



PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE POLICY

(WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY)



FutureQuals[®]



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Enquiries should be addressed to Future Awards and Qualifications.

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Introduction to FutureQuals

FutureQuals is forward thinking, learner and customer-focussed, and committed to delivering inspiring learning and skills.

Our Values

“We are a Visionary, Supportive, Innovative and Professional Awarding Organisation that is committed to excellence”.

Our Vision

“We envisage a place in which every learner realises their full potential”

Our Mission

“To provide respected and valued qualifications and assessment to enable quality assured learning”

FutureQuals is recognised to deliver regulated qualifications by Ofqual in England, CCEA Regulation in Northern Ireland, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA Accreditation) and Qualifications Wales to offer a comprehensive and diverse range of qualifications across a wide range of vocational areas many of which are transferable across industries and sectors.

A full list of FutureQuals current qualifications can be accessed at <http://www.futurequalsquals.com>

We have developed a genuine understanding and insight into all types of educational organisations, which ensures that we are highly responsive to their needs. We offer a wide range of benefits and support for our learners, our approved centres, and their assessment and quality assurance teams.

FutureQuals offers a wide range of benefits and support for all of our educational products and services including:

- Vocational qualifications accredited by the UK regulators and recognised by employers, universities and professional bodies
- 24/7 online management systems for the registration of learners, ensuring highly efficient services and access to assessment and results.
- A diverse range of qualifications
- A flexible approach to assessment
- A network of professionals who examine and quality assure our regulated qualifications and assessments
- Regular updates on new developments in education and training
- Unrivalled customer service support and extensive guidance materials

FutureQuals Public Interest (Whistleblowing) Policy

Introduction

FutureQuals is committed to the highest standards of conduct in its activities in the UK and internationally. This requires honesty and integrity in all areas of the business and a culture of openness between staff, customer and any other third party.

We encourage all stakeholders including centres and learners to come forward and raise their concerns about any issue in relation to the delivery of our qualifications.

By knowing about concerns FutureQuals is able to take action to protect the interests of centres, learners and anyone that undertakes work for or on behalf of FutureQuals.

The purpose of this policy is to give information on how to identify situations that may represent wrongdoing and provide information on how to report allegations of wrongdoing. We want you to feel confident in raising concerns and to “blow the whistle” about concerns and bad practice.

However, we recognise that you may have reservations that by reporting issues you may be subject to adverse consequences. Therefore, this policy provides information about the Public Interest Disclosure Act and explains that there are certain safeguards in place to protect whistle-blowers.

Centres Responsibility

It is vital that all centre staff and learners are fully aware of the contents of this policy in addition to our Malpractice and Maladministration Policy. As part of the centre approval process a centre must have in place a Whistleblowing policy so that its staff can freely raise concerns about activities without the risk of adverse consequences to their employment or career.

What is Whistle-blowing?

Whistleblowing is different from making a complaint and from an employment dispute. Complaints generally tend to be an expression of personal dissatisfaction for example about a product or service that has been received but not to the standard expected and/or the complainant has been poorly treated. Employment disputes generally tend to be where an employee has a dispute about his/her contract or employment position.

Whistle-blowing is officially called “making a disclosure in the public interest”. An individual blows the whistle when they tell their employer, a regulator, customers, the police or the media about wrongdoing, risk or malpractice that they are aware of through their work.

Individuals can raise concern directly with FutureQuals through this policy if they have a genuine belief that malpractice and/or wrongdoing is taking place or is likely to take place that is in the public interest to disclose and falls under the following categories as defined by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 – PIDA:

- a criminal offence, e.g. fraud
- someone’s health and safety is in danger
- risk or actual damage to the environment
- a miscarriage of justice
- the company is breaking the law, e.g. doesn’t have the right insurance
- you believe someone is covering up wrongdoing

Protection under PIDA is for an individual making a disclosure that is in the public interest who works, or worked, under a contract of employment or any other contract under which they agree to perform personally any work or services for another party in a contract. The term includes employees, home workers, casual workers, people involved in training and work experience, Crown Servants and members of the Armed Forces. Services for clients and customers of their profession or business. It protects those

making disclosure form being dismissed or penalised by their employer because of or as a result of the disclosure.

