

EXAMS AND ASSESSMENTS WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY (see also STCG Whistleblowing Policy)

Introduction

In line with the South Thames Colleges Group (STCG) Whistleblowing Policy, whistleblowing in relation to exams and assessments is encouraged, not penalised, and staff are made aware that they have a duty to report any concerns they have about the conduct of examinations.

The head of centre and governing board at STCG aim to create and maintain an approach to examinations that reflects an ethical culture, and encourages staff to be aware of and 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**, STCG 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 whistleblowing procedures relating to exams and assessments for STCG. Members of the senior leadership team who are responsible for handling any cases of whistleblowing are fully aware of the contents of this policy and will escalate any instances of malpractice to the relevant awarding body/bodies.

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

Purpose of the policy

In conjunction with the STCG Whistleblowing 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
- 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 STCG fails to comply with its obligation to report any alleged, suspected or actual incidents of malpractice or maladministration.

Reporting

If a member of centre staff involved in the management, administration and/or conducting of examinations (such as exams officer, exams assistant or invigilator) has a concern or reason to believe that malpractice has or

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will occur in an examination or assessment, concerns should normally be raised initially with the appropriate College Vice Principal.

However, there may be times when it may be more appropriate to refer the issue direct to the governing board, most often when the allegation is against the head of centre.

Examples of malpractice

- In addition to the centre wide Whistleblowing Policy, this exams-specific policy includes reference to exams-related breaches including, but not limited to, the following:
- Failure to comply with exam regulations as set out by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), its awarding bodies as well as those of other 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 exam paper prior to the exam 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

The procedure for raising a concern is as outlined in the STCG Whistleblowing Policy Sections 5.

If the individual does not feel safe raising the issue/reporting malpractice within the centre, 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.

- In order to investigate concerns effectively, the awarding body should be provided 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

Alternatively, a worker could consider making a disclosure to Ofqual as a prescribed body for whistleblowing to raise a concern about wrongdoing, risk or malpractice.

Response

The response procedure is as outlined in the STCG Whistleblowing Policy Section 6.

Confidentiality

Section 7 of the STCG Whistleblowing Policy applies.

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