

Whistleblowing Policy

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**Approved externally by SFJ
Awards' Quality & Standards
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1 Purpose

An approved centre may have their own Whistleblowing policy in place which they follow.

The policy outlines SFJ Awards approach to Whistleblowing. It details the actions that people can take and the safeguards that exist to protect them.

2 Definition

Whistleblowing is a term used when an individual discloses information relating to malpractice or wrongdoing and/or the covering up of malpractice or wrongdoing.

SFJ Awards' whistleblowing policy can be brought into effect should an individual have grounds to reasonably believe information and evidence shows one or more of the following (*the list is not exhaustive and is intended for guidance only*):

- a criminal offence has been, is being or is likely to be committed
- a person has failed, is failing, or is likely to fail, to comply with a legal obligation
- a training provider has failed, is failing, or is likely to fail, to comply with one or more of the requirements of the awarding organisation which approves it
- a miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur
- the health and safety of an individual has been, is being, or is likely to be, endangered
- the environment has been, is being, or is likely to be, damaged
- information relating to any of the above has been, or is likely to be, deliberately concealed
- a member of staff making a disclosure about that provider's malpractice
- a learner or parent/guardian making a disclosure about a training provider's malpractice
- reports concerning potentially fraudulent claims for qualifications.

When you blow the whistle you are raising a genuine concern about a suspected wrongdoing that affects the integrity of the business or the well-being of fellow employees. You might not be directly or personally affected by the suspected wrongdoing nor have a personal interest in the outcome of any investigation into your concern, although you might.

Whistleblowing is distinct and differs from making a complaint, a grievance, employment disputes or an appeal.

When you complain, normally you are saying that you have been personally affected by an alleged wrongdoing. Further information can be found in SFJ Awards' Complaints Policy which can be downloaded from our website: www.sfjawards.com/Complaints

A grievance is when you, as an employee, have a dispute about your own employment position. If you are an employee you should refer to your internal workplace policies.

An appeal is a decision or judgement that is being questioned. An appeal is a process through which the outcome of a decision may be challenged. Further information can be found in SFJ Awards' Enquiries and Appeals Policy which can be downloaded from our website: www.sfjawards.com/Appeals

3 Roles and Responsibilities

Quality and Assessment Manager:

- To ensure allegations are handled and investigated in accordance with this policy.

SFJ Awards' Awarding Organisation Manager (Responsible Officer):

- Take timely, informed decisions and exercise professional judgement when deciding when and how to report events to the Qualifications Regulators and when managing events.
- Identifies and notifies the Qualifications Regulators promptly of an event that has occurred or is likely to occur that could have an adverse effect.

4 Making an Allegation

SFJ Awards expects individuals to raise the concern(s) with the centre in the first instance with a view to resolving through their own internal policies.

Where the concern(s) raised have not been addressed, you may feel it appropriate to make a disclosure and notify SFJ Awards.

You should provide as much of the information and evidence you have seen as possible to support your disclosure.

Disclosures should be sent to:

The Quality & Assessment Manager
SFJ Awards
1st Floor, Unit C
Meadowcourt Business Park
4 Hayland Street
Sheffield
S9 1BY

or

Emailed to: info@sfjawards.com

If you choose to make a whistleblowing disclosure to SFJ Awards and have provided contact details, we will send you an initial acknowledgement (within 5 working days) to confirm we have received your disclosure.

Should the disclosure fall outside the scope of SFJ Awards, you will be informed of this in writing within 2 working days of us receiving the disclosure.

SFJ Awards will update the discloser as to what action is being taken in response to a whistleblower's disclosure and will advise when our investigations have been concluded.

5 Investigating Allegations

Investigations will be carried out by SFJ Awards' Quality & Assessment Manager, along with other members of the Senior Management team, as appropriate.

We will consider each disclosure of information sensitively and carefully, and decide upon an appropriate response.

We will inform the discloser about the outcome of our investigation.

6 Confidentiality

We would encourage you to put your name to your disclosure allegation whenever possible as concerns expressed anonymously tend to be less powerful.

We will consider anonymous whistleblowing disclosures however it may not be possible to investigate or substantiate anonymous disclosures.

You may wish to raise a concern in confidence under this policy. If you ask SFJ Awards to protect your identity, we will not disclose it without your consent. If the situation arises where we cannot resolve the concern without revealing your identity (for example if you are a key witness) we will discuss with you how we can proceed.

As a whistleblower you should recognise that you may be identifiable by others due to the nature/circumstances of the disclosure. If you are concerned about being identified, you should discuss your concerns at the time of disclosure.

We will endeavour to keep a whistleblower's identity confidential, especially where asked to do so, however we may need to share information received in the disclosure with third parties in cases where we consider it necessary to do so.

We may need to disclose your identity to *(the list is not exhaustive and is intended for guidance only)*:

- the police, fraud prevention agencies or other law enforcement agencies (to investigate or prevent crime, including fraud)
- the courts (in connection with court proceedings)
- another person to whom we are required by law to disclose your identity

If this happens, we will inform the discloser at the earliest opportunity.

7 Malicious Allegations and Vexatious Behaviour

It is not appropriate to use the Whistleblowing policy in order to pursue a personal dispute against an individual, or an organisation.

Any deliberate false, trivial, malicious or vexatious allegations will be taken very seriously by SFJ Awards and appropriate action will be taken. Where an individual acts in a malicious way, the confidentiality protection outlined above will cease to apply.

SFJ Awards will not engage with frivolous, persistent/repeated contact from individuals with no new information or evidence to bring to the investigation, as this reduces the time that can be dedicated to carrying out investigations.

Where an individual corresponds with SFJ Awards in an abusive manner or repeatedly and persistently contacts SFJ Awards with no new information or evidence to bring to the investigation, SFJ Awards will treat such behaviour as vexatious.

Further information can be found in SFJ Awards' Vexatious Behaviour Policy which can be downloaded from our website: www.sfjawards.com/Vexatious

8 Monitoring

Cases will be monitored by SFJ Awards' Quality and Assessment Manager and reported to the SFJ Awards Quality & Standards Committee.

9 Review of the Policy

This policy will be reviewed by the Quality and Assessment Manager on a regular basis as part of SFJ Awards' self-evaluation arrangements and revised as necessary in response to lessons learnt, customer feedback, changes in legislation and guidance from the Qualifications Regulators.

Our review of the policy will ensure that SFJ Awards procedures continue to be consistent with the regulatory criteria and are applied appropriately and equitably.

Policies and formal amendments to policies are approved at the next meeting by the Quality & Standards Committee.

If you have any queries about the content of the policy or you wish to give feedback then please contact SFJ Awards Tel: 01142 841970 or email info@sfjawards.com

10 Location of the Policy

You can download copies of the policy from our website: www.sfjawards.com/Whistleblowing