

UNIVERSITY OF BRIGHTON

Whistleblowing policy

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This procedure is for use in cases where a member of staff or a student wishes to raise a concern about any aspect of the work or operation of the University other than a personal grievance. Allegations of injustice or discrimination suffered by an individual should be pursued through the Staff Grievance Procedure or the Student Complaints Procedure.
- 1.2 The University, as a public body, has a duty to conduct its affairs in a responsible and transparent way, and to take into account both the requirements of its funding bodies (especially the Higher Education Funding Council for England) and the general expectations which society has of public bodies, which are set out in the reports of the Committee on Standards in Public Life. The University has also adopted a Statement of Shared Values, which stresses the need for the utmost integrity and accountability on the part of those chosen to manage the University's affairs.
- 1.3 Members of the University community should feel able to raise any serious concern about financial or constitutional malpractice without feeling that their position in the institution will be jeopardised. The normal way of raising concerns is through the University's management structure (heads of school or department, or deans of faculty, or other line managers). A member of the University may, if this route seems inappropriate, approach a more senior manager, or a trade union or Students Union representative, or follow the steps described below.

2 Procedures

- 2.1 Allegations about financial malpractice, including concerns about misuse of the University's assets or resources, should normally be made to the Head of Internal Audit. The Head of Internal Audit will investigate the matter, and will prepare a report for the Deputy Director (as line manager for the Head of Internal Audit), the Director, and the Chairman of the Audit Committee. If, for any reason, the person raising the concern considers it inappropriate to refer the matter to the Head of Internal Audit, then they may approach any of the officers named in paragraph 2.2 below.
- 2.2 Allegations about other issues, including for example the behaviour of a senior member of University staff or a member of the Board of Governors, or the propriety of committee decisions, should normally be made to the Deputy Director and Clerk to the Board of Governors. If the allegation concerns the Deputy Director, or the complainant considers it inappropriate to refer the matter to the Deputy Director, then the allegation may be made to the Director, or to the Chairman of the Board of Governors. If for any reason none of these individuals is deemed to be appropriate, the matter should be raised with the Chairman of the Audit Committee.
- 2.3 The person with whom an allegation is raised will make a record of its receipt, and of the subsequent action taken. He or she will normally arrange for an investigation to be carried out, and for a report to be prepared. The report of the investigation will be made to the Director, or if the complaint concerns the Director, to the Chairman of the Board of Governors. If the person with whom the allegation is raised judges that the allegation is wholly without substance or merit, then he or she may dismiss the allegation without an investigation. In such instances, the complainant will be so

informed, and will be given the opportunity to re-make the allegation to another person.

- 2.3 Those receiving and considering reports of investigations into allegations of serious malpractice will consider what action is necessary and appropriate. In some instances, the allegations will be dismissed after investigation; in other instances, it may be necessary to instigate corrective action, to institute disciplinary proceedings, or to alert the police. The person or persons against whom any allegation is made must be informed of the allegation and the evidence supporting it and must be allowed to comment on the report. In all cases, the report of the investigation will also be considered by the Audit Committee, which will determine whether appropriate action has been taken, and whether changes to university policies, procedures or controls are required. The original complainant will be kept informed of the outcome of the complaint.
- 2.4 If an allegation or complaint cannot, for any reason, be satisfactorily examined and dealt with through these procedures, the Board of Governors has final responsibility for determining an alternative approach which preserves the spirit of the procedure. This may, for example, involve establishing a special committee of governors, or drawing upon external advice or arbitration.

3 Confidentiality

- 3.1 The identity of any person making an allegation will remain confidential to the person receiving it until a formal investigation is launched. Thereafter, the identity of the person making the allegation will be kept confidential, if requested, unless this is incompatible with a fair investigation (for example, it may be judged unfair to conceal the identity of the person making an allegation from the person about whom it is made).
- 3.2 The University encourages staff and students who have significant concerns to raise them internally by using these procedures. It is committed to act promptly and sensitively to investigate such allegations, and to take any necessary corrective action. It recognises, nevertheless, that in extreme cases, staff or students might feel it essential to involve an external authority (the HEFCE, the National Audit Office, or a member of parliament).
- 3.3 Provided the allegations have been made - internally or externally - lawfully, without malice and in the public interest, the University will seek to ensure that the position of the complainant in the University - as a member of staff or a student - is not disadvantaged as a result of the making of the allegation. The University will, however, take steps to defend itself and its members against defamatory statements or actions by any individual or group, and will seek appropriate redress.

Approved by Board of Governors, 1 May 1998