

University of Birmingham

Anti-Fraud Policy Statement

Introduction

The University of Birmingham is committed to the prevention of fraud and the promotion of an anti-fraud culture.

The University operates a zero-tolerance attitude to fraud and requires staff to act honestly and with integrity at all times, and to report all reasonable suspicions of fraud.

The University will investigate all instances of actual, attempted and suspected fraud committed by staff, students, suppliers, subsidiaries and other third parties, and will seek to recover funds and assets lost through fraud. Perpetrators will be subject to disciplinary and/or legal action.

This policy is endorsed and supported by the Registrar and Secretary, Chief Financial Officer, Director of Legal Services and the Head of Internal Audit on behalf of the University Executive Board.

Definition of fraud

The term 'fraud' is commonly used to describe the use of deception to deprive, disadvantage or cause loss to another person or party, or to obtain financial gain. This can include theft, the misuse of funds or other resources, or more complicated crimes such as false accounting and the supply of false information.

Examples include purchasing items for personal use using University funds, unapproved use of University assets for personal gain, falsely claiming overtime or travel expenses, or undertaking activities for personal gain during paid University time without appropriate approval.

Individuals can be prosecuted under the Fraud Act 2006 if they make a false representation, fail to disclose information or abuse their position.

The University has established procedures to encourage staff to report actual, attempted or suspected fraud and/or other forms of illegal activity without fear of reprisal. The Fraud Response Plan clarifies the process to be followed and reporting of the investigation.

Key responsibilities

The Vice-Chancellor is responsible for:

- Ensuring that as soon as is reasonably practicable any incident of actual or suspected fraud is reported to the Chair of Council and the Chair of the Audit Committee where required under the Fraud Response Policy, and determining whether a report should be made to the OfS as a Reportable Event under the Regulatory Framework. .

The Chief Financial Officer is responsible for:

- Developing, implementing and maintaining adequate systems of financial management and internal control to prevent and detect fraud.

The Registrar and Secretary is responsible for:

- Initiating the Fraud Response Policy on receipt of actual or suspected incidents of significant fraud or irregularity which are deemed to be of sufficient materiality.

The Director of Legal Services is responsible for:

- Initiating the investigation to ensure that it is performed under legal privilege where the suspected fraud could have significant legal, financial or reputational consequences.

The Head of Internal Audit is responsible for:

- Liaising with the Registrar and Secretary, Director of Legal Services, Chief Financial Officer and other officers as required as part of the investigation into actual or suspected fraud,
- Briefing the Chief of Staff, who is responsible for OfS reporting matters, as soon as possible to provide advice to the Vice-Chancellor as Accountable Officer on reporting the matter to OfS,
- Providing reports on serious incidents and fraud to the Audit Committee.

Staff are responsible for:

- Maintaining and monitoring compliance with internal controls and agreed policies and procedures,
- Immediately reporting details of any suspected fraud, whether by an employee or an external organisation, and
- Assisting in the investigation of suspected fraud.

Reporting suspicions

Staff should report concerns about actual, attempted or suspected fraud to their line manager, who will in turn inform the Registrar and Secretary in line with the University's Whistleblowing Policy. Advice may be obtained from the Head of Internal Audit, Chief Financial Officer, or Director of Legal Services over the appropriate steps to take. Staff should not attempt to investigate any fraud themselves.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 protects employees who raise concerns about certain matters of public interest in good faith. Staff can obtain free independent advice from the charity Public Concern at Work using the following link: <http://www.pcaw.org.uk/>

A copy of the Whistleblowing Policy can be found on the intranet or can be obtained from the following link (Appendix C): <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/council-code-of-practice.pdf>

Fraud response plan

The University has established guidelines for senior managers on the immediate actions to be taken in the event of a fraud being discovered or suspected within their area of responsibility. It covers reporting and recording requirements, securing evidence and preventing further losses, and the investigation process.

A copy of the Fraud Response Plan can be found on the intranet or can be obtained from the following link (Appendix E): <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/council-code-of-practice.pdf>

Last review and updated: March 2024

Other relevant policies:

- [Anti-Bribery Policy](#)
- [Gifts and Hospitality Policy](#)
- [Code of Practice on Corporate Governance](#)
- [Conflict of Interest](#)
- [Fraud Response Plan](#)
- [Manual of Financial Rules](#) which includes [Proceeds of Crime](#) / [Anti-Money Laundering](#)
- [Procurement Procedures](#)
- [Whistleblowing](#)
- [Code of Ethics](#)