

## CPCAB POLICY ON WHISTLEBLOWING

CPCAB's policy for dealing with whistleblowing aims to:

- encourage staff, tutors and registered candidates to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice;
- provide an avenue for raising concerns and offering feedback on any action taken;
- ensure that a response is given to concerns raised and that whistleblowers understand how to pursue them if not satisfied.

This policy should be read in conjunction with CPCAB's policies on complaints, malpractice and appeals.

### **Introduction**

CPCAB is committed to the highest standards of openness and accountability and we encourage staff, tutors and candidates who have serious concerns about any aspect of the qualification service to come forward and voice those concerns.

This confidential reporting code is intended to offer an option for dealing with concerns. CPCAB is committed to listening to concerns, taking them seriously and ensuring that they are dealt with promptly and fairly.

*Note: in addition to CPCAB's commitment to protect those who raise concerns, the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 provides a worker with potential protection for detriment and dismissal for making a 'qualifying disclosure'. The Act encourages workers to raise matters internally and it steers the worker to use an internal whistleblowing policy where this exists (there are legal requirements for 'qualifying disclosures' to be protected under the Act).*

### **Aims and scope of the policy**

The policy encourages the whistleblower to feel confident in raising concerns and to provide an avenue for doing so. It outlines the CPCAB commitment to respond to such concerns and protects the whistleblower from reprisals or victimisation arising from the raising of concerns.

CPCAB will investigate allegations including possible:

- malpractice, in particular in relation to the assessment of candidates. See CPCAB's policy on malpractice for further information on what might constitute malpractice and sanctions that may be imposed, including potential de-registration of a centre;
- maladministration, including failure to adhere to CPCAB published procedures. The response to maladministration may include imposing sanctions but is more likely to involve putting a programme of support and extra monitoring in place;
- centre difficulties which could lead to either of the above and which could be assisted by early intervention and increased support from CPCAB.

CPCAB will NOT investigate issues specifically related to a centre's relationship with its candidates. See also CPCAB's complaints policy.

Appeals or complaints regarding external assessment decisions are covered by CPCAB's appeals policy.

It is CPCAB's usual practice not to communicate directly with candidates, who are contracted to their registered training centre rather than to the awarding body. In cases of whistleblowing this practice may be waived. Please note: CPCAB's commitment to investigate concerns does not imply either accepting or rejecting them.

### **Investigations**

Initial investigations will be carried out by a panel of staff from CPCAB's qualification service. In the event of serious problems being identified the investigation may be referred to:

- a different department within CPCAB, eg complaints panel;
- an external auditor;

- Ofqual (the Office of the Qualifications Regulator);
- the police.

Some concerns may be resolved by agreeing an action plan, without the need for a formal investigation. On the other hand, if urgent action is needed this will be taken before the investigation is launched.

### **How to raise a concern**

Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing and should include the background and history of the concern, giving as many relevant details as possible, such as names and dates. Whistleblowers should outline why they are particularly concerned about the situation and declare any personal interest they may have in the situation. Although it is not expected that proof of an allegation will be provided beyond all doubt, it should be possible to demonstrate that there are reasonable grounds for concern.

CPCAB strongly discourages whistleblowers from investigating a concern or accusing individuals directly.

**Tutors, exams officers or other centre staff** can raise concerns either directly with CPCAB or via their designated CPCAB-appointed external verifier.

**CPCAB-registered candidates** are encouraged to raise concerns via their registered centre if at all possible, preferably informally in the first instance (see CPCAB's complaints policy). Where this is not possible, as stated above CPCAB will waive its normal practice of not communicating directly with candidates.

**CPCAB staff** should report concerns to their line manager where possible. Where concerns relate to the line manager they should approach a member of the senior management team.

CPCAB will respond to all concerns raised by whistleblowers, normally within 10 working days:

- acknowledging that the concern has been received;
- indicating how the concern will be investigated;
- giving an idea of how long any proposed investigation is likely to take.

CPCAB will also advise the whistleblower when the investigation has been concluded. However, whilst all allegations of malpractice or maladministration will be investigated, for reasons of confidentiality it may not be possible to inform them of the outcome.

### **Protection of the whistleblower**

All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the identity of the initiator. Whistleblowers should be aware, though, that the source of the information may be revealed during the investigation itself and in serious concerns they may be asked to provide a statement or even come forward as a witness.

If an allegation is made in good faith but not confirmed by investigation, no action will be taken against the initiator. Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that already affect the initiator.

If an allegation is knowingly made frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken.

### **Anonymous allegations**

Whistleblowers are requested to include their name and contact details with their allegation if possible. Concerns raised anonymously or through a third party have less validity and it may not be possible to investigate them, depending on the seriousness of the concern and the possibility of confirming the allegation.