

Whistleblowing Policy

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About Us

Access Further Education Ltd ('The College') has subsidiary companies, trading names and trading partnerships through which it operates. The trading names and partnerships might have their own names or brands, but the legal entity for the purpose of this policy is Access Further Education Ltd. Trading subsidiaries, trading names and trading partnerships include Access Creative College ('ACC'), Access Industry ('AI') and Access Sport ('AS'). The dBs Institute (DBS Music UK Holdings and its subsidiaries), whilst a separate legal entity, shares common Directorships with the College.

1. Purpose

Here at the College, we're committed to carrying out our business in a safe, honest and ethical way. Part of that is creating an open and supportive working environment where colleagues feel able to speak up about any suspected wrongdoing. This Policy details our process for dealing with whistleblowing. This policy applies to all colleagues and anyone working with us.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees of the College. It also applies to agency and freelance workers, consultants and the self-employed.

3. What is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the term used when a colleague passes on information about wrongdoing. If you're concerned that any of the things below are happening, have happened or are likely to happen, we encourage you to raise this as soon as possible:

- Any bribery, fraud or other criminal offence
- A miscarriage of justice
- A risk to health and safety
- A risk or actual damage to the environment
- A breach of any other legal or professional obligation.
- you believe someone is covering up wrongdoing

We particularly want our people to report if they have any concerns that modern slavery is taking place within our organisation, the suppliers and agencies we work with, or within our local communities so that these matters can be investigated by the proper authorities.

You don't need to have any proof that any of these things are happening. As long as you have a reasonable belief, you should report your concerns. But if we find that you've knowingly made a false allegation, we may deal with this under the Disciplinary and Conduct Policy which you can find on our Policy Portal.

If you have become aware of any practices that could compromise the integrity and security of examinations, please refer to the Whistleblowing Policy (Exams) which you can find on our Policy Portal.

If you've got a personal complaint or concern, like about how you're being treated at work, this isn't a whistleblowing matter. It would be covered under the Grievance Policy and Procedure which you can find on our Policy Portal.

If you have concerns about bullying or harassment we urge you to report it to your line manager. If your concern about bullying and harassment relates to your line manager, please contact their manager. If you need confirmation of who to report to, please contact our People Services Team at people@accesscreative.ac.uk for advice.

4. Protection for whistleblowing

If you've reported a reasonable belief that any of the things above are happening, then don't worry – we won't allow you to be treated badly because of it.

If you find out that a colleague has blown the whistle, you must not treat them badly because of it. If we think you

might have done, we'll need to investigate, and it may mean disciplinary action against you. And you might also be at risk of being found personally liable for your behaviour.

5. Confidentiality

If you like, we'll make sure that we take steps to protect your identity, as far as we reasonably can. If you ask us to treat things confidentially, we won't disclose your identity without your consent, unless we have to in order to look into your complaint or if it's required by law.

6. Blowing the whistle

If you need to raise a concern, here's how you can go about doing it:

You can raise the issue with your line manager. But if your line manager's involved in the activity you have concerns about, or you don't feel able to speak to them, talk to another manager instead. You can raise things either in person or write them a letter. Your letter needs to include what your concern is, why you think it's true and any other details you can give us. Remember to include your contact details. We may need to get in touch to talk about your concerns or to get some more details.

You can raise your concerns anonymously if you like and we'll take these seriously. But it may be difficult for us to do a proper investigation if we can't talk to you about other information we might need.

You can also utilise MyConfide which is a secure digital platform used by education providers to record, manage and investigate concerns relating to staff conduct and safeguarding. The system is designed to provide a safe and confidential way to raise concerns.

7. Other internal contacts

If you feel like you can't raise the matter with a manager in your business area, you can contact Jason Beaumont, CEO, at jason.beaumont@accesscreative.ac.uk

8. External contacts

We'd really like you to raise any concerns internally first, to give us the chance to look into things. But you do have the option of reporting the matter to the Relevant Authority.

Depending on the type of concern you have, there are public bodies you can contact, such as

- HM Revenue and Customs 0800 788 887
- Department for Education <https://form.education.gov.uk/>
- ESFA complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk
- Competition and Markets Authority 020 3738 6556 or at whistleblower@cma.gov.uk
- Health and Safety Executive <https://www.hse.gov.uk/>
- Environment Agency 03708 506 506 or at enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk
- Serious Fraud Office 0300 123 2040 or at <https://www.sfo.gov.uk/contact-us/>.
- NSPCC 0800 028 0285 or at help@ncpcc.org.uk

9. Media

Just to remind you that it will very rarely if ever, be appropriate to raise a whistleblowing concern directly to the media. And you should never tell the media about any concern that you've already raised which is being investigated.

10. Outcomes

Just so you know, because we need to keep things confidential, we may not be able to tell you about any investigation we do or action we take about the issue you've told us about. But wherever we can, we'll try to let you know the outcome. We trust that you'll treat any information we do give you as confidential.

11. If you need further support

If you have any further questions about whistleblowing, speak to your manager. If managers receive information about a whistleblowing concern they can contact People Services.

Remember that we have an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) that can be accessed and utilised 24 hours a day. Details of how you can access it here

- Website: <https://wisdom.healthassured.org/login> (The organisational client code is MHA021394) there is also a Wisdom app available for Apple or Android smartphones available in the Apple store or Google Play store.
- Email: counsellingadvice@healthassured.co.uk
- Phone: 0800 028 0199.

12. Related Policies

All our policies can be found on our Policy Portal.

Whistleblowing Policy (Exams)

Grievance Policy and Procedure

Safeguarding, Child Protection and Prevent Policy

Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy and Procedure

Group Health & Safety Policy

ACC Prevention of Fraud and Bribery Act

Disciplinary and Conduct Policy