



Public Interest Disclosure Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** Norland's policy on raising concerns and the reporting of malpractice, the Public Interest Disclosure Policy (sometimes known as "whistleblowing"), respects the current legal requirements in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA) including the 2020 Information Commissioner's Office [guidance](#) relating to this Act. The operation of this policy is the responsibility of the Principal who will inform the Chair of the Audit Committee if the policy is invoked.
- 1.2** There is a separate policy available in staff handbook for staff; this policy relates to all other stakeholders – students, clients, placements, families and any other interested parties.
- 1.3** In line with public bodies, Norland has a duty to conduct its affairs in a responsible way. It is committed to taking into account both the requirements of the regulatory bodies and the [Seven Principles of Public Life \(the Nolan principles\)](#) that emerged from the Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life 1995 (the Nolan Committee). In addition, Norland is committed to the principles of academic freedom and the highest possible standards of openness, quality and accountability. In line with these commitments, Norland encourages any member of the Norland community who has serious concerns about any aspect of Norland's work to come forward and voice those concerns. The proper reporting of concerns will maintain and enhance quality and ensure accountability.
- 1.4** Where someone, irrespective of their relationship with Norland, has serious concerns about perceived irregularities in the governance, the running of Norland or the activities of staff or students within Norland, they should be able to raise those concerns without fear of victimisation or harassment, or of a detrimental effect on their academic results or the nature of their relationship with Norland. Norland will treat all such complaints seriously.
- 1.5** This policy outlines a process whereby legitimate concerns can be raised without fear of victimisation or being placed in a moral dilemma with the route of public disclosure as the sole means of action. It provides an opportunity for those concerns to be investigated and for appropriate action to be taken to ensure that the matter is resolved effectively within Norland wherever possible. Legitimate concerns should be raised if they are in the interests of Norland, staff, students or the public.
- 1.6** This policy is not intended to replace the existing Student Complaints, Complaints Procedure for External Stakeholders or Academic Appeals Procedures. It is intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures.
- 1.7** Examples of malpractice or serious concerns covered by this policy are:



- an offence or breach of any statutory instrument or legal obligation;
- academic or professional malpractice;
- abrogation of appropriate procedures;
- improper or unauthorised use of public or other funds;
- fraud;
- financial irregularity;
- dishonesty;
- malpractice;
- corruption;
- bribery;
- unethical conduct;
- miscarriage of justice;
- danger to the health or safety of any individual or the environment;
- the deliberate concealing of information about the above.

1.8 Generally, concerns are likely to involve something which may be unlawful, or which may be contrary to Norland's policies, or which falls below established standards or practice, or which amounts to unethical or improper conduct.

1.9 Concerns should be raised in the first instance either in writing or in person with the Principal. If the concern relates to the Principal, the concern should be raised with the Chair of the Board of Directors. Norland will investigate, promptly and thoroughly, all concerns raised in accordance with this policy, and will take appropriate action. Norland's Head of Quality and Standards and Registrar has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy.

1.10 Any concern raised in accordance with this policy will be treated seriously. All steps will be taken to protect those raising concerns in good faith by maintaining confidentiality as far as is consistent with progressing the matter. Those who raise concerns through the agreed procedures will not be subject to disciplinary action providing that they do so lawfully, without malice, in the public interest and in a way which respects confidentiality.

1.11 Concerns should not be raised in order to pursue any private dispute, i.e. a matter which is not, in any way, connected to the business of Norland. Raising a false allegation will not necessarily lead to disciplinary action, if it can be demonstrated that the matter was raised in good faith; however, where there is evidence that an allegation has been made with malicious, vexatious or frivolous intent, the matter will be regarded as a serious disciplinary offence. Similarly, any victimisation of someone who raises a concern, or any attempts to deter them from raising a legitimate concern about malpractice, will be regarded as a serious disciplinary offence.

1.12 Where students of Norland undertake placements in other organisations, Norland has a responsibility to ensure, as part of its approval of the placement, either (a) that the placement organisation has appropriate whistleblowing policies in place, or (b) where this is not the case, that the organisation has seen and agreed to the principles and procedures outlined in Norland's own policy. If necessary, where a student feels unable to raise an issue with a placement supervisor or



employer due to fear of victimization or harassment, the matter may be raised through Norland's internal procedures, and Norland will then raise it with the organisation in question on the student's behalf.

- 1.13** In view of the protection afforded to those raising a bona fide concern, it is preferable that individual puts their name to any disclosure. The identity of the person raising the matter will be kept confidential, if so requested, for as long as possible, provided that this is compatible with a proper investigation. Anonymous complaints are not covered by this procedure, but may be reported, investigated or acted upon as the person receiving the complaint sees fit (including the use of this procedure), having regard to the seriousness of the issue raised, the credibility of the complaint, the prospects of being able to investigate the matter, and fairness to any individual mentioned in the complaint.

2. PROCESS

- 2.1** The person to whom the disclosure is made (normally the Principal or nominee) will normally consider the information and decide whether there is a prima facie case to answer. They will decide whether an investigation should be conducted and what form it should take. This will depend on the nature of the matter raised and may be
- investigated internally;
 - referred to the External Auditors;
 - the subject of independent enquiry.
- 2.2** Some matters, following investigation, will need to be referred to the relevant external authority, e.g. the Police or the Office for Students. If the person to whom the disclosure is made decides not to proceed with an investigation, the decision will be explained as fully as possible to the individual who raised the concern. It is then open to the individual to make the disclosure to the Chair of the Board or to the Chair of the Audit Committee.

3. INVESTIGATION

- 3.1** Any investigation will be conducted as sensitively and speedily as possible. The person raising the concern will be notified of the intended timetable for the investigation. The person to whom the disclosure is made may authorise an initial investigation to establish the relevant facts. The investigation may be conducted by the External Auditor in the case of a financial irregularity, or by another person. The investigator will report his or her findings to the person to whom the disclosure was made, who will then decide if there is a case to answer and what procedure to follow. This may include taking steps to set up a special internal independent investigation or reference to some external authority, such as the police, for further investigation. The decision may be that the matter would be more appropriately handled under existing procedures for grievance, bullying and harassment, complaints or discipline.



3.2 Where disclosure is made, the person or persons against whom it is made will be told at an early stage of the investigation, and of the evidence supporting it, and they will be allowed to respond.

3.3 The individual making the disclosure will be informed of what action is to be taken.

3.4 Should an investigation or referral lead the appropriate Norland authority to conclude there has been a breach of Norland policies or procedures, those responsible may, in addition to any civil or criminal proceedings, be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the disciplinary procedures of Norland.

4. REPORTING OF OUTCOMES

4.1 An official written record will be kept of each stage of the procedure

4.2 A report of all disclosures and subsequent actions taken will be made by the persons deciding on the issues. This record should be signed by the Investigating Officer and the person who made the disclosure, and dated. Where appropriate the formal record need not identify the person making the disclosure, but in such a case that person will be required to sign a document confirming that the complaint has been investigated. Such reports will normally be retained for at least five years. In all cases, a report of the outcome will be made to the Board of Directors.

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