



# Whistleblowing Policy

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Document Revision History		
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2.0	03/04/2024	2024 Rebranding
1.0	08/03/2018	Initial version

## 1 Introduction

PeopleCert always strives to maintain a culture of openness with its whole ecosystem. By becoming aware of any malpractice/poor practice, we are able to take the necessary steps to safeguard the interests of our partners/Accredited Organisations (AOs), candidates and any other stakeholders.

Therefore, we encourage our staff, partners/AOs and candidates to get in touch with us and 'speak up' or 'blow the whistle', and to raise any concerns in relation to the delivery of our exams and services.

This policy is designed to provide you with information about the process by which you may blow the whistle. It also presents measures that PeopleCert has in place in order to protect whistleblowers.

This policy is reviewed annually as part of our internal audit and continuous improvement arrangements; it will be revised when and if necessary in response to external feedback, market trends, changes in our practices, new requirements set by the Regulatory Authorities, Accreditors/Test Owners or changes in legislation.

## 2 Partner's / AO's responsibility

It is important that your staff and customers (trainees and/or candidates) are fully aware of this policy and its contents, therefore we expect you to communicate the right to whistleblowing as appropriate.

We also expect our partners/ Accredited Organisations to maintain a culture where staff can freely raise concerns about activities and practices without the risk of adverse consequences to their future employment or career.

## 3 What is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is when an individual reports suspected malpractice or maladministration and/or the covering up of malpractice or maladministration.

The malpractice or maladministration may be committed by an Accredited/approved Organisation and may be reported by an employee of the Organisation, or a trainee and/or candidate.

Whistleblowing is different from both complaints and employment disputes and should not be confused with any expression of personal dissatisfaction. An individual raising an allegation under these whistleblowing arrangements should have a reasonable belief that the disclosure is in the public interest. Individuals can raise a concern with PeopleCert under the arrangements outlined in this policy if they have a reasonable belief that malpractice and/or a maladministration is occurring or is likely to occur. Examples of whistleblowing disclosures that could be made to us include:

- a member of staff of an Accredited Organization making a disclosure about actual or possible malpractice/ maladministration at the Accredited Organization and/or the Organization's failure to comply and adhere to the Accreditation requirements;
- a trainee and/or candidate making a disclosure about possible malpractice/maladministration at one of our Accredited Organizations;
- making a disclosure about possible malpractice / maladministration being carried out by a member (internal or external associate) of PeopleCert.

Malpractice is essentially any activity or practice (deliberate actions, neglect, default or other practice) which deliberately contravenes regulations and compromises the integrity of the assessment process and/or the validity of certificates. Malpractice may include a range of issues from failure to maintain appropriate records or systems to the deliberate falsification of records in order to claim certificates. For the purpose of this policy, this term also covers criminal activity; failure to comply with any legal

obligation; miscarriages of justice; danger to health and safety; damage to the environment; misconduct; and forms of discrimination or bias towards individual or groups of candidates.

Maladministration is essentially any activity or practice which results in non-compliance with administrative regulations and requirements and includes persistent mistakes or poor administration within a centre.

The categories listed below are examples, but not an exhaustive list, of Organizations and candidate malpractice/ maladministration:

- Persistent failure to adhere to our requirements; poor administrative/operational arrangements;
- Fraudulent claim for certificates and/or deliberate submission of false information to achieve a certification;
- Using non accredited/approved trainers and/or invigilators;
- Failure to maintain appropriate auditable records, e.g. training and/or examination records and/or false records;
- Misuse of PeopleCert and Accreditor's/ Test owner's logos, brand names and trademarks or misrepresentation of an Organization's relationship with PeopleCert and/or its accreditation and approval status; promoting services or products for which the Organization is not accredited;
- Denial of access to premises, records, information, candidates and staff to any authorised PeopleCert representative and/or regulatory authorities;
- Intentional withholding or delaying information, which is critical to maintaining the quality standards of our services;
- The unauthorised use of inappropriate materials / equipment during examinations (e.g. mobile phones, books or notes, etc);
- A loss or theft of, or a breach of confidentiality in any exam materials; inappropriate circulation/distribution of exam materials, insecure storage of exam materials;
- Unauthorised amendment, copying or distributing of exam papers/materials;
- Inappropriate assistance/support to candidates (e.g. unfairly helping them to pass an exam);
- Failure to arrange for Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations;
- Plagiarism by candidates/staff;
- Copying from another candidate;
- Cheating by candidates/staff;
- Personation - assuming the identity of another candidate or having someone assume their identity during an assessment;
- Selling certificates, papers/assessment details;
- Fraud;

In case of doubt on how best to proceed, you can always contact the PeopleCert Quality team.

