

Northern Regional College Raising Concerns Policy

Doc No. CBD 09

Issue	Document Title	Date of 1st Issue	Last Reviewed	Responsibility of
01	Raising Concerns Policy	May 2021		Head of Performance and Planning

This document can also be produced in alternative formats upon request.

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1. Introduction

The College is committed to the highest possible standards of openness and accountability in the delivery of education, training and business services. Raising a concern (also known as whistleblowing) relates to notifying the College about danger, wrongdoing or illegality that affects others (e.g. staff, students, taxpayers, customers, or members of the public).

2. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear information and to reassure staff, students and others that they can raise genuine concerns about potential wrongdoing in confidence, through a clear internal process and without putting their position at risk.

Being made aware of concerns enables the College to address any suspected wrong-doing as early as possible and to take timely actions to deal with any risks or weaknesses identified, promote accountability and reduce risks for our staff and service users.

This policy also aims to promote a culture in the College whereby staff, students and others have the confidence to raise concerns openly, and where those concerns are dealt with in line with the guidance from NIAO to public bodies.

This document is for members of staff, students and members of the public who want to raise concerns. Those who raise a concern should have an honest belief that wrongdoing has occurred. Where it is found that someone has deliberately made false or vexatious accusations, the College may invoke disciplinary action and/or pass the matter to the relevant authority.

3. Raising Concern Policy Statement

It is the College's policy to:

- encourage staff, students and others to raise issues of concern;
- have clear procedures that enable staff, students and others to raise genuine concerns.
- deal with concerns raised in a timely, proportionate and confidential manner.
- ensure that concerns raised are taken seriously.
- ensure that any fact-finding and/or investigations follow the approved procedure and that reports and decisions are documented.

- maintain a register of concerns raised (and actions taken) for monitoring by the College Audit & Risk Committee and Sponsor Department in line with statutory requirements

4. Types of Concern

This policy relates to concerns about suspected malpractice, risk, abuse or wrongdoing in the College. Types of concerns could include, but are not restricted to:

- risk to children and/or vulnerable adults
- unlawful conduct
- abuse of public funds
- threat to health and safety
- failing to safeguard personal and/or sensitive information
- a breach of the employee Code of Conduct.

Personal grievances or dissatisfaction in respect of employment issues are not dealt with by this policy and its procedures unless the concern raised is in the public interest. This policy does not deal with complaints about the College's performance or standards of service and any issues of this nature will be dealt with via the Complaints Policy.

5. How to raise a concern

5.1. Informally

Staff are encouraged to raise any concerns in the first instance with their line manager or with the relevant senior manager. Where appropriate, the manager will carry out an informal investigation and report back.

5.2. Formal disclosure

If a member of staff feels unable to raise a concern with their line manager/the relevant senior manager, or they are dissatisfied with the informal outcome, the concern should be raised formally by contacting RaisingConcernsChampion@nrc.ac.uk

Members of the public and students wishing to raise concerns should also email Raisingconcernschampion@nrc.ac.uk

Where there is a belief that the Policy has not been followed and/or there is an ongoing concern, the matter should be brought to the attention of the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee via the Secretary to the Governing Body through gbsecretary@nrc.ac.uk .

5.3. Raising Concerns Externally

In circumstances where internal processes have not yielded the outcome and response anticipated, public interest disclosure can be made directly to:

Sponsor department – Department for the Economy - raising.concerns@economy-ni.gov.uk – this should be the first and only referral point if someone does not wish to raise a matter internally. If the concern raised is more appropriate to another body, DfE will ensure that the concern is forwarded to that body and advise the correspondent.

6. Confidentiality

If you want to raise the matter in confidence, please say so at the outset so that appropriate arrangements can be made. Confidentiality will be protected as far as possible. However, it may not always be feasible to maintain confidentiality if this impedes the fact-finding investigation.

If you are unsure whether or how to raise a concern or you want confidential advice at any stage, you may contact the independent organisation Protect. Further information is available at www.protect-advice.org.uk Telephone 02031172520.

7. Links to other Documents

Internal Documents:

- SOP for Raising Concerns will need the link)
- [Compliments and Complaints Policy](#)
- [Anti Fraud Policy](#)
- [Grievance Policy](#)
- Code of Conduct (TBC)
- [Policy for Staff Malpractice](#)
- [Student Malpractice Policy](#)

External Documents

- [NIAO – Raising Concerns – a good practice guide for the NI public sector.](#)

(This section is not included in the final version)

D1. Working Group: details of staff who were involved in the development of this document:

Name	Position
Deborah Kerr	Head of Performance, Planning & MIS
Mel Higgins	Chief Operating Officer
Jenny Small	VP for Performance and Development
Sean Laverty	Head of Finance, Risk and Governance

D2. Consultation: details of staff, external groups or external organisations who were consulted in the development of this document:

Please refer to Equality Screening Consultation Guidance.

Name	Organisation/Title	Date
Bill McCluggage	Chair of Audit & Risk Committee, Northern Regional College	9.11.20
Terri Scott	Principal & CEO, Northern Regional College	
DFE Governance Unit		24.02.21

D3. Approval Dates:

Details	Date Approved
Equality Screening (please refer to Equality Screening Guidance)	12.05.21
Quality Checked (please refer to Quality Checklist)	02.06.21
SLT	22.03.21
Governing Body (SLT to decide if PPS needs to go to Governing Body)	25.03.21

D4. Communication Plan:

Please provide details and dates as to how this document will be communicated, implemented and disseminated:

Action:	Action by:	Date:
Uploaded to Canvas	QM	18.06.21

D5. Document History (this format/layout to be updated)

N/A – New policy

Issue no. under review (Please see the front page)	Date of review: (Date)	Who was involved in reviewing the document? (Name/s)	Were changes made to the document after reviewing? (Yes or No)	If changes have been made, please provide brief details:	New Issue No.	If Yes, did the document need to go through consultation again? (Yes*/No)	If Yes, did the document need to be Equality Screened again? (Yes*/No)	If Yes, date those affected by document will be alerted of updated document: (Date)
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* If you answered 'Yes' in columns E or F, you must forward details of additional consultation and/or screening to the Equality Officer.