

We operate in a global environment of increasing change, ambiguity and uncertainty. The ways in which we work have become more complex and present new regulatory, ethical, and legal challenges.

Sometimes we may have concerns about what is happening at the University and usually, these concerns can easily be resolved. But what if they are about breaches of the law, serious misconduct by another person, health and safety or financial malpractice?

In exceptional circumstances like these, it can be difficult to know what to do.

Aston University's 'Speak Up Policy' provides a confidential and secure way for you to raise concerns about conduct. This guide outlines the key steps to take and who you can contact.

If in doubt – do not hesitate to 'SPEAK UP and SPEAK OPENLY'!



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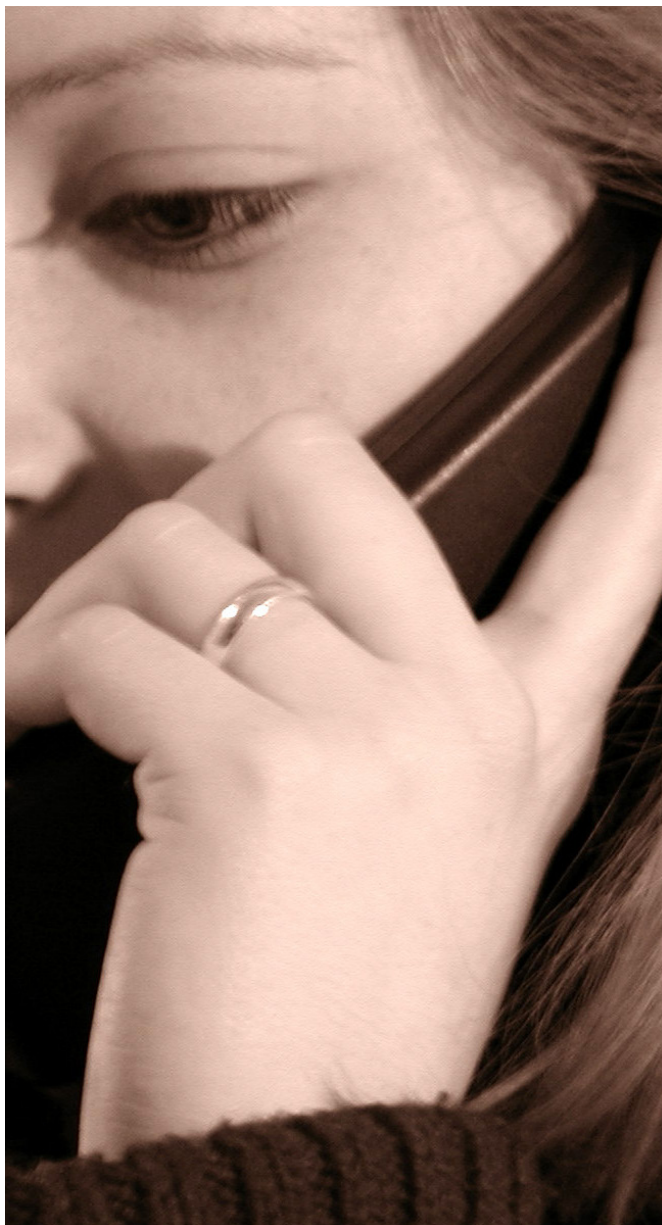
A guide to Aston University's Whistleblowing Policy

what to do if you have a concern
and who you can contact

Who can I talk to?

You can talk to your line manager, trade union representative, sabbatical officer of the Students' Union, personal tutor or a colleague.

You could also contact a member of the Executive Team or the Director of Governance and ask that person to bring the matter forward on your behalf.



How do I raise a concern?

Step 1 – Informal consultation

Once you have decided who to talk to, you can have an informal discussion with that person who may be able to resolve the concern quickly and effectively. Otherwise they may feel the issue should be formally reported to the Designated Officer responsible for dealing with concerns.

Step 2 – Formal reporting to a Designated Officer

You can formally report your concern by talking or writing to the Director of HR & Organisational Development. If the concern is about the Director of HR & Organisational Development you can discuss the issue with the Provost. Alternatively you can refer the matter to the Chair of the Audit Committee (in writing and marked 'strictly confidential') at: Chair of the Audit Committee, c/o Director of Governance, Aston University, Birmingham, B4 7ET.

Outside of the University you can contact the Office for Students, the Health and Safety Executive, Birmingham City Environmental Health Department, the Quality Assurance Agency, the Office of Fair Access, the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, the Information Commissioner's Office, etc.

Step 3 – Investigation by the Designated Officer

The nature of the investigation depends on your concern and the person to whom the concern is reported will acknowledge this and keep a record of action taken.

The Designated Officer:

- ▶ Will carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation but if they feel the concern is unjustified you will be told that no further action will be taken.
- ▶ Can appoint another person to undertake the investigation on their behalf. In this case the person(s) who are the subject of concern have the opportunity to make comments before the investigation is concluded.
- ▶ Will respect your confidentiality as far as possible and keep you informed of the progress. However, to maintain confidentiality of all individuals involved means you should also treat information about the investigation as confidential.

Step 4 – The outcome

- ▶ The Designated Officer will tell you about the outcome and provide a confidential and normally anonymised report to the Audit Committee.
- ▶ If you are worried about reprisals, raise this with the Designated Officer who can provide reassurance and, if necessary, take steps to ensure this does not happen.
- ▶ If you make an allegation in good faith which is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you.
- ▶ If the investigation shows you have made malicious allegations, and if you carry on making them, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

What happens if I want to appeal?

We will deal with your concern fairly but cannot always guarantee the outcome you would like. If you are not satisfied because you believe there was evidence of wrong doing, prejudice or bias, and/or there is further evidence which was not available at the time, you can appeal.

You can appeal on these grounds, in writing, to the Vice-Chancellor (or the Chair of Council if the allegation relates to the Vice-Chancellor). You need to state the reasons for your appeal and provide supporting evidence.

How can I be assured of confidentiality and protection?

We will make every effort to keep your identity confidential and it will not be revealed without your consent, unless required by law. But we cannot guarantee that others will not try to infer the identity of that person.

We encourage openness and will not allow harassment or victimisation. We will take action to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith.

What happens to concerns made anonymously?

We hope you feel able to voice concerns openly and we encourage you to do this. Anonymous concerns are much less powerful but they will be considered at the discretion of the University.

How can I find out more?

The Speak Up Policy will be developed and promoted to encourage people to report and discuss concerns early and before a serious incident occurs. The University will work with trade union representatives and officers of the Students' Union to ensure staff and students have the confidence to raise concerns and reduce the risk that unethical practice goes unchallenged.

The University will offer training for managers so they understand their role and responsibilities, in handling concerns and how to support staff.

For more information including contact details; guidance; policies and other supporting information please visit our website:
<https://www2.aston.ac.uk/about/management-structure/policies-and-regulations/ethics-framework/index>