



# **Regents Park Community College**

## **Exams**

### **Whistleblowing Procedure**

**Policy updated: April 2023**

**Policy to be reviewed: April 2024**

**Non-Statutory**

## Introduction

Whistleblowing Regents Park Community College is encouraged, not penalised, and staff are made aware that they have a duty to report any concerns they have about the conduct of examinations.

The Head of Centre and Governing Board at Regents Park aim to create and maintain an approach to examinations that reflects an ethical culture and encourages staff and students to be aware of and report practices that could compromise the integrity and security of examinations.

In compliance with section 5.11 of the JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres**, Regents Park will:

- take all reasonable steps to prevent the occurrence of any malpractice (which includes maladministration) before, during and after assessments have taken place
- inform the awarding body **immediately** of any alleged, suspected or actual incidents of malpractice or maladministration, involving a candidate or a member of staff, by completing the appropriate documentation
- as required by an awarding body, gather evidence of any instances of alleged or suspected malpractice (which includes maladministration) in accordance with the JCQ publication **Suspected Malpractice: Policies and Procedures** and provide such information and advice as the awarding body may reasonably require

This policy requirement has been added within **General Regulations for Approved Centres** in response to the recommendations within the report of the Independent Commission on Examination Malpractice.

This policy sets out the whistleblowing procedures at Regents Park. Regents Park Senior Leadership and staff follow the [Whistleblowing Policy](#) produced by Southampton City Council

This policy also sets out the principles which allow members of centre staff and students to feel confident in reporting instances of actual, alleged or suspected malpractice to relevant members of senior leadership.

## Purpose of the policy

This policy:

- encourages individuals to raise concerns, which will be fully investigated by appropriately trained and experienced individuals
- identifies how to report concerns
- explains how such concerns will be investigated and sets expectations regarding the reporting of outcomes
- provides details of relevant bodies to whom concerns about wrongdoing can be reported, including awarding organisations and regulators
- includes a commitment to do everything reasonable to protect the reporter's identity, if requested
- sets out how those raising concerns will be supported.

This policy also details the steps that could be taken by an individual involved in the management, administration and/or conducting of examinations if Regents Park fails to comply with its obligation to report any alleged, suspected or actual incidents of malpractice or maladministration.

## **Guidance in relation to suspected malpractice in examinations and assessments**

This guidance is principally for centre staff who may witness malpractice in examinations and assessments and are unsure about what action to take. The security and integrity of examinations and assessments is essential if public confidence in qualifications is to be maintained. The approach taken by the awarding bodies to malpractice is set out in the JCQ Suspected Malpractice document.

If the person raising the issue is a worker, this will be considered as whistleblowing. This includes agency staff and contractors.

### **Reporting**

If a member of centre staff involved in the management, administration and/or conducting of examinations (such as exams officer, exams assistant or invigilator), a student or a member of the public (such as a parent/carer) has a concern or reason to believe that malpractice has or will occur in an examination or assessment, concerns should normally be raised initially with the Headteacher.

However, there may be times when it may be more appropriate to refer the issue direct to the Governing Board, most often when the allegation is against the Head of Centre.

### **Examples of malpractice**

In addition to the centre wide Whistleblowing Policy, this exams-specific policy, includes reference to exams-related breaches including, but not limited to, the following:

- Failure to comply with exam regulations as set out by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) and its awarding bodies
- A security breach of the examination paper
- Conduct of centre staff which undermines the integrity of the examination
- Unfair treatment of candidates by either giving an advantage to a candidate/group of candidates (e.g. by permitting a candidate an access arrangement which is not supported by appropriate evidence), or disadvantaging candidates by not providing access to the appropriate conditions (providing a 'level playing field')
- Possible fraud and corruption (e.g. accessing the exam paper prior to the exam to aid teaching and learning)
- Abuse of authority (e.g. the head of centre/members of the senior leadership team overriding JCQ and awarding body regulations)
- Other conduct which may be interpreted as malpractice/maladministration

### **Whistleblowing procedure**

If the individual does not feel safe raising the issue/reporting malpractice within the centre, or they have done so and are concerned that no action has been taken, that individual could consider making their disclosure to a malpractice expert at the awarding body for the qualification where malpractice is suspected. Examination centres are required by the JCQ Suspected Malpractice document to refer malpractice to the appropriate awarding body.

