



Raising and Escalating Concerns Policy and Procedure : Initial Teacher Education Programmes

Raising and Escalating Concerns Policy and Procedure: Initial Teacher Education Programmes				Ref: PL.072.-v001
Brief Description & Purpose:	The policy aims to offer guidance to facilitate and support students, academic and practice staff to safely raise complaints/concerns which may arise in practice placements.			
Applicable to (list cohorts):	Staff: All staff	Students: All students	Third Parties: All who are in a formal relationship with the University	
Effective From:	May 2019	Last Review Date:	May 2020	
Approval Authority:	Quality and Standards Sub-Committee	Approved:	28 March 2025	
Executive Owner:	Faculty Academic Registrar (HLS)	Business Owner:	Faculty Director of Placements (HLS)	
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1. INTRODUCTION

The policy aims to offer guidance to facilitate and support students, academic and practice staff to safely raise complaints/concerns which may arise in practice placements.

An important aspect of the process is assuring and maintaining confidentiality which will be guaranteed at all times, however, due to the nature of some situations there are occasions where anonymity cannot be guaranteed and proper reporting of incidents have to safeguard children.

This policy is relevant **to all organisations and the people who work or study in them**. All staff and students should be aware of their role and responsibility in highlighting or communicating issues or concerns relating to the well-being of pupils or staff that arise on placement.

When a risk occurs, often one of the first people to suspect or realise that something is wrong may be a student. However, the student may not feel they are the best person or in the best position to raise a concern or they may lack confidence in raising the issue. It is the aim of this policy and procedure to enable and support staff/students in identifying and taking appropriate action should such situations arise.

Examples of the areas of 'concern' that might be encountered might fall under the following headings:

- *Health and Safety*
- *Child Welfare*
- *Professional misconduct towards a child / towards other staff*
- *Problematic Professional Working Conditions*

In the context of this policy and procedure, Whistleblowing is defined as '**raising complaints or concerns about malpractice or wrongdoing in the workplace without fear of reprisal**'. The procedure is intended to cover concerns which are in the public interest and may involve any of the following:

- Abuse of service users –pupils, or students
- Other improper, unprofessional conduct or unethical behaviour
- Endangering health or safety of the environment
- Committing a criminal offence
- Failure to observe a legal obligation or to comply with an instrument of governance
- Miscarriage of justice
- Administrative malpractice (financial or non-financial)
- Suppression or concealment of any information relating to any of the above

This is not intended to be a comprehensive list and any other matters raised under this policy will be considered seriously.

All organisations should ensure they are doing their "reasonable best" to manage themselves and their staff, customers/service users against possible risk and harm. A student on placement and/or a member of staff in the placement provider organisation may identify a

situation or event, which has the potential to cause risk or harm to an individual(s) or the organisation.

For the purpose of this policy, risk is defined as ***“any situation that the student is involved in which gives rise for concern for any of the parties involved”***.

The management of risk also aims to:

- Provide a rapid process/system to support students who have experienced an adverse event
- Reduce possible harm to client groups
- Reduce possible harm to the organisation
- Improve the learning environment
- Reduce possibility of harm to the student/employee

2. POLICY STATEMENT

This policy and procedure applies to all ITE and Education Studies programmes in the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences that require student allocation to a practice placement as part of a programme of study. It has been developed in full collaboration with Placement Providers.

The aim is to ensure that potential/identified concerns are managed in a timely manner in order to minimise the risk and/or limit the potential for harm or future risk.

As a public body, the University recognises its responsibilities under the **Public Interest Disclosure Act** ('Whistleblowing' Act 1999) and the second report on **Standards in Public Life** (Nolan Committee 1996) that staff and students are permitted to speak freely without fear of disciplinary action, victimisation or discrimination. This extends to providing processes that facilitate and support staff and / or students to raise legitimate issues / concerns related to practice placements.

In particular the University acknowledges the relative powerlessness and vulnerability of students who may be undergoing a process of assessment by work-based staff during their practice placement. The University takes seriously its responsibilities towards students and regards it as important that students are able to voice their concerns and that their interests are safeguarded as far as possible.

