**Whistleblowing policy**

**1.**  **ABOUT THIS POLICY**

**1.1**   St George’s, University of London (hereinafter the “University”) is committed to conducting our institutional business with honesty and integrity, and the University expects all staff and students to maintain high standards. 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.

**1.2**   The aims of this policy are:

**(a)**  To encourage staff or students 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.

**(b)**  To provide staff and students with guidance as to how to raise those concerns.

**(c)**  To reassure staff or students that they should be able to raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

**1.3**   This policy covers all employees, officers, consultants, contractors, casual workers, agency workers and students including, for the avoidance of doubt any students reading towards qualifications awarded by the University. St George’s University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust have their own whistleblowing procedure, details of which are available from them.

**1.4**   This policy takes account of the Whistleblowing Arrangements Code of Practice issued by Protect (formerly known as Public Concern at Work).

**1.5**   This policy does not form part of any employee’s contract of employment and the University may amend it at any time.

 **2.**  **PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR THE POLICY**

**2.1**   The Risk Audit and Efficiency Committee has overall responsibility for this policy, and for reviewing the effectiveness of actions taken in response to concerns raised under this policy.

**2.2**   The General Counsel has day-to-day operational responsibility for this policy under the direction of the Director of GLAS who through the General Counsel must ensure that all managers and other staff who may deal with concerns or investigations under this policy receive regular and appropriate training.

**2.3**   The General Counsel, under the direction of the Director of GLAS shall review this policy from a legal and operational perspective at least once a year and shall seek the approval of the Risk Audit and Efficiency Committee to any amendments following that review.

**2.4**   All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they use it to disclose any suspected concern (no matter how big or small), danger or wrongdoing. Staff 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 General Counsel.

**3.**  **WHAT IS WHISTLEBLOWING?**

**3.1**   **Whistleblowing** is the disclosure of information which relates to concerns, suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. It may include, but is not limited to:

**(a)**  safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults;

**(b)** criminal activity;

**(c)**  failure to comply with any legal or academic or professional obligation or regulatory requirements;

**(d)**  miscarriages of justice;

**(e)**  danger to health and safety;

**(f)**  damage to the environment;

**(g)**  bribery or facilitating tax evasion or aggressive tax avoidance contrary to our Anti-corruption Policy;

**(h)**  financial fraud or mismanagement;

**(i)**  breach of our internal policies and procedures and Code of Conduct;

**(j)**  conduct likely to damage our reputation or financial wellbeing or which is unethical

**(k)**  unauthorised disclosure of confidential information;

**(l)**  negligence;

**(m)**  breach of the Scheme and Statutes of St George’s, University of London or of any student regulations, internal policies and procedures or professional rules that do not have the force of law;

**(n)**  the deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.

This is a non-exhaustive list of the types of disclosures which are likely to fall within these categories.

**3.2**   A **whistle-blower** 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.

**3.3**   This policy should not be used for complaints relating to your own personal circumstances, such as the way you have been treated at work or study. In those cases you should use the Grievance Procedure or Dignity at Work and Study Policy or Student Concerns and Complaints Procedure as appropriate.

**3.4**   If you are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy you should seek advice from the General Counsel, whose contact details are at the end of this policy.

**4.**  **RAISING A WHISTLEBLOWING CONCERN**

**4.1**  The University hopes that in many cases you will be able to raise any concerns with either your line manager if you are employed here, or Dean for Student Welfare or Dean for Student Conduct and Compliance if you are a student, or if you are engaged in another capacity (such as a contractor) with your main point of contact at the University. You may raise concerns in person or put the matter in writing, including via email although you should check that it has been received by the intended recipient. It may be possible to agree a way of resolving your concern(s) quickly and effectively. In some cases the matter may be referred to the General Counsel or redirected to an appropriate channel, for example, staff grievance or student complaint procedures.

**4.2**   Where the matter is more serious, or you feel that your line manager, or Dean or Deputy Dean for Student Welfare or Student Conduct and Compliance, or other point of contact, has not addressed your concern, or you prefer not to raise it with them for any reason, you should contact one of the following:

**(a)**  Ken Morrison – General Counsel; or,

**(b)**  Charlotte Martin – Director of GLAS

Your concern may be shared by either of the above with the other in order to deal with your concern efficiently. Contact details are set out at the end of this policy.

If the disclosure is about the General Counsel then the disclosure should be made to the Director of GLAS. If the disclosure is about the Director of GLAS the disclosure should be made to the Chief Operating Officer (COO) Paul Ratcliffe.

**4.3**   A meeting will usually be arranged 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.

 **4.4**   The University will arrange to make a written summary of your concern and provide you with a copy after the meeting. You will also be given an indication of how the University proposes to deal with the matter.

**5.**  **CONFIDENTIALITY**

**5.1**   The University hopes that staff and students will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. However, if you want to raise your concern confidentially, the University will make every reasonable effort to protect your identity. If it is necessary for anyone investigating your concern to know your identity, the University will ensure this is discussed with you first.