If you work for an examination centre or are involved in examinations or assessments and you witness activity that you are concerned may be malpractice, you should act upon it. It is likely that the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) offers you legal protection from being dismissed or penalised for raising certain serious concerns ('blowing the whistle'). Given the importance of the integrity of the qualifications system, suspected malpractice is likely to be a serious concern.

### **Who do you talk to and what happens if you contact the awarding body?**

Each awarding body has staff who deal with malpractice. You can talk to them in confidence and explain your concerns. However, as awarding bodies are not prescribed bodies as defined by the PIDA they cannot promise you the legal protections detailed in PIDA.

The awarding body will:

- Understand the difficult position that you are in;
- Have experience of similar situations; **and**
- Explain the importance of supporting evidence and the sort of evidence that might help in your particular case.

The awarding body will make every effort to protect your identity, if that is what you wish, unless legally obliged to release it (for example, in the course of a police investigation). Please be aware that it will not be possible for the awarding body to provide you with a report on the findings or outcome of any investigation that may ensue.

If you do not feel safe raising the matter within the centre, or you have done so and are concerned that no action has been taken, you could consider making your disclosure to a “prescribed person” – which includes Ofqual and Qualifications Wales (the regulators in England and Wales respectively). The full list of prescribed persons and bodies are detailed in this guidance: GovUK: Blowing the whistle a list of prescribed people and bodies.

In order to investigate concerns effectively, the awarding body should be provided with as much information as possible/is relevant, which may include:

- The qualifications and subjects involved
- The centre involved
- The names of staff/candidates involved
- The regulations breached/specific nature of suspected malpractice
- When and where the suspected malpractice occurred
- Whether multiple examination series are affected
- If the issue has been reported to the centre and what the outcome was
- How the issue became apparent

Members of the public are not protected by PIDA, but the awarding body will make every effort to protect their identity if that is what they wish, unless the awarding body is legally obliged to release it.

Alternatively, a worker could consider making a disclosure to Ofqual as a prescribed body for whistleblowing to raise a concern about wrongdoing, risk or malpractice.

### **Anonymity**

In some circumstances, the whistleblower might find it difficult to raise concerns with the nominated member of the senior leadership team. If a concern is raised anonymously, the issue may not be able to be taken further if insufficient information has been provided. In such instances, and if appropriate, the allegation may be disclosed to a union representative, who could then be required to report the concern without disclosing its source. Alternatively, whistleblowers or others with

concerns about potential malpractice can report the matter direct to Ofqual, who is identified as a 'prescribed body'. Awarding organisations are not prescribed bodies under whistleblowing legislation; however, awarding organisation investigation teams do give those reporting concerns the opportunity for anonymity.

A whistleblower can give his/her name but may also request confidentiality; the person receiving the information should make every effort to protect the identity of the whistleblower.

## Students

Students at Regents Park are made to feel comfortable discussing/reporting malpractice issues of which they are aware. The regulations surrounding their assessments, and wider academic integrity, will be reiterated to students who are undertaking, or who are about to undertake, their courses of study.

Which awarding body is contacted will depend on the qualification where malpractice is suspected. You can contact a malpractice expert within the specific awarding body as shown below:

AQA	<a href="mailto:Irregularities@aqa.org.uk">Irregularities@aqa.org.uk</a>	0161 958 3736
CCEA	<a href="mailto:malpractice@ccea.org.uk">malpractice@ccea.org.uk</a>	028 90 261200 ext 2203
City & Guilds	<a href="mailto:investigationandcompliance@cityandguilds.com">investigationandcompliance@cityandguilds.com</a>	020 7294 2775
Pearson	<a href="mailto:pqsmalpractice@pearson.com">pqsmalpractice@pearson.com</a>	020 7190445
OCR	<a href="mailto:malpractice@ocr.org.uk">malpractice@ocr.org.uk</a>	01223 553998
WJEC	<a href="mailto:malpractice@wjec.co.uk">malpractice@wjec.co.uk</a>	029 20265448
NCFE	<a href="mailto:CustomerCompliance@ncfe.org.uk">CustomerCompliance@ncfe.org.uk</a>	0191 2408835

You may find the following websites useful:

JCQ	<a href="https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/malpractice">https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/malpractice</a>
Public Concern at Work	<a href="https://www.badcreditloans.co.uk/">https://www.badcreditloans.co.uk/</a>
Ofqual	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ofquals-whistleblowing-policy/">https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ofquals-whistleblowing-policy/</a>