



Whistleblowing Policy

Introduction

George Watson's College ("The School") is committed to acting at all times with honesty and integrity, in line with our School values. We expect all colleagues to maintain high standards in accordance with our Code of Conduct. However, all organisations face the risk of things going wrong from time to time, or of unknowingly harbouring illegal or unethical conduct. A culture of openness and accountability is essential in order to prevent such situations occurring and to address them when they do occur.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is:

- To encourage colleagues to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as appropriate, and that their confidentiality will be respected
- To provide colleagues with guidance as to how to raise those concerns
- To reassure colleagues that they should be able to raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

This policy does not form part of any contract of employment or other contract to provide services, and we may amend it at any time.

Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to all employees, consultants, self-employed contractors, casual workers, agency workers, volunteers and interns.

Who is responsible for this policy?

The Governing Council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy, and for reviewing the effectiveness of actions taken in response to concerns raised under this policy.

The Principal is responsible for ensuring actions are taken in response to concerns raised under this policy and for informing the Governing Council of issues, as appropriate.

The Head of Human Resources is our designated Whistleblowing Officer who has day-to-day operational responsibility for this policy and you should refer any questions about this policy to them in the first instance. The Head of Human Resources must ensure that regular and appropriate training is provided to all managers and other colleagues who may deal with concerns or investigations under this policy.

All colleagues are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they use it to disclose any suspected danger or wrongdoing. colleagues are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved. Comments, suggestions and queries should be addressed to the Head of Human Resources.

What is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include:

- criminal activity
- failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements;
- miscarriages of justice
- danger to health and safety
- damage to the environment
- bribery under our Anti-Bribery Policy
- facilitating tax evasion
- financial fraud or mismanagement
- breach of our internal policies and procedures including our Code of Conduct
- conduct likely to damage our reputation or financial wellbeing
- unauthorised disclosure of confidential information
- negligence
- any concerns you might have in relation to child protection; or
- the deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.

A **whistleblower** is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to any of the above. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of our activities (a **whistleblowing concern**) you should report it under this policy.

This policy should not be used for complaints relating to your own personal circumstances, such as the way you have been treated at work. In those cases you should use the [Grievance Procedure](#) or [Dignity and Respect Policy](#) as appropriate.

If a complaint relates to your own personal circumstances but you also have wider concerns regarding one of the areas set out above (for example, a breach of our internal policies), you should discuss with the Head of Human Resources which route is the most appropriate.

If you are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy you should seek advice from the Head of Human Resources whose contact details are in Annex 1.

Raising a whistleblowing concern

We hope that in many cases you will be able to raise any concerns with your line manager/Head of Department or the Head of Human Resources. You may tell them in person or put the matter in writing if you prefer. They may be able to agree on a way of resolving your concern quickly and effectively. In some cases they may refer the matter to the Chief Operating Officer or the Principal.

However, where the matter is more serious, or you feel that your line manager/Head of Department or the Head of Human Resources has not addressed your concern, or you prefer not to raise it with them for any reason, you should contact one of the following:

- the Chief Operating Officer, or,
- the Principal, or,
- if the concern is regarding the Principal, to the Chair of the Governing Council.

Contact details are set out in Annex 1.

Where the Principal has a whistleblowing concern to raise this should be raised with the Merchant Company Education Board.

We will arrange a meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss your concern. You may bring a colleague or union representative to any meetings under this policy. Your companion must respect the confidentiality of your disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

We will take down a written summary of your concern and provide you with a copy after the meeting. We will also aim to give you an indication of how we propose to deal with the matter.

Confidentiality

We hope that colleagues will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. However, if you want to raise your concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret. If it is necessary for anyone investigating your concern to know your identity, we will discuss this with you.

We do not encourage colleagues to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if we cannot obtain further information from you. It is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible. Whistleblowers who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should come forward to the Head of Human Resources or one of the other contact points listed above and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality. If you are in any doubt you can seek advice from Protect, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are in Annex 1.

Investigation and outcome

Once you have raised a concern, we will carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation. We will inform you of the outcome of our assessment. You may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information.

In some cases we may appoint an investigator or team of investigators including colleagues with relevant experience of investigations or specialist knowledge of the subject matter. The investigator(s) may make recommendations for change to enable us to minimise the risk of future wrongdoing. We reserve the right to appoint an independent external investigator, if we consider this to be appropriate in the circumstances.

We will aim to keep you informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent us giving you specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. You should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.

If we conclude that a whistleblower has made false allegations maliciously, the whistleblower will be subject to disciplinary action.

If you are not satisfied

While we cannot always guarantee the outcome you are seeking, we will try to deal with your concern fairly and in an appropriate way. By using this policy you can help us to achieve this.

If you are not happy with the way in which your concern has been handled, you can raise it with the Principal. Alternatively, where the Principal has been directly involved to date, you may contact the Chair of the Governing Council. Contact details are set out in Annex 1.

External disclosures

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases you should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.

The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body such as a regulator. It will very rarely, if ever, be appropriate to alert the media. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. The independent whistleblowing charity, [Protect](#), operates a confidential helpline. They also have a list of prescribed regulators for reporting certain types of concern. Their contact details are set out in Annex 1. You may also raise a concern to [GTCS](#) regarding a matter which is within their remit.

Whistleblowing concerns usually relate to the conduct of our colleagues, but they may sometimes relate to the actions of a third party, such as a contractor (e.g. cleaning or catering), supplier or service provider. In some circumstances the law will protect you if you raise the matter with the third party directly. However, we encourage you to report such concerns internally first. You should contact your line manager/Head of Department or the Head of Human Resources or one of the other key contacts set out above for guidance.

Protection and support for whistleblowers

It is understandable that whistleblowers are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. We aim to encourage openness and will support colleagues who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

Whistleblowers must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern. Detrimental treatment includes dismissal, disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. If you believe that you have suffered any such treatment, you should inform the Head of Human Resources immediately. If the matter is not remedied you should raise it formally using our [Grievance Procedure](#).

You must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. If you are involved in such conduct you may be subject to disciplinary action.

Our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is available to provide additional support for anyone raising concerns under this policy. Details of this can be found at Annex 1.

Relevant Legislation

The following legislation is relevant in relation to the School's Whistleblowing Policy:

- The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998

Other Relevant Policies and Document

Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers

Dignity and Respect Policy

Disciplinary Policy and Procedures

Grievance Policy and Procedures

Effective Date

The Whistleblowing Policy is effective from **June 2024**. This policy supersedes any previous policies or procedures relating to whistleblowing.

Approval and Review

The Whistleblowing Policy has been approved by the Governing Council, following endorsement by the Principal's Leadership Team and ICE Committee.

The School will regularly review this policy, and any associated procedures, to ensure that it continues to comply with current employment legislation and the School's operational needs. In line with the HR policy review schedule agreed with the ICE Committee, a policy review will take place at least every two years, or as soon as practicable after any change of relevant legislation.

Date of next review: Summer 2026

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ANNEX 1

Contacts

Whistleblowing Officer - Head of Human Resources	Jane Robinson 0130 446 6000 J.Robinson@gwc.org.uk
Principal	Melvyn Roffe 0131 446 6000 M.Roffe@gwc.org.uk
Chief Operating Officer	Su Breadner 0131 446 6010 S.Breadner@gwc.org.uk
Chair of the Governing Council	Don Young D.Young@gwc.org.uk
Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)	Your Care Wellbeing Platform 0800 023 9324 vivup.co.uk
Protect (Independent whistleblowing charity)	Helpline: 0203 117 2520 E-mail: info@protect-advice.org.uk Website: https://protect-advice.org.uk/contact-protect-advice-line/