



Policy Document

Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure



Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Scope	3
Purpose	4
Definitions.....	4
The content of the disclosure	4
Procedure	5
What happens after the disclosure is made	5
Confidentiality	6
What happens after the investigation	6
Whistleblowing contacts.....	7
For qualifications and assessment	7
Wider list of prescribed people and bodies	7
Policy updating and reviewing	7
Policy version and owner	8



Introduction

This policy details Aspire Qualification's (AQ's) commitment to the provision of duty of care to AQ Learners and AQ Centres. AQ has a positive commitment and open approach to whistleblowing.

This policy and procedure are intended to be used in line with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA) which provides protection for whistleblowing on wrongdoing. The AQ policy encourages Learners/staff at AQ Centres to raise concerns with AQ should they feel, the issue would not be addressed independently by the AQ Centre.

If you are concerned about issues that you see or hear regarding AQ qualifications, usually these concerns are easily resolved by following AQ or AQ Centre policies and procedures. However, those procedures may not appear to be appropriate where:

- There is no relevant procedure
- You have genuine concerns about using a particular procedure at either the outset or the end of the process
- Your concern is about conduct likely to harm the reputation of AQ

It can be difficult to know what to do in this situation. You may be concerned about raising such issues or you may want to keep the concerns to yourself, perhaps feeling it is not any of your business or that it is only a suspicion.

However, AQ has introduced this policy to enable you to raise genuine concerns about such matters at an early stage and in the Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure right way. AQ would rather you raised the matter when it is of first concern, rather than wait for proof. Please also see the AQ Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and procedure.

Scope

This policy is aimed at internal AQ staff, candidates, course providers and teaching staff delivering courses leading to our qualifications.



Purpose

This document aims to set out the policy for those who wish to make certain disclosures to AQ relating to:

- The development, delivery and award of AQ qualifications
- Assessment arrangements on AQ qualifications
- Other matters likely to be of relevance or interest to AQ in our role as an Awarding Organisation

Definitions

Whistleblowing is a term used when an individual discloses information relating to suspected malpractice or wrongdoing and/or the covering up of suspected malpractice or wrongdoing. The suspected malpractice or wrongdoing is often committed by a Learner or an AQ Approved Centre, although this is not always the case. Whistleblowing is distinct from both complaints and employment disputes.

Complaints is an expression of personal dissatisfaction. Examples of complaints that we will normally investigate can be found in the AQ Complaints Policy.

Employment disputes, relate to where a worker has a dispute about his or her own employment position or contract. If you are experiencing such a dispute, you should take this up with your employer or another responsible body. AQ cannot act over grievances of this nature.

The content of the disclosure

An individual may decide to make a whistleblowing disclosure to prevent harm or to hold an organisation to account. Genuine concerns which, in your honest, reasonable belief, is in the public interest and suggests that wrongdoing has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed, could qualify for protection under PIDA.

Wrongdoing includes (but is not limited to):

- A criminal offence that has been, is being, or is likely to be committed
- A person who has failed, is failing, or is likely to fail to comply with a legal obligation
- A miscarriage of justice that has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur
- The health and safety of an individual which has been, is being, or is likely to be endangered
- The environment has been, is being, or is likely to be damaged, or



- Information relating to any of the above that has been, or is likely to be, deliberately concealed.

The AQ policy additionally covers any conduct not included above which appears likely to, or may, cause harm to the reputation of AQ.

Procedure

What should you do if you have a concern about suspected malpractice or wrongdoing?

Whistleblowing disclosures can be made by email to info@aspirequalifications.com

Allegations of suspected malpractice or wrongdoing may be made anonymously.

What happens after the disclosure is made

1. If you choose to make a whistleblowing disclosure to AQ, and have provided contact details, AQ will send you an initial acknowledgement that we have received your disclosure.
2. AQ will normally ask you to provide as much evidence as possible to support your disclosure.
3. AQ will conduct a full investigation and will look into all whistleblowing disclosures and pass them on to the relevant responsible person, who in most cases will be the Director of Awarding or Responsible Officer. However, it may not always be possible to investigate or substantiate anonymous disclosures if there is lack of evidence
4. AQ will consider each disclosure of information sensitively and carefully and decide upon an appropriate response. AQ may share with third parties any information received in the disclosure where it is considered necessary to do so
5. In most cases, AQ will keep you updated as to what action is being taken in response to your disclosure. AQ will normally send you an update within 28 working days of receiving your disclosure, but this may take longer if the issue is particularly complex

What if I don't want to reveal my identity

AQ very much hopes that the assurances given in this policy will encourage you to allow disclosure of your identity to those who need to know.

If you disclose your identity, it will be easier for AQ to:



- Look into the matter
- Protect your position
- Give you feedback where appropriate

However, if you wish to raise an issue anonymously, AQ will, of course, consider your disclosure.

Confidentiality

AQ will endeavour to keep a whistleblower's identity confidential where asked to do so, although cannot guarantee this.

There may be the need to disclose your identity to:

- 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 AQ is required by law to disclose your identity

A whistleblower should also recognise that he or she may be identifiable by others due to the nature or circumstances of the disclosure.

What happens after the investigation

The Director of Awarding and/or Responsible Officer will ensure, to the appropriate extent, that the findings of the investigation are communicated to:

- You, as the person raising the wrongdoing concern (assuming that contact details have been supplied)
- The individual(s) under investigation and if appropriate, other external authorities who may need to consider whether action should be taken on the basis of the findings



Whistleblowing contacts

For qualifications and assessment

Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)
Contact them about matters in relation to which the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation exercise functions under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

Whistleblowing and malpractice
Complaints investigation manager
Ofqual
Earlsdon Park
53-55 Butts Road
Coventry
CV1 3BH

Tel: 0300 303 3344

Email: whistleblowing@ofqual.gov.uk

Online form: complaints.ofqual.gov.uk/new-concern

Wider list of prescribed people and bodies

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/blowing-the-whistle-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies--2/whistleblowing-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies>

Policy updating and reviewing

We monitor our policies on an ongoing basis to ensure that they remain fit for purpose and responsive.

All policies relating to AQ will be updated on an 18-month cycle or sooner as required. Earlier policy updates will take place in response to any regulatory change, resulting legislation or feedback received, that dictates the need to conduct an earlier review.

Our policy review process also forms part of AQ's continuous improvement monitoring and self-assessment arrangements.



Policy version and owner

Version	February 2025
Policy review date	August 2026
Policy owner	Responsible Officer
Regulatory references	Condition A8: Malpractice and maladministration Condition A5: Conflict of Interest Condition A6: Governing body accountability Whistleblowing links to the above Conditions in relation to Awarding Organisations