

BUCS WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

February 2025

1. Introduction

British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity and transparency. We encourage all employees, volunteers, trustees, contractors, and third parties to report any concerns regarding unethical or unlawful behaviour in the workplace without fear of retaliation.

2. Purpose

2.1 This policy aims to:

- Provide a safe and confidential avenue for reporting concerns about wrongdoing, malpractice, or unethical behaviour.
- Guide as to how to raise those concerns.
- Ensure concerns are addressed promptly and appropriately.
- Protect whistleblowers from retaliation or victimisation.

3. Scope

3.1 This policy applies to:

- All employees, including full-time, part-time and temporary.
- Contractors, agency workers, volunteers, officers, interns and suppliers.
- Any other individuals engaged in activities involving BUCS.

4. What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to wrongdoing or other illegal or unethical conduct in the workplace. BUCS is committed to conducting its business honestly and with integrity at all times and believes in the responsibility to take appropriate steps to identify such issues and address them.

4.1 A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to any of the below whistleblowing issues. 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.

4.2 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 Anti-

Harassment and Bullying Policy as appropriate. If you are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy, you should seek advice from your Line Manager or the HR Department.

5. Whistleblowing Concerns

By law, there are several issues you can whistleblow about. The below are called "qualifying disclosures". A qualifying disclosure is one made in good faith by an employee who has a reasonable belief that:

- a criminal offence;
- a miscarriage of justice;
- an act creating risk to health and safety;
- an act causing damage to the environment;
- a breach of any other legal obligation; or
- concealment of any of the above;

6. Safeguarding Concerns

If the issue relates to safeguarding concerns, these must be reported immediately. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect
- Any action or omission that places a vulnerable person at risk.
- Failure to protect individuals from harm or abuse.

In safeguarding cases, you should use the Safeguarding Policy and contact the Lead Safeguarding Officer.

7. Reporting Procedures

We hope that in many cases you will be able to raise any concerns with your line manager. 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.

However, where the matter is more serious, or you feel that your line manager 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 HR Department
- The CEO

We will arrange a meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss your concerns. You may bring a colleague or trade 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.

While we encourage you to speak to either your line manager or one of the above individuals about any concerns, we understand this may not always be possible. In such cases, you may report your concerns through our internal anonymous reporting tool which ensures confidentiality and allows you to raise concerns without fear of retaliation.

8. Confidentiality

Whistleblowers' identities will be kept confidential unless disclosure is required by law or is necessary for the investigation. The whistleblower will be expected to keep the raised issue and the identity of those involved confidential. If the whistleblower's identity needs to be disclosed, the whistleblower will be informed beforehand.

We do not encourage employees to make disclosures anonymously, although we will make every effort to investigate anonymous disclosures. You should be aware that a 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.

9. Investigation

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 to provide further information.

In some cases, we may appoint an investigator(s) with relevant experience of investigations or specialist knowledge of the subject matter. The investigator (or investigators) may make recommendations for change to enable us to minimise the risk of future wrongdoing.

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 from giving you specific details of the investigation, an outcome or any disciplinary action taken as a result. You should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.

10. 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 how your concern has been handled, you can raise it with one of the other key contacts in paragraph 7. Alternatively, you may contact the Chair of the Board.

11. External disclosures

This policy aims to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing. 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 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.

Whistleblowing concerns usually relate to the conduct of our employees, but they may sometimes relate to the actions of a third party, such as a 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, in line with this policy. You should contact your line manager or one of the other individuals set out in paragraph 7 for guidance.

12. Protection and Support

Whistleblowers who raise genuinely held concerns in good faith under this policy will not be dismissed or subjected to any detriment following such action. Detriment includes unwarranted disciplinary action and victimisation. If a whistleblower feels they have been unfairly treated as a result of raising a concern, they should report this to their line manager immediately. If the matter is not remedied, you should raise it formally using our Grievance Procedure.

Employees who victimise or retaliate against those who have raised concerns under this policy will be subject to disciplinary action.

13. Malicious Allegations

If an investigation under this procedure concludes that a disclosure has been made maliciously, vexatiously, in bad faith or with a view to personal gain it will be treated as gross misconduct and will be subject to disciplinary action.

14. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or following any significant legislative changes to ensure it remains compliant with employment law.