



Whistleblowing Policy

Date Ratified: October 2020

Date Policy due to be reviewed: October 2022

Committee Responsible for policy: Board of Governance

Geraldine Kelly – Chair of the Board of Governors

Review No:	Date	Summary of Changes	Reviewer
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The Ridge Employability College are committed to conducting our business with honesty and integrity, and we expect all staff to maintain high standards.

However, all organisations face the risk of things going wrong from time to time, or of unknowingly harbouring illegal or unethical conduct. A culture of openness and accountability is essential in order to prevent such situations occurring or to address them when they do occur.

The aims of this policy are:

- (a) To encourage all staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously, investigated as appropriate, and that their confidentiality will be respected.
- (b) To provide staff with guidance as to how to raise those concerns.
- (c) To reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns in good faith without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

This policy does form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

1. Who is covered by this policy?

This policy applies to all individuals working at all levels of the organisation, including senior managers, teachers, Directors, support staff, employees, consultants, contractors, term-time, part-time and fixed-term workers, casual and agency staff, volunteers and anyone else working for or providing services to The Ridge Employability College.

2. What is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work.

This may include:

- (a) Criminal activity, (for example, fraud, corruption or theft has been or is likely to be committed)
- (b) Miscarriages of justice.
- (c) Danger to health and safety to staff and/or learners.
- (d) Damage to the environment.
- (e) Failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements.

- (f) Bribery.
- (g) Financial fraud or mismanagement.
- (h) Negligence.
- (i) Breach of our internal policies and procedures.
- (j) Conduct likely to damage our reputation.
- (k) Unauthorised disclosure of confidential information.
- (l) Where a learner is or you suspect a learner is at risk of harm, or may have been harmed.
- (m) The deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.

Any issues to do with child protection or safeguarding learners should be raised under The Ridge Employability College Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

A whistle-blower is a person who raises a genuine concern in good faith relating to any of the above. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of our activities (a whistleblowing concern) you should report it under this policy.

This policy should not be used for complaints relating to your own personal circumstances, such as the way you have been treated at work. In those cases you should use the grievance procedure.

If you are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy you seek advice from the Head of College whose contact details are at the end of this policy.

3. Raising a whistleblowing concern

We hope that in many cases you will be able to raise any concerns with your line manager. You may tell them in person or put the matter in writing if you prefer. They will be able to agree a way of resolving your concern quickly and effectively. In some cases they may refer the matter to the Head of college or board of directors.

A written and oral complaint should detail the background and history of the concern, (giving dates) and the reason why they are concerned about the situation.

However, where the matter is more serious, or you feel that your line manager has not addressed your concern, or you prefer not to raise it with them for any reason, you should contact the Head of College or board of Directors.

Contact details are set out at the end of this policy.

We will raise a meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss your concern.

We will take down a written summary of your concern and provide you with a copy after the meeting.

We also aim to give you an indication of how we propose to deal with the matter.

4. Confidentiality

We hope that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. However, if you want to raise your concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret. If it is necessary for anyone investigating your concern to know your identity, we will discuss this with you.

Anonymous disclosures are not usually investigated but the college will exercise its discretion whether to investigate in these circumstances. Proper investigations may be more difficult or impossible if we cannot obtain further information from you. It is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible and have been made in good faith. Whistle-blowers who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should come forward to their line manager or one of the other contact points and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality.

5. External Disclosures

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases you should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.

The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body such as a regulator. It is not appropriate to alert the media. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern externally. The independent whistleblowing charity, Protect – speak up – stop harm, operates a confidential helpline. They also have a list of prescribed regulators for reporting certain types of concern. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

Whistleblowing concerns usually relate to the conduct of our staff, but they may sometimes relate to the actions of a third party, such as a parent, carer, learner, external supplier or service provider. The law allows you to raise a concern in good faith with a third party, where you reasonably believe it relates mainly to their actions or something that is legally their responsibility. However, we encourage you to report such concerns internally first. You should contact your Head of College or Directors for guidance.

6. Investigation and outcome

Once you have raised a concern, we will carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation. We will inform you of the outcome of our assessment. You may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information.

In some cases we may appoint an investigator or team of investigators including staff with relevant experience of investigations or specialist knowledge of the subject matter. The investigator(s) may make recommendations for change to enable us to minimise the risk of future wrongdoing.

The person receiving the concern will keep you informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent us giving you specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. You should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.

Where appropriate, the matters raised may be referred to the police, an external regulatory body, or form the subject of an independent enquiry.

If we conclude that a whistle-blower has made false allegations maliciously, in bad faith or with a view to personal gain, the whistle-blower will be subject to disciplinary action. Employees may also be subject to disciplinary action if they disclose confidential information externally in some circumstances.

7. If you are not satisfied

While we cannot always guarantee the outcome you are seeking, we will try to deal with your concern fairly and in an appropriate way. By using this policy you can help us to achieve this.

If you are not happy with the way in which your concern has been handled, you can raise it with the Board of Directors.

8. Protection and support for whistleblowers

It is understandable that whistle-blowers are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. We aim to encourage openness and will support staff who raise genuine concerns in good faith under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

Staff must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern in good faith. Detrimental treatment includes dismissal, disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment or informal pressure connected with raising a concern. If you believe that you have suffered any such treatment, you should inform your line manager immediately. If the matter is not remedied you should raise it formally using our grievance procedure.

Staff must not threaten to retaliate against whistle-blowers in any way. Anyone involved in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action.

A confidential support and counselling hotline is available to whistle-blowers who raise concerns under this policy. Their contact details are set out at the end of this policy.

9. Responsibility for the success of this policy

The Ridge Employability College has overall responsibility for this policy, and for reviewing the effectiveness of actions taken in response to concerns raised in this policy.

All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they use it to disclose any suspected danger or wrongdoing. Staff are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which might be improved. Comments, suggestions and queries should be addressed to the Head of College.

10. Contacts

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