

Raising a concern with UKAS

A quick guide to whistleblowing

Speaking out

You may be employed in an organisation that is UKAS accredited and have concerns about what is happening where you work in terms of how your organisation complies with the requirements of accreditation.

When the concerns feel serious because it might affect colleagues or your whole organisation, it can be difficult to know what to do, especially if procedures are not being followed or activities are taking place which may be in contravention of UKAS requirements.

You may feel that raising the matter would be disloyal to colleagues, managers and/or your organisation. However, everyone working has a duty to follow their professional code of conduct and ensure that organisations meet the standards to which they have been assessed and accredited.

We would always encourage you to try to resolve any concerns you have within your organisation first. This is the recommended course of action. But if you feel unable to do this, or feel your voice is not being heard, you can speak to someone who is independent of your organisation.*

It is UKAS' role to ensure our accredited bodies are meeting the applicable international accreditation standards for certification, verification, testing, calibration, inspection and medical health, and to take action if they are not. Should we find that our accredited bodies are not meeting these international standards we can act to ensure they do. However, if the accredited does not take the required action and/or we believe they are not in compliance, we have a range of sanctions which we can apply.

**The concerns do not have to be restricted to this type of activity. Whistleblowing can cover risk, malpractice or wrongdoing.*

I need to raise a concern - what do I do?

You will be able to justify raising a genuine concern if you do so honestly and reasonably, even if you are mistaken. You may however, want to get independent advice first, or contact your trade union or professional regulatory body*.

1. If you see an unsafe practice, risk or wrongdoing, can you tackle it yourself, there and then? A firm, polite challenge is sometimes all that is needed.
2. Talk to your line manager about the problem if possible, or someone senior in the organisation.
3. If you do not feel able to raise your concern with your line manager or other management, consult your organisations whistleblowing policy, if there is one and follow it.
4. If you have tried all the aforementioned options, or you do not feel able to raise your concern internally, you can raise your concern to UKAS.

**Please note UKAS is not a regulatory authority and therefore, cannot impose fines, prevent an organisation operating or close them down.*

Can I give UKAS information anonymously or in confidence?

It is best to raise your concern openly with us, as this makes it easier for UKAS to follow it up with the accredited body concerned. We would not disclose your identity without your consent unless there are legal reasons which require us to do so.

You can, if you wish, supply information to us anonymously. However, please note we would not be able to contact you to discuss or seek further information from you if needed. We would also not be able to provide you with feedback about any actions we may take.

What will UKAS do with my information?

UKAS has a specifically trained team who process all whistleblowing concerns which come in to us. Emails, phone calls and letters supplied by a whistleblower are reviewed and followed up.

A quick guide to the law

The term 'whistleblower' may be used to describe person or persons who make a 'qualifying disclosure' about a concern at work.* Where a worker/employee suffers detriment or is dismissed as a result, then they may have certain employment protections under the Employment Rights Act 1996 (as amended by the Public Disclosure Act 1998, often referred to as 'PIDA'). In practice, this means you may be able to claim unfair dismissal at an Employment Tribunal.**

UKAS is one of a number of bodies you can make a qualifying disclosure to, but we have no powers under the Public Interest Disclosure Act and therefore, cannot advise you on this or any other legal matter. We cannot intervene, be involved in or advise on any dispute you may have with an employer resulting from a concern you may wish to raise with UKAS, or any underlying employment issues.

If you have any concerns about making a disclosure to UKAS you should seek your own independent advice from a solicitor, trade union or organisation such as Public Concern at Work.

* The Employment Rights Act 1996 defines a 'qualifying disclosure' with reference to the information's relationship to the public interest and specified areas of potential damage or harms.

** Not every disclosure of information about perceived wrongdoing or malpractice will be a 'qualifying disclosure' and enable the worker/employee to receive protection by the Act.