## 4 How to whistleblow

To raise an allegation or concern under these whistleblowing arrangements, you may contact the PeopleCert Quality team (contact details are available at the end of this policy).

Upon making an allegation or raising any concern it is helpful to provide as much information and supporting evidence as possible to help us identify inform the nature of the investigation we need to carry out.

Although it is important to note that it is not essential to have clear evidence before making an allegation under this policy, we nevertheless ask that you explain as fully as you can the nature of the allegation or circumstances that gave rise to your concern.

## 5 Protecting your identity

Sometimes a person making an allegation may wish to remain anonymous, although it is always preferable to reveal your identity and provide us with your contact details so that we are able to contact you as part of the investigation as necessary. However, if you are concerned about possible adverse consequences that may occur should your identity be revealed to another party, then please inform us that you do not wish for us to divulge your identity and we will work to ensure your details are not disclosed.

Whistleblowers must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a genuine concern. Detrimental treatment includes dismissal, disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. If you believe that you have suffered any such treatment, you should inform PeopleCert immediately.

The investigator(s) assigned to explore the allegation will not reveal the whistleblower's identity and will keep it confidential unless the whistleblower agrees or if it is necessary for the purposes of the investigation, such as to:

- the police, fraud prevention agencies or other law enforcement agencies (to investigate or prevent crime, including fraud);
- the courts (in connection with court proceedings), to which we are required by law to disclose your identity;
- other third parties, where we consider it necessary to do so [e.g. the regulator(s)].

The investigator will advise you if it becomes necessary to reveal your identity against your wishes.

A whistleblower should also recognise that he or she may be identifiable by others due to the nature or circumstances of the disclosure (e.g. the party which the allegation is made against may manage to identify possible sources of disclosure without such details being disclosed to them).

## 6 What we will do upon receiving a whistleblowing allegation

Once a concern has been raised, we have a duty to pursue the matter. Depending upon the nature of the allegation, we will appoint someone to investigate the allegation who has the appropriate skills and training and who has not had any previous involvement or personal interest in the matter.

The person(s) appointed to investigate the matter [the investigator(s)] may contact the whistleblower to ascertain the details of their concern. If the whistleblower does not wish to make a written statement, the investigator(s) will write a brief summary of the issue and the whistleblower will be expected to confirm this as correct.

The investigator will then conduct an investigation to establish the facts in accordance with our internal procedures.

In all cases, we will keep the whistleblower updated as to how we have progressed the allegation (e.g. we have undertaken an investigation). However, we will not disclose all details of the investigation activities and it may not be appropriate for us to disclose full details of the outcomes of the investigation due to confidentiality or legal commitments (e.g. disclose full details on the action that may be taken against the parties concerned). The whistleblower will be expected to treat any information about the investigation confidential.

## **7 Outcomes of an investigation**

If the investigation results in a proven case of malpractice or maladministration, we will take appropriate action against the relevant parties in accordance with our relevant and, where necessary, we may impose the applicable sanctions.

If the allegation is not proven by the investigation, provided that the whistleblower did not deliberately raise an allegation which they knew to be untrue, no action will be taken against them by PeopleCert. If the allegation was made due to a genuine misunderstanding, the individual(s) or the Organisation that have been the subject of the investigation will be expected to bear no malice or ill feeling towards their whistleblower.

If, however, the investigation concludes that the whistleblower raised a false allegation maliciously, we reserve the right to take any legal or disciplinary action.

PeopleCert will not disclose to the whistleblower the actions taken or the sanctions imposed.

## **8 Contact us**

If you wish to make an allegation as outlined in this policy, have a query in relation to our whistleblowing arrangements, or if you would like to feed back any views please contact us through [quality@peoplecert.org](mailto:quality@peoplecert.org)



E-mail: [info@peoplecert.org](mailto:info@peoplecert.org), [www.peoplecert.org](http://www.peoplecert.org)

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