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Whistleblowing Policy

1. Scope

This policy applies to all parts of Veritas Mediation Academy (VMA). It outlines the procedures and protections available to individuals reporting concerns under the **VMA Whistleblowing Policy** (see Appendix A for further details).

2. Purpose

Definitions:

- **Whistleblowing** – When an employee reports concerns about misconduct, wrongdoing, or malpractice in the workplace, commonly referred to as "blowing the whistle" or "making a disclosure."
- **Whistleblower** – A person who raises such concerns.

VMA values whistleblowing as a **constructive action** that helps maintain **ethical and professional standards**. It is committed to fostering an environment where individuals can **report concerns without fear of victimisation, discrimination, or negative consequences**.

This policy serves to **protect whistleblowers** and provide a structured framework for reporting concerns such as **risk exposure, unethical conduct, misconduct, or malpractice**.

Policy Objectives:

- Encourage staff and subcontractors to **confidently raise concerns** at the earliest opportunity.
- Provide a **clear reporting process** and feedback mechanism.
- Ensure that individuals are aware of their rights and **protection against retaliation**.
- Reassure whistleblowers that **concerns raised in good faith will be taken seriously** and addressed appropriately.

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3. Principles of the Policy

This policy enables individuals connected with VMA to **confidentially report concerns** about potential wrongdoing.

Key Considerations:

- The Whistleblowing Policy is **separate from grievance procedures**, which should be used if concerns relate to an individual's own treatment as an employee.
- Clients of VMA who have concerns about the quality of services should raise issues through the **Complaints Policy**.
- Whistleblowing disclosures should follow the **procedures outlined in Appendix A**.

Legal Protection:

Whistleblowers are protected under:

- **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (UK)**

These laws ensure that whistleblowers who make **genuine and justified disclosures** are **protected from dismissal, victimisation, or discrimination**.

Whistleblower Protections:

To qualify for protection, disclosures must be made:

1. **In the public interest**
2. **Based on a reasonable belief** that wrongdoing has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur.

Examples of Reportable Wrongdoing:

The following concerns may be reported under this policy:

- **Criminal offences** (e.g., fraud, bribery, corruption)
- **Breach of company policies** that could result in financial or reputational damage
- **Unfair business practices** (e.g., preferential treatment in contracts)
- **Legal or regulatory non-compliance**
- **Miscarriage of justice**
- **Health & safety violations**
- **Environmental harm**

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- **Financial malpractice, fraud, or bribery**
- **Bullying or harassment** (especially when systemic)
- **Inappropriate behaviour towards vulnerable individuals**
- **Failure by senior management to take action on safeguarding concerns**
- **Attempts to conceal any of the above**

External Whistleblowing Advice

Staff is encouraged to **report concerns internally first**, but they may also seek external guidance:

- **UK:** Contact **Protect** for confidential advice at [Protect-Advice.org.uk](https://www.protect-advice.org.uk)

4. Responsibilities

All Staff:

- Must comply with this policy and legal obligations.
- Should report concerns in **good faith**.

Line Managers:

- Ensure that staff understand and follow the policy.
- Provide support and guidance on whistleblowing concerns.

VMA Senior Management Team:

- Responsible for **policy oversight, review, and enforcement**.
- Ensures that concerns are investigated appropriately.

5. Related Policies & Documents

- **UK Government Guidance:** [Whistleblowing – Guidance for Employers](#)

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Appendix A: Whistleblowing Reporting & Investigation Process

1. Confidential Reporting

Raising a whistleblowing concern can be challenging, particularly when it relates to **fraud, bribery, or corruption**. However, early reporting is **crucial** to preventing serious issues.

Key Safeguards:

- Staff may bring a **work colleague or trade union representative** to meetings.
- VMA will protect whistleblowers from **retaliation or career repercussions**.
- Anonymity will be respected where possible, but certain situations (e.g., safeguarding concerns) may require disclosure to the **Designated Safeguarding Officer**.
- **Victimisation or retaliation against a whistleblower** is a **disciplinary offence**.

2. Reporting a Concern (Disclosure Process)

Internal Disclosures

1. Step 1 – Speak to Your Line Manager:

- If possible, discuss concerns **directly with your manager** and provide clear details and evidence.
- If the concern relates to your manager, proceed to **Step 2**.

2. Step 2 – Escalate to a member of the Senior Management Team:

- If the issue involves senior staff, report it to the **Designated Whistleblowing Officer**, who is the Head of Quality & Learning.
- If concerns relate to the Head of Quality & Learning, report them to the Directors of the company.

External Disclosures

- If concerns arise from external sources (e.g., clients, suppliers), they must be **immediately reported** to the **Designated Safeguarding Officer**.

3. Investigation Process

3.1 Initial Assessment:

- All disclosures will be **carefully reviewed**.

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- The whistleblower's **identity will be protected**, unless disclosure is required by law.

3.2 Acknowledgment:

- The concern will be acknowledged within **seven business days** with an explanation of **next steps**.

3.3 Investigation & Findings:

- If an investigation is warranted, it will be conducted confidentially.
- Findings may be summarised at the **VMA Senior Manage Team** quarterly meeting, ensuring anonymity.
- If a concern involves **misconduct allegations**, the accused will have the right to respond.

3.4 Outcomes:

- If wrongdoing is confirmed, appropriate **disciplinary action** will be taken.
- If no action is taken, the whistleblower will be informed of **the reasons why**.

3.5 Feedback to the Whistleblower:

- Where possible, the whistleblower will receive **updates on the case outcome**.
- However, confidentiality constraints may **limit the level of detail shared**.

3.6 Legal & Third-Party Actions:

- If concerns involve external entities (e.g., subcontractors, law enforcement), VMA will fully cooperate with investigations.
- If necessary, cases may be **referred to the police** or regulatory bodies.

Final Notes

VMA is committed to **transparency, integrity, and ethical conduct**. This policy ensures that staff can report concerns **confidentially and without fear of retaliation**.

If you need further guidance, please contact the admin team at info@veritasmediationacademy.com.

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