

THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON

PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE POLICY STATEMENT AND GUIDELINES

Introduction

The Board of Governors of the University of Wolverhampton wishes to ensure that at all times the business of the University is conducted with probity. In recognition of this, and having regard to the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, the Board of Governors has approved the publication of this statement and guide, which is applicable to members of the Board of Governors, staff and students of the University.

Statement

When someone connected with an organisation does something illegal or improper in connection with the business of that organisation, it is his/her colleagues who are often the first to know or suspect that something improper is, or has been going on. There is, however, a natural reluctance for some people to voice their concerns, whether this is because of a feeling that there is insufficient evidence or from fears that such “whistleblowing” may have unforeseen and/or unfortunate repercussions.

The Board of Governors of the University of Wolverhampton will not condone any University business activity that is illegal or improper, whether this is done by any individual member of the Board, senior manager, member of staff or student of the University, or any of its suppliers or contractors. The Board encourages staff and students of the University to report any suspected or actual illegal or improper activity.

What sorts of things are covered by this guidance?

It is impossible to provide an exhaustive list of the types of activities that might fall within the scope of this guidance, but it would certainly include acts of fraud, theft, endangering the health and safety of staff, students and members of the public. It may also encompass acts, which are damaging to the environment, deliberate failure to comply with legal obligations, and may also include instances of sexual impropriety. The rule of thumb is to report any suspicions of misconduct or malpractice connected with University business, in accordance with the paragraph below. Whilst the University's Board of Governors encourages such reporting, any instance of a report which is made maliciously or for personal gain, will of itself be regarded as a misconduct in accordance with the University's disciplinary procedures.

Who do I report to?

This guidance does not supplant the established procedures such as the generic formal complaints procedures; the grievance procedure; or the policies on discrimination, harassment or bullying. Any notification should preferably be in writing, and for this purpose the formal complaints procedure forms may be used to initiate a report or suspicion of misconduct/malpractice. Such reports should normally be submitted to an appropriate line manager, but the Board of Governors acknowledge that this may, in some instances, be considered inappropriate and, in such instances, the report may be sent in confidence to the Clerk to the Board of Governors (Mr A W Lee), Room MA131, University of Wolverhampton, Wulfruna Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1SB.

If, following such reporting there remains a concern or dissatisfaction with the process of enquiry or the outcome, you may submit a further written report in confidence to the Chairman of the Board of Governors in a sealed envelope submitted care of the Clerk to the Board at the above address.

Upon receipt of such a report, the Chairman in his absolute discretion shall decide the course of action to take and the form of response to you.

The Board of Governors do not expect you to have absolute proof of any misconduct or malpractice, but do expect you to be able to show reasonable grounds for your suspicions, and to co-operate, where necessary, in any investigations which ensue.

How confidential is this process?

The University will endeavour to keep the identity of any reporter confidential, but this cannot be guaranteed. For example, if a criminal investigation ensues, you may be called as a witness in any proceedings. The University will, however, seek to protect you from any subsequent victimisation.

How will the matter be investigated?

Receipt of your report will be acknowledged as soon as possible, and appropriate investigations will be undertaken. The nature of the investigations will depend upon the circumstances of the matter being reported upon, and these may involve, for example, Senior University Managers, the Internal Audit Service, External Auditors, Police or other external agencies. You will be provided with feedback (so far as the law permits) upon completion of the investigation.

The Board of Governors will undertake a periodic review of the effectiveness of these guidance notes, and will welcome any suggestions for modification or improvement.

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