This is particularly so for students who may be employees of the placement provider organisation (GTP students and FE students). In such cases where the student raises an issue or concern related to their employing organisation, any subsequent investigation **MUST** be addressed from the perspective of the individual as a student undertaking a programme at Northumbria University Faculty of Health and Life Sciences. **In all such circumstances this policy and procedure will apply.**

The University wish to reassure all students that no detrimental action of any kind will be taken against a student making a complaint or raising an issue, provided that it is



done in good faith and without malice. A malicious or vexatious complaint, however, could result in disciplinary action.

2.1 Confidentiality

When raising a concern whilst out on practice placement, the University cannot guarantee anonymity due to the fact that each concern will need to be fully investigated. You may wish to seek advice and support from your union representative during this process.

3. HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

3.1 STAGE 1 – Raising your initial concern

If you witness or suspect there is some wrongdoing or malpractice taking place or about to take place, it is important to keep calm and discuss the issue informally with a senior member of staff such as the Training Co-ordinator, Head Teacher of the placement school or Manager of the non-school setting or the Principal of the college, Partnership Co-ordinator (primary) or Programme Leader (secondary, or FE, or GTP) and/or University Tutor. They will help you think about what has happened and help you decide if there is a genuine problem.

Your initial concern should be raised **at the first available opportunity** with the Training Co-ordinator or Head Teacher of the placement school or the manager of the non-school setting, the Principal of the college or with the Partnership Co-ordinator (primary) or Programme Leader (secondary, or FE, or GTP) or University Tutor. The aim of this early informal discussion is to promote local resolution.

If the issue is resolved to the satisfaction of the student or whoever first raised the issue / concern at this stage, **no further action is required.**

NB: Some concerns may be serious enough to warrant omission of Stage 2 and direct escalation to Stage 3 –Raising Concern. If you are unsure about the severity of your concern and would like to discuss it with a third party, you may contact a safeguarding manager within the Local Authority who will always be prepared to discuss concerns and actions required.

Raising concerns can be extremely stressful and if you are experiencing symptoms of stress or anxiety at any point during this process, we advise you to see your GP, occupational health department or Student Welfare and Support Service at the very earliest opportunity.

3.2 STAGE 2 – Formal Exploratory Meeting

If the concern/issue cannot be resolved locally, a formal exploratory meeting must be arranged. The meeting will normally be convened by the Partnership Co-ordinator (primary) or Programme Leader (secondary, or FE, or GTP) or University Tutor and should include the student and Training Co-ordinator or Head Teacher of the placement school, Manager of the non-school setting, Principal of the college. The concern will be explored and discussed fully. This meeting should be documented and a “Raising an Initial Concern Form” must also be completed.



The exploratory meeting may decide:

- There is no case to answer and further action is not justified – the reason for this decision must be made clear to you
- The matter could be resolved through mediation – if you are happy with this, the other party will be informed and discussions will take place to rebuild relationships
- Disciplinary action may be necessary, in which case there may be a disciplinary investigation
- The case may be serious enough to warrant a direct escalation to **Stage 3 – Raising Concern**

Within the Raising an Initial Concern Form your statements should be clear and objective, providing:-

- Full details of the issue (who, what, where, when, etc)
- Summary of the discussion
- Any actions
- Any supporting information or evidence
- Outcome (locally resolved, further review meeting required or escalate to Stage 3 - Whistle Blowing)

If the issue is resolved at this stage, **no further action is required**.

If you are unhappy with what is decided, please talk to your Programme Leader, Partnership Co-ordinator (primary) or Programme Leader (secondary, or FE, or GTP) or University Tutor for details of what you can do.

Where applicable, you should follow Local Authority Safeguarding and Whistle Blowing procedures.

3.3 STAGE 3 – Whistle Blowing

If your concern/complaint has not been resolved at either Stage 1 or Stage 2 of this policy or if the concern requires immediate escalation to Stage 3, speak with your Partnership Co-ordinator (primary) or Programme Leader (secondary, or FE, or GTP) and they will support you through the process. The following procedure documents the steps the staff member will take.

