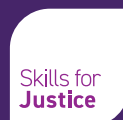




Whistleblowing Policy



Revisions and Amendment Register

Date of Issue	Page No	Revision	Version
May 2024		New updated issue following policy review	24/1

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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 an individual 'blows the whistle' they are raising a genuine concern about a suspected wrongdoing that affects the integrity of the business or the well-being of fellow employees. They might not be directly or personally affected by the suspected wrongdoing nor have a personal interest in the outcome of any investigation into the concern.

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

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

A grievance is when an individual, as an employee, has a dispute about their own employment position. Employees should refer to their employer's internal workplace policies.

An appeal is questioning a decision or judgement. 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 the SFJ Awards website: www.sfjawards.com/policies

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Quality Assurance and Compliance Manager will:

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

SFJ Awards' Head of Awards and Assurance Services (Responsible Officer) will:

- Take timely, informed decisions and exercise professional judgement when deciding when and how to report events to the Qualifications Regulators and when managing events.
- Identify and notify 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 the Centre's own internal policies.

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

The individual should provide as much of the information and evidence as possible to support the disclosure.

Disclosures should be sent to:

Quality Assurance and Compliance Manager
SFJ Awards
1st Floor, Unit C
Meadowcourt Business Park
4 Hayland Street
Sheffield
S9 1BY

or

Emailed to: info@sfjawards.com

If an individual chooses to make a whistleblowing disclosure to SFJ Awards and has provided contact details, SFJ Awards will send an initial acknowledgement (we aim to do this within 5 working days) to confirm that the disclosure has been received.

Should the disclosure fall outside the scope of SFJ Awards, the discloser will be informed of this in writing. This will typically be within 5 working days of SFJ Awards receiving the disclosure although it may take longer should external advice be required.

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

5. Investigating Allegations

Investigations will be carried out by SFJ Awards' Quality and Compliance Manager, along with other members of SFJ Awards staff, as appropriate.

SFJ Awards will consider each disclosure of information sensitively and carefully, before deciding on an appropriate response.

SFJ Awards will inform the discloser about the outcome of our investigation.

6. Confidentiality

SFJ Awards would encourage anyone making a disclosure to put their name to the disclosure allegation whenever possible as concerns expressed anonymously tend to be less powerful.

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

An individual may wish to raise a concern in confidence under this policy. If a discloser asks SFJ Awards to protect their identity, SFJ Awards will not disclose it without consent. If the situation arises where SFJ Awards cannot resolve the concern without revealing the discloser's identity (for example if the discloser is a key witness) SFJ Awards will discuss how best to proceed with the discloser.

As a whistleblower, an individual should recognise that they may be identifiable by others due to the nature/circumstances of the disclosure. Anyone concerned about being identified, should discuss your concerns with SFJ Awards at the time of disclosure.

SFJ Awards will endeavour to keep a whistleblower's identity confidential, especially when asked to do so. However, SFJ Awards may at times consider it necessary to share information received in the disclosure with third parties.

SFJ Awards 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, SFJ Awards will inform the discloser at the earliest opportunity.

7. Malicious Allegations and Vexatious Behaviour

It is not appropriate to use the Whistleblowing policy 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: sfjawards.com/policies.

8. Monitoring

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

9. Review of the Policy

This policy will be reviewed as part of a review cycle, and revised as necessary in response to lessons learnt, customer feedback, changes in legislation and guidance received from the Regulators.

10. Location of the Policy

A copy of this policy can be downloaded from Odyssey, ACE360 or from the SFJ Awards website: www.sfjawards.com/policies.

11. Copyright

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