**5.2**   The University does not encourage staff or students to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if we cannot obtain further information. It is also more difficult to establish credibility. Whistle-blowers who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should approach the General Counsel and appropriate reasonable measures can be taken to protect confidentiality. Advice and support are available from Protect (formerly known as Public Concern at Work), the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

**6.**  **INVESTIGATION AND OUTCOME**

**6.1**   Once you have raised a concern, the concern will be conveyed to the General Counsel or nominee who will carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation. The University will inform you in writing of the outcome of this assessment. There may be further meetings to obtain additional information. Normally we will follow the same timescales as are stipulated in our staff grievance procedure for complaints regarding staff or students concerns and complaints procedure for complaints regarding students. These are:

**(a)**  Staff: the amount of any investigation required will depend on the nature of the concern(s) raised and will vary from case-to-case. The concern will be dealt with as soon as possible;

**(b)** Students: within fifteen working days of a “formal” concern being raised, the General Counsel will investigate the concern(s) and report to the Director of GLAS

**6.2**   In some cases the Director of GLAS acting on the advice of the General Counsel may appoint an investigator or team of investigators including staff with relevant experience of investigations or specialist knowledge of the subject matter. The investigator(s) may make recommendations for change to enable the University to minimise the risk of future wrongdoing.

**6.3**   The General Counsel or nominee will aim to keep you informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale.

**6.4.** 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.

 **6.4**   Any report produced following an investigation described above will be provided to the Director of GLAS or her nominee to decide whether, and what, further action is required under the University policies and procedures. The Director of GLAS may delegate responsibility to take any action to deal with any identified concerns or issues to any senior officers of the University and will inform you in writing that this has been done unless there are any specific confidentiality reasons for not doing so. The outcome will be reported *inter alia* to the Risk Audit and Efficiency Committee, the Vice-Chancellor, Chief Operating Officer and Chair of Council for their information.

**6.5.** If the Director of GLAS or nominee concludes that a whistle-blower has made false allegations maliciously, the whistle-blower may be subject to disciplinary action.

**7.**  **IF YOU ARE NOT SATISFIED**  **WITH THE SERVICE YOU RECEIVE FROM THE GOVERNANCE, LEGAL & ASSURANCE SERVICES (GLAS) DEPARTMENT**

**7.1**   The University is committed to dealing with your concern fairly and in accordance with this policy

**7.2**   If you are unhappy with the way in which your concern is being managed, you can raise it informally with the General Counsel to ensure you receive the right level of service from GLAS. If you remain unhappy with the service you receive from GLAS you can express your dissatisfaction to the Director of GLAS or nominee or with the COO.

**8.**  **RAISING YOUR DISCLOSURE EXTERNALLY** **(EXCEPTIONAL CASES)**

**8.1**   The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing within the University. In most cases it should not be necessary to alert anyone externally. However, if you are dissatisfied with the way your concern has been dealt with by the University you can express your dissatisfaction to the chair of the Audit Committee and/or the University’s internal auditors. Contact details are set out at the end of this policy.

**8.2**   The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for concerns to be raised with an entirely separate external body e.g. a regulator. It will rarely, if ever, be appropriate to alert the media before raising concerns internally to the University. The University recommends that individuals seek advice before reporting a concern externally. The independent whistleblowing charity, Protect operates a confidential helpline and provides a list of prescribed regulators for reporting certain types of concern. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

**8.3**   Whistleblowing concerns usually relate to the conduct of staff, but they may sometimes relate to the actions of a third party, such as employees of St George’s University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, students or suppliers or service providers. 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 in line with this policy.

**9.**  **PROTECTION AND SUPPORT FOR WHISTLEBLOWERS**

**9.1**   It is understandable that whistle-blowers may be worried about possible repercussions. We aim to encourage openness and will support staff and students who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

**9.2**   Whistle-blowers 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 an individual believes that he/she has experienced any such treatment, the General Counsel should be informed as soon as possible.

**9.3**   No one should threaten or retaliate against whistle-blowers in any way. Any individual who is involved in such conduct may be subject to disciplinary action and may be subject to legal action initiated by the whistle-blower.

**10.**  **CONTACTS**

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| **Chair of Council** | Christine Swabey020 8725 0585 (Clerk to Council)cmartin@sgul.ac.uk |
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| **Director of Governance, Legal and Assurance Services** | Charlotte Martin 020 8725 0585cmartin@sgul.ac.uk  |
| **General Counsel** | Ken Morrison020 8725 5096legal@sgul.ac.uk  |
| **Chair of the Audit Committee**  | Sarah Wilton020 8725 0585 (Clerk to Council) cmartin@sgul.ac.uk  |
| **Internal auditors** | KPMG0207 311 1367 |
| **Confidential counselling**  | 020 8725 3628 counselling@sgul.ac.uk |
| **Protect** (Independent whistleblowing charity) | Helpline: (020) 3117 2520Contact form: <https://protect-advice.org.uk/contact-protect-advice-line/> Website: <https://protect-advice.org.uk>  |