- 3.3.1** *The member of University staff, in discussion with the student must complete **FORM WB1 Whistleblowing Report** available via the Practice Placements Website at www.northumbria.ac.uk/hcesplacements.*



- 3.3.2** *The Partnership Co-ordinator (primary) or Programme Leader (secondary, or FE, or GTP) or University Tutor must immediately inform the Director of Practice Placements (DPP) and forward the completed **FORM WB1 Whistleblowing Report**.*
- 3.3.3** *The DPP will work with the Head of Department to immediately inform the Training Co-ordinator or Head Teacher of the school or the manager of the non-school setting or principal of the college.*
- 3.3.4** *A safeguarding concern will require the DPP to immediately raise an ALERT with the Local Authority Safeguarding Team. The member of staff should immediately follow the universities safeguarding policy and report to the DSO and or Serious Welfare team. Who will provide support and ensure organisational policy is adhered to.*
- 3.3.5** Following contact from the DPP, Partnership Co-ordinator (primary) or Programme Leader (secondary, or FE, or GTP), the Training Co-ordinator or Head Teacher of the school or the manager of the non-school setting, or the Principal of the college, the area may need to invoke organisational policies and procedures as appropriate, and/or conduct an investigation. The DPP will maintain the confidential records and monitor all risk incidents and report any trends/findings to the Associate Dean for Learning, Teaching and Student Experience.
- 3.3.6** If the Head Teacher of the school or the manager of the non-school setting or the Principal of the college wish to interview the student, permission **MUST** be sought from the DPP, as per the 'Policy and Procedure, Following a Request to Interview a Student of Northumbria University'. Requests should be accompanied by a completed **FORM WB2 Request to Interview a Student** within two working days – available via the Practice Placements Website at www.northumbria.ac.uk/hcesplacements.
- 3.3.7** All completed forms **MUST** be sent to the DPP, who will inform the Programme Manager/Head of Department/Associate Dean for Learning, Teaching and Student Experience/ Partnership Co-ordinator (primary) or Programme Leader (secondary, or FE, or GTP). The Training Co-ordinator or Head Teacher of the school or the manager of the non-school setting or Principal of the college will be informed of the outcome by **either the DPP or** the Partnership Co-ordinator (primary) or Programme Leader (secondary, or FE, or GTP), whichever is deemed most appropriate to that particular situation, of the outcome, as appropriate.
- 3.3.7** The Partnership Co-ordinator (primary) or Programme Leader (secondary, or FE, or GTP) and University Tutor will support the student throughout the procedure.
- 3.3.8** Action taken will depend on the nature of the concern, but may include:
- Immediate notification to the University DSO and Serious Welfare Team.
 - Referral to Local Authority Safeguarding Team and / or police
 - Withdrawal of students from the placement
 - Ongoing communication and discussion with the placement provider



- No further action

4. PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW A STUDENT

- 4.1** If the Head Teacher of the placement school or the manager of the non-school setting or Principal of the college wishes to interview the student, permission **MUST** be sought from the DPP and/or Associate Dean for Learning, Teaching and Student Experience/Head of Department, as per the 'Request to Interview a Student of Northumbria University' Policy/Procedure and complete **FORM WB 2 Request to Interview a Student**.

Available from:

Placements and Partnerships Office

Room B104

Faculty of Health and Life Sciences
Northumbria University

Coach Lane Campus

Benton

Newcastle Upon Tyne

NE7 7XA

Also at www.northumbria.ac.uk/hcesplacements

- 4.2** A formal response will normally be issued to all requests within 5 University working days.
- 4.3** ***Interviews by the Police*** - Northumbria University Faculty of Health and Life Sciences accept that we may not be notified until after the event has taken place (for example there may be occasion where a student needs to be interviewed immediately by a Police representative) however, should the Placement Provider need to take immediate action following a serious incident, then Northumbria University expect to be notified as per this Policy at the first available opportunity and no later than the next University working day.



5. RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Within ten working days of receiving a Stage 3 (Whistleblowing) concern, the DPP will write to the discloser to:

- Acknowledge that the concern has been received
- Indicate how it has been dealt with
- Give an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
- Explain whether any initial enquiries have been made
- Explain whether further investigations are to take place and if not, why not

Throughout the procedure students will be offered support from their personal tutor or programme manager. Additional support via Student Welfare and Support Services will be available. It is recognised that students who raise a concern will be interested in the outcome. It is likely that full details of the outcome following investigation will not be disclosed to the person raising the concern for reasons of confidentiality in line with the GDPR (2018). It is however good practice to provide an opportunity to debrief the student following on from this process and provide an opportunity for structured reflection in order to promote professional development. This may involve a meeting with any of the following as deemed appropriate: the Personal Tutor, Programme Lead, Faculty Lead for Raising Concerns, Practice Education Facilitator, Practice Placement Facilitator, Placement Manager, Director of Practice Placements. This is not an exhaustive list and will be determined by the nature of each individual case.

6. PROCEDURE FOR CONCERN/COMPLAINT RAISED BY A MEMBER OF STAFF FROM THE PRACTICE PLACEMENT SETTING CONCERNING STUDENT CONDUCT OR BEHAVIOUR

There may be occasions when a Training Co-ordinator or Head Teacher of the school or the manager of the non-school setting or Principal of the college or other member of staff in the placement setting wishes to raise concerns regarding a student of Northumbria University. In such a situation, in order to ensure effective communication between all parties, the following procedure **MUST be adhered to:-** (if not already resolved at either Stage 1 or Stage 2 of this policy.)

- 6.1(a)** The Training Co-ordinator or Head Teacher of the school or the manager of the non-school setting or Principal of the college in discussion with the person who raised the concern, must complete **FORM WB1 Whistleblowing Report** available via the Practice Placements Website.

It is essential that appropriate persons are made aware of the situation at the earliest opportunity, i.e. the DPP and Programme Leader or in their absence, the University Tutor.

- 6.1(b)** The student is interviewed, as per the 'Request to Interview a Student of Northumbria University' Policy/Procedure. Requests should be accompanied by a completed **FORM WB2 Request to Interview a Student** within two working days available via the Practice Placements Website.



- 6.1(c)** The Programme Leader, Partnership Co-ordinator (primary) or Programme Leader (secondary, or FE, or GTP) or University Tutor will support students at all times, during any ensuing process.
- 6.1(d)** If the situation is of a serious nature, it may be decided to remove the student from the placement area, with immediate effect. In such circumstances, it is the responsibility of the Programme Leader or Partnership Co-ordinator (primary) or Programme Leader (secondary, or FE, or GTP) to contact the DPP and/or Associate Dean for Learning, Teaching and Student Experience / Head of Department **as soon as possible**. This action would ensure a safe environment for all concerned until the matter can be discussed with University representatives. We recognise that this will be a very stressful and upsetting situation for most students. Students will be fully supported and kept informed during this process by their Personal Tutor and Programme Lead. It is important that students are signposted to their student union and the university wellbeing teams during this process also.
- 6.1(e)** The Head Teacher of the school or the manager of the non-school setting or Principal of the college will inform the practice placement provider staff of the outcome, as appropriate.
- 6.1(f)** The Head Teacher of the school or the manager of the non-school setting or Principal of the college will maintain confidential records and monitor all risk incidents. Records will be filed within the student record. These will be reviewed annually with the DPP.

References

Local Authority Safeguarding Guidelines:

Newcastle upon Tyne:

Adult - <http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/care-and-wellbeing/adult-social-care/safeguarding-adults?opendocument>

Child - <http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/care-and-wellbeing/adult-social-care/newcastle-safeguarding-children>

Sunderland:

Adult - <http://www.alertabuse.org.uk/>

Child - <http://www.sunderlandscb.com/>



Northumberland:

Adult - <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=1065>

Child - <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=3808>

Gateshead:

Adult

<http://www.gateshead.gov.uk/Care%20and%20Health/CommunityCare/VulnerableAdults/FAQ.aspx>

Child -

<http://www.gateshead.gov.uk/Care%20and%20Health/ChildrenandFamilies/LSCB/home.aspx>

South Tyneside:

Adult - <http://www.southtyneside.info/article/15093/>

Child - <http://www.southtyneside.info/article/12492/stscb>



Flowchart 1 – Student Raising Concerns

