

1.0 POLICY STATEMENT / PURPOSE

The University is committed to the highest standards of integrity, probity, and accountability. It seeks to conduct its affairs in a responsible manner taking into account the proper use of public funds, the requirements of its funding bodies and the standards required in public life.

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 and to address them when they do occur.

The aims of this Policy are:

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

2.0 SCOPE

This Policy applies to all employees and those who are engaged to work in the University and includes apprentices, interns, atypical workers, agency workers and those with honorary contracts. The Policy also applies to any registered students and members of University bodies such as Council.

This Policy applies to any disclosure raised in the public interest and in good faith and cannot be used by individuals to challenge financial and business decisions properly taken by the University or seek reconsideration of any matter already addressed under other internal procedures, for example disciplinary and grievance procedures. This Policy should not be used for complaints relating to your own personal circumstances. In those cases, you should use the staff Grievance Policy or Student Complaint Procedure, or other internal policy as relevant.

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work or study. This may include:

- criminal activity;
- a failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirement;
- a miscarriage of justice;
- danger to health or safety;
- financial or non-financial maladministration, malpractice, bribery or fraud (not covered under the University's Financial Regulations);
- damage to the environment;
- breach of University policy or procedures, or
- deliberately concealing information demonstrating that one or more of the above taking place.

If you are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this Policy you should seek advice from the Whistleblowing Officer or a Trusted Person, whose contact details are at the end of this Policy.

The University subscribes to a confidential helpline service provided by Protect, the independent whistle blowing charity. The service is free to use and can provide useful advice and support if you are considering whether to make a disclosure and how to do so.

3.0 POLICY, PROCEDURES AND ENFORCEMENT

Raising a Concern

It is expected that most concerns will be raised openly with line managers or senior colleagues, or for students with their academic or College tutor, as part of the day-to-day good practice of the University. It is only when an individual considers that their concerns have not been appropriately dealt with or their concern is about their line manager or department or their concern is so serious that it should be considered at a more senior level that it may be raised under this Policy.

Where an individual considers that it may be necessary to make a disclosure under this Policy, the disclosure should be made in writing to the University Secretary: University Secretary's Office, Palatine Centre or email university.secretary@durham.ac.uk.

If a disclosure involves or implicates the University Secretary, the disclosure should be made to the Vice-Chancellor: Vice-Chancellor's Office, Palatine Centre or email vice.chancellor@durham.ac.uk.

If a disclosure involves or implicates the Vice-Chancellor, the disclosure should be made to the Chair of Audit and Risk Committee: c/o University Secretary's Office, Palatine Centre or email m.l.towes@durham.ac.uk.

The University Secretary (or Vice-Chancellor) may designate an alternative senior officer in the University to deal with the disclosure.

Disclosures should be raised promptly so that they can be considered in a timely manner.

An individual should make it clear that they are raising their concern under this Policy and they should provide sufficient information and detail to allow the concern to be meaningfully considered.

Confidentiality

We hope that staff will feel able to voice whistle blowing 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

We do not encourage staff to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation 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. Whistleblowers who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should come forward to the Whistleblowing Officer and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality. If you are in any doubt you can seek advice from Protect, the independent whistle blowing charity who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

The University's Response to a Disclosure

We will acknowledge receipt of the disclosure within 2 working days and will consider whether the matters disclosed provide sufficient grounds for proceeding further. The University Secretary may bring the disclosure to the attention of the Vice-Chancellor, Chair of Council, Director of HR or Director of Student Support and Wellbeing (as appropriate) and the Chair of Audit Committee.

Once you have raised the concern, we will carry out an initial assessment within 5 working days to determine whether a detailed investigation is required and the scope of any investigation. This assessment will also consider whether the matter should be considered under a different University policy or if the matter should be referred to an appropriate external body, for example the police.

We will inform you of the outcome of our initial assessment, along with an indication of how we propose to deal with the matter. You may be required to attend additional meetings to provide further information. You may bring a colleague or union representative to any meetings under this Policy. Your companion must respect the confidentiality of your disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

Investigation

If an investigation is required, 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.

When an allegation is made against a "named individual", the named individual will normally be informed of the allegation and of any supporting evidence and they may be given a right to respond to any allegations. The point at which this may occur will depend on the specific nature of the case. The University's duty of care to staff extends to the named individual during the investigation and particularly in the case of a vexatious claim.

We will aim to 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.

The outcome of any investigation may be reported to the Vice-Chancellor, the Chair of Council, the Director of Human Resources or Director of Student Support and Wellbeing (as appropriate) and the Chair of Audit Committee.

If we conclude that a whistleblower has made false allegations maliciously, the whistleblower will be subject to disciplinary action.

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 University Secretary. Alternatively, you may contact the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee or our external auditors. Contact details are set out at the end of this policy.

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 will very rarely if ever be appropriate to alert the media. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. The independent whistleblowing charity, Protect, 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 student or University supplier. In some circumstances the law will protect you if you raise the matter with the third party directly. However, we encourage you to report such concerns internally first. You should contact your line manager, academic or College tutor or the University Secretary for guidance.

Protection and support for whistleblowers

It is understandable that whistleblowers are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. We aim to encourage openness and will support staff and students who raise genuine concerns under this Policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

Whistleblowers must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern. Detrimental treatment includes dismissal, disciplinary action, threats, or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. If you believe that you have suffered any such treatment, you should inform the University Secretary immediately. If the matter is not remedied, you should raise it formally using the University's Grievance Policy or Student Complaint Procedure.

You must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. If you are involved in such conduct you may be subject to disciplinary action.

Confidential support is available to whistleblowers from Protect, the independent whistleblowing charity. Their contact details are set out at the end of this policy.

Records

All concerns raised and action taken in response to any disclosures under this Policy, including a copy of any investigation reports, will be retained for 5 years. An annual report of disclosures which have been made under this Policy will be compiled by the University Secretary's Office and submitted to Council and the Audit and Risk Committee.

4.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

This policy has been designed to ensure that no-one receives less favourable treatment due to protected characteristics.

5.0 CONTACT DETAILS AND RELATED INFORMATION

Whistleblowing Officer	Jennifer Sewel University Secretary Tel: 0191 333 6144 Email: university.Secretary@durham.ac.uk
Vice-Chancellor	Professor Long Acting Vice-Chancellor and Warden Tel: 0191 224 6212 Email: vice.chancellor@durham.ac.uk
Trusted Person	Gillian Campbell Director of University Assurance Service Tel: 0191 334 4516 Email: gillian.campbell@durham.ac.uk
Trusted Person	Tess Mantzoros Head of Legal Services Tel: 0191 334 4640 Email: tess.mantzoros@durham.ac.uk
Chair of Audit and Risk Committee	Kay Boycott Chair of Audit and Risk Committee Tel: 0191 344 6115 Email: m.l.towes@durham.ac.uk
External auditors	Grant Thornton Email: sarah.matthews@uk.gt.com
Protect (Independent whistleblowing charity)	Tel: 020 3117 2520 www.protect-advice.org.uk

[Finance Department : Financial Regulations - Durham University](#)

[Human Resources & Organisational Development : Disciplinary Regulations - Durham University](#)

[Human Resources & Organisational Development : Grievance Regulations - Durham University](#)

[Colleges and Student Experience Division : Student Complaints - Durham University](#)

VERSION CONTROL:

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Contact for further information: University Secretary's Office