



Raising a concern with UKAS

A quick guide about whistleblowing

Speaking out

You may be employed in an organisation that is accredited by UKAS and you may have concerns about what is happening where you work in terms of how your organisation complies with the requirements of accreditation. When the concern feels serious because it might affect colleagues or your whole organisation, it can be difficult to know what to do, especially if procedures are being followed which might be in contravention of UKAS requirements.

You may feel that raising the matter would be disloyal to colleagues, to managers or to 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 concern 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's job to ensure our customers are meeting the international standards, and take action if they do not.

UKAS's role is to assess against internationally agreed standards, organisations that provide certification, testing, inspection and calibration services. If we find that they are not meeting these standards, we take action to make them. If the conformity assessment body does not do what we ask and we believe the organisation is not in compliance, we have a range of sanctions we can apply*.

The concerns don't have to be restricted to this type of activity. Whistleblowing can cover any 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 want to get independent advice first, or contact your trade union or professional regulatory body.

*However, please note that UKAS is not a regulatory authority and therefore cannot close organisations down or stop them operating.

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 own organisation's whistleblowing policy, if there is one, and follow that.
4. If you have tried all these, or you do not feel able to raise your concern internally, you can raise your concern in confidence with us at UKAS.

Can I give UKAS information anonymously or in confidence?

It is best to raise your concern openly with us, because that makes it easier for us to follow it up. We will not disclose your identity without your consent unless there are legal reasons that require us to do so.

You can if you wish give us information anonymously. However, note that we won't be able to contact you to discuss your concern or ask you for further information, and we won't be able to give you any feedback about any action we take.

What will UKAS do with my information?

We have a specially trained team, who process all whistleblowing concerns that come in to us. All emails, phone calls, letters are followed-up until completion.

A quick guide to the law

The term 'whistleblower' may be used to describe people who make a 'qualifying disclosure' about a concern at work.* Where a worker suffers a 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 Interest Disclosure Act 1998, often referred to as 'PIDA'). In practice, this is likely to mean that they 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 cannot advise you on this or any other legal matter. We cannot intervene, be involved in or advise on any dispute you might have with an employer resulting from any concern you might wish to raise with UKAS, or any underlying or other employment issue.

If you have any concerns about making a disclosure to UKAS you should seek your own independent advice from a lawyer, 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 harm.

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