

Student Whistleblowing Policy

OELS is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity, accountability, and ethical behaviour. This Student Whistleblowing Policy provides a safe and confidential framework for reporting concerns about wrongdoing, misconduct, or illegal activities within the institution. By encouraging a culture of openness, we aim to ensure that all concerns are addressed promptly, fairly, and in line with our legal and ethical obligations.

1. About this Policy

1.1 OELS is committed to fostering a transparent and inclusive academic environment where students can raise concerns about wrongdoing or risks without fear of reprisal.

1.2 This policy applies to all students, including degree-seeking students, study-abroad participants, and students on short courses.

1.3 For personal academic or administrative issues (e.g., mark disputes), students should refer to the Student Appeals and Complaints Policy.

1.4 This policy aligns with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA), which protects individuals raising genuine concerns in the public interest.

2. What is Whistleblowing?

2.1 Whistleblowing is when a student reports information they genuinely believe is in the public interest and relates to:

- Criminal activity.
- Non-compliance with legal or regulatory obligations.
- Academic or professional malpractice (e.g., research misconduct).
- Health and safety risks.
- Environmental harm.
- Concealment of any of the above.

2.2 Concerns unrelated to whistleblowing (e.g., personal academic grievances) should follow other policies, such as the Appeals and Complaints Policy.

2.3 Examples of whistleblowing concerns include:

- Fraud or financial misconduct.
- Data protection breaches.
- Mismanagement of resources.

2.4 Examples and Scenarios:

- **Example 1:** A student discovers falsified research data being submitted for an assessment and reports this concern.

- **Example 2:** A student observes unethical practices during a business simulation exercise, such as deliberately inflating financial projections to mislead peers or instructors about the team's performance and decides to raise the issue.
- **Example 3:** A student becomes aware of funds being misused by OELS and feels compelled to report it anonymously.

3. How to Raise a Concern

3.1 Students should report concerns promptly. They can speak with the Dean, the Academic Programmes Director, or the OELS Director in the first instance.

3.2 Alternatively, students can contact the Student Whistleblowing Officer via email at quality@oels.co.uk or submit concerns confidentially through the online report form: <https://forms.office.com/e/j7Tfg61KcY>

3.3 What Happens After a Concern is Raised:

- Upon receiving a report, the Whistleblowing Officer will acknowledge receipt within five working days.
- The Whistleblowing Officer may request to meet the student to discuss the concern. Students may bring a companion for support.
- A preliminary assessment will determine the need for a full investigation, and the student will be informed of next steps.
- Investigations will be conducted as promptly as possible, with updates provided to the whistleblower at key stages.
- At the conclusion of the investigation, the student will be informed of the outcome, subject to confidentiality constraints.

4. Confidentiality and Anonymity

4.1 While students are encouraged to identify themselves, anonymous reports will be reviewed by the Student Whistleblowing Officer at OELS's discretion based on the:

- Seriousness of the issue.
- Availability of evidence.

4.2 Confidentiality will be maintained unless legal disclosure is necessary for the investigation.

4.3 Students raising genuine concerns in good faith will be supported and protected from retaliation.

5. Protection for Whistleblowers

5.1 Students who raise concerns in good faith will not face academic disadvantage or retaliation.

5.2 Retaliation or harassment against whistleblowers is prohibited and may lead to disciplinary action.

5.3 Malicious or knowingly false reports may result in disciplinary measures.

6. Contacts

Student Whistleblowing Officer

Ms Joanne Roxburgh, Room 405, quality@oels.co.uk

Independent Support

Protect Helpline: +44 (0) 20 3117 2520

Website: <https://protect-advice.org.uk/>

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