PIDA protection extends to disclosures made to a number of prescribed regulators for certain purposes. The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) – whom we are regulated by – is a prescribed regulator for matters pertaining to the development, delivery and award of regulated qualifications and other relevant matters of interest to its role as regulator.

Ofqual publishes a public Whistle-blowing Policy within which it states that an individual working for a centre delivering regulated qualifications may make a whistle-blowing disclosure to the awarding organisation that has approved it to deliver the qualifications in question.

You may also make your disclosure directly to Ofqual. However, Ofqual may request that the awarding organisation investigates the subject of the disclosure in the first instance.

Examples of disclosures that you may wish to make to us under this policy include:

- actual or possible malpractice/wrongdoing at a centre and/or failure to comply with the contractual terms of its centre agreement with us
- actual or possible malpractice/wrongdoing being carried out by a FutureQuals employee or worker

In case of doubt on how best to proceed or if you are unsure as to whether you will have protection under PIDA provisions, you may wish to consider contacting Public Concern at Work (PCAW) or getting independent legal advice prior to any disclosure. PCAW is a whistle-blowing charity that can provide confidential, free advice and support about whistle-blowing.

How to make a disclosure

To raise an allegation under this policy, please contact the FutureQuals Responsible Officer using the contact details found at the rear of this policy.

Please provide as much information and supporting evidence that is relevant as possible. It is important to note that it is not essential that you have clear evidence of wrongdoing but you must be able to explain as fully as possible the nature of the allegation and the circumstances of your concern.

We encourage any individual to voice concern to FutureQuals under this policy and will make every effort to protect your identity. We will not disclose it without your consent unless we are required to do so by the police or other enforcement agencies, the courts in connection with court proceedings, or other third parties that we consider necessary e.g. relevant regulatory authorities. If the issue cannot be resolved without your identity being disclosed, we will discuss this with you prior to any disclosure.

However, you should recognise that due to the nature or circumstances of your disclosure, it may be possible for others to identify you, for example the party which the allegation is made against may identify possible sources of disclosure without any such details being disclosed to them.

Once a disclosure is made we have a duty to pursue it even if you withdraw the allegation as we are required by the regulators to investigate any allegations that may impact on our standards and/or the integrity of FutureQuals qualifications.

Investigation of your concerns

Once you have raised a concern we will appoint an investigator with relevant experience of investigation or specialist knowledge of the subject matter that has not had any previous involvement or interest in the matter to undertake the investigation. The investigation will be carried out in accordance with the arrangements published in our Malpractice and Maladministration Policy.

We will carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation which may include arranging a meeting with you to discuss your disclosure, to obtain further information and/or to progress

the investigation. You may choose to be accompanied to any meetings under this policy but they must respect the confidentiality of your disclosure and our investigation of it.

During the investigation we may feedback to you any relevant progress and the likely timescale of the investigation. However, we won't disclose all details of the investigation activity nor, if it is not appropriate to do so, the full details of the outcome of the investigation. This may be because of confidentiality or legal reasons for example, the full details of any action that may be taken against named parties. However, we will strive to handle this matter fairly and reasonably.

If the investigation produces evidence and results to support a proven case of malpractice or wrongdoing, we will take the necessary action against relevant parties in accordance with the arrangements published in our Malpractice and Maladministration Policy. The investigator may also make recommendations for change to enable us to mitigate and minimise the risk of future occurrences.

Should the outcome of the investigation be unproven, as long as it has been established that the allegation was not deliberately false, no action will be taken against you by FutureQuals. However, should the investigation produce evidence that the allegations made were deliberately false, you may be at risk of investigation by your employer.

Contact details

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Future (Awards and Qualifications) Ltd is registered under the Data Protection Act and handles all data in accordance with the required procedures of the Act.

Continuous Improvement

This policy is subject to a three-year review cycle, or earlier should any feedback or concern be brought to the attention of FutureQuals, to ensure it remains fit for purpose and the process and its outcomes are deliverable.

It is also reviewed as part of FutureQuals continuous improvement monitoring through its annual self-assessment arrangements.



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