

Whistleblowing Policy Document – Exams

Ashmole Academy



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Policy Summary and Guiding Principles

Ashmole Trust is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. Staff and students are encouraged to be aware of and to report practices that could compromise the integrity and security of examinations.

In compliance with section 5.11 of the JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres**, Ashmole Trust will:

- take all reasonable steps to prevent the occurrence of any malpractice (which includes maladministration) before, during and after assessments have taken place
- inform the awarding body **immediately** of any alleged, suspected or actual incidents of malpractice or maladministration, involving a candidate or a member of staff, by completing the appropriate documentation
- as required by an awarding body, gather evidence of any instances of alleged or suspected malpractice (which includes maladministration) in accordance with the JCQ publication **Suspected Malpractice: Policies and Procedures** and provide such information and advice as the awarding body may reasonably require

This policy sets out the principles which allow members of centre staff and students to feel confident in reporting instances of actual, alleged or suspected malpractice to relevant members of senior leadership.

Aims and Scope of this Policy

This policy:

- encourages individuals to raise concerns, which will be fully investigated by appropriately trained and experienced individuals
- identifies how to report concerns
- explains how such concerns will be investigated and sets expectations regarding the reporting of outcomes
- provides details of relevant bodies to whom concerns about wrongdoing can be reported, including awarding organisations and regulators
- includes a commitment to do everything reasonable to protect the reporter's identity, if requested
- sets out how those raising concerns will be supported.

This policy also details the steps that could be taken by an individual involved in the management, administration and/or conducting of examinations if Ashmole Trust fails to comply with its obligation to report any alleged, suspected or actual incidents of malpractice or maladministration.

Raising a Concern

If a member of centre staff involved in the management, administration and/or conducting of examinations (such as the Examinations Coordinator, Examinations Assistant or an invigilator), a student or a member of the public (such as a parent/carer) has a concern or reason to believe that malpractice has or will occur in an examination or assessment, concerns should normally be raised initially with the Senior Assistant Head with responsibility for Examinations.

However, there may be times when it may be more appropriate to refer the issue direct to the Head Teacher, or to the board of governors, for example, if the allegation is against the Head Teacher.

Examples of malpractice

In addition to the centre wide Whistleblowing Policy, this examinations-specific policy, includes reference to examination-related breaches including, but not limited to, the following:

- Failure to comply with examination regulations as set out by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) and its awarding bodies

- A security breach of the examination paper
- Conduct of centre staff which undermines the integrity of the examination
- Unfair treatment of candidates by either giving an advantage to a candidate/group of candidates (e.g. by permitting a candidate an access arrangement which is not supported by appropriate evidence), or disadvantaging candidates by not providing access to the appropriate conditions (providing a 'level playing field')
- Possible fraud and corruption (e.g. accessing the examination paper prior to the examination to aid teaching and learning)
- Abuse of authority (e.g. the Head of Centre/members of the Senior Leadership Team overriding JCQ and awarding body regulations)
- Other conduct which may be interpreted as malpractice/maladministration

Whistleblowing procedure

If an individual does not feel confident raising the issue/reporting malpractice within the school, or they have done so and are concerned that no action has been taken, that individual could consider making their disclosure to a malpractice expert at the awarding body for the qualification where malpractice is suspected.

For members of centre staff, it is likely that the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) will offer legal protection from dismissal or for being penalised for raising certain serious concerns.

In order to investigate concerns effectively, the individual should provide the awarding body with as much information as possible/is relevant, which may include:

- The qualifications and subjects involved
- The centre involved
- The names of staff/candidates involved
- The regulations breached/specific nature of suspected malpractice
- When and where the suspected malpractice occurred
- Whether multiple examination series are affected
- If the issue has been reported to the centre and what the outcome was
- How the issue became apparent

A member of staff could consider making a disclosure to Ofqual as a prescribed body for whistleblowing to raise a concern about wrongdoing, risk or malpractice.

Anonymity

In some circumstances, the whistleblower might find it difficult to raise concerns with the nominated member of the Senior Leadership Team. If a concern is raised anonymously, the issue may not be able to be taken further if insufficient information has been provided. In such instances, and if appropriate, the allegation may be disclosed to a union representative, who could then be required to report the concern without disclosing its source. Alternatively, whistleblowers or others with concerns about potential malpractice can report the matter direct to Ofqual or to the relevant awarding body, both of whom will give the opportunity for the whistleblower to remain anonymous.

A whistleblower can give his/her name, but may also request confidentiality; the person receiving the information should make every effort to protect the identity of the whistleblower.

Students

Every effort will be made to ensure students at Ashmole are made to feel comfortable discussing/reporting malpractice issues of which they are aware. The regulations surrounding their assessments, and wider academic integrity, will be reiterated to students who are undertaking, or who are about to undertake, their courses of study.