



Anti-Fraud, Corruption and Bribery Policy

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Anti-Fraud, Corruption and Bribery Policy

Background

Aim2Learn Ltd (A2L) takes its responsibilities for protecting public money very seriously. It recognises that the public has the right to expect A2L Senior Management and employees to:

- At all times fully comply with all the legislation to which they are subject;
- Conduct business in a totally honest and ethical manner;
- Maintain A2L's business free from the adverse effects of fraud and corruption;
- Positively encourage prevention;
- Devise cultures and procedures to enable detection;
- Vigorously investigate substantiated complaints;
- Conduct confidential and fair investigations;
- Take all appropriate actions where fraud and corruption is suspected.

A2L also values its reputation for ethical behaviour, for financial probity and reliability, and recognise that over and above the commission of any crime, any involvement in bribery will also have an adverse effect on image and reputation. To limit A2L's exposure to fraud, corruption and bribery our aims are:

- Having a clear anti-fraud, corruption and bribery policy in place
- Encouraging all staff to be vigilant and to report any suspicion of bribery, providing them with suitable channels of communication and ensuring sensitive information is treated appropriately
- Rigorously investigating instances of alleged bribery and assisting the police and other appropriate authorities in any resultant prosecution
- Taking firm action and vigorous action against any individual (s) involved in fraud, corruption and bribery

This policy sets out A2L's approach to fraud, corruption and bribery and is designed to encourage prevention, assist detection and identify a defined route for investigation.

Introduction

A2L requires all staff, members and contractors to act honestly at all times and protect the public resources they are responsible for. Fraud is an ever-present threat to these resources.

A2L prohibits any inducement which results in a personal gain or advantage to the recipient, or any person or body associated with them, and which is intended to influence them to take action which may not be solely in the interests of A2L. This policy is not meant to prohibit the following practices, providing they are customary in a particular sector/market and are proportionate and are correctly recorded:

- Normal and appropriate hospitality
- The giving of a ceremonial gift on a festival or at another special time
- The use of any recognised fast-track process which is available to all on payment of a fee

- The offer of resources to assist the person or body to make the decision more efficiently provided that they are supplied for that purpose only

A2L is committed to making sure that money paid out in Benefits goes to those entitled to receive it.

A2L is fully committed to the provisions of the Public Interest Act 1998 (known as the “Whistleblowing” Act) and its Members and Officers are positively encouraged to report any suspicions or concerns that they may have about such matters as:

- The committing of a criminal offence
- Non-compliance with a legal obligation
- The perpetration of a miscarriage of justice
- The endangering of health and safety
- The damaging of the environment
- The concealing of any information relating to any of the above matters.

See Aim2Learn’s Whistleblowing Policy.

Definitions

In law, a person is guilty of fraud if they are in breach of any of the following:

- False representation
- Failing to disclose information
- Abuse of position

Fraud occurs where a person unlawfully obtains money or other property belonging to another person or organisation by knowingly giving false information or omitting to declare information. It may include stealing, forgery and falsification of records.

Corruption involves the offering and acceptance of a reward for doing something or perhaps not doing something and would usually occur in connection with contracts.

Bribery occurs when a person offers, promises or gives an advantage, directly or indirectly, to another person, intending that a person is rewarded for, or induced to, perform a relevant function of activity improperly.

Improper is when there is a breach of good faith, impartiality or trust.

Whistleblowing in this policy refers to the disclosure, by staff, of malpractice, illegal acts or omissions at work.

Responsibilities

Aim2Learn’s responsibilities

A2L will develop and maintain effective controls to prevent fraud, corruption and bribery, and make sure that if it does occur, it will be detected quickly. If fraud, corruption or bribery is suspected, a prompt and vigorous investigation will be carried out. Appropriate legal and disciplinary action will be taken in all cases where justified and, if necessary, the police will be informed.

A2L has established systems for recording and subsequently monitoring all discovered cases of fraud, corruption and/or bribery. The investigation will always consider if there has been a failure of supervision and if so, disciplinary action will be taken. Changes to systems and procedures will also be made to ensure similar frauds do not happen again.

A2L has whistle blowing procedures in place.

Management

A2L recognises that a key preventative measure in the fight against fraud, corruption and bribery is to take effective steps at the recruitment stage to establish, as far as possible, the previous record of potential staff, in terms of their propriety and integrity. In this regard, temporary and contract staff should be treated in the same manner as permanent staff. The appropriate procedure, which will include obtaining written references, will be laid down A2L Senior management.

Management must ensure that all their staff are fully conversant with the rules, regulations and procedures in place for the prevention of fraud, corruption and bribery.

Managers are responsible for making sure an effective system of internal control exists within their areas of responsibility and that such controls operate effectually. There is a need for all managers to assess the types of risk involved in the operations for which they are responsible; to regularly review and test the control systems for which they are responsible; to ensure that controls are being complied with; and to satisfy themselves that their systems continue to operate effectively.

In terms of establishing and maintaining effective controls; wherever possible, managers should ensure that:

- There are separation of duties so that control of a key function is not vested in one individual;
- Backlogs are not allowed to accumulate;

It is accepted that a reduction in staff numbers may make the above impractical, but every effort should be made to ensure that internal controls remain adequate for the prevention and detection of fraud.

Employees

Staff are required to comply strictly with all regulations, rules and instructions that are promulgated with the objective of preventing fraud, corruption and bribery. Principal amongst these are:

- The Employee's Code of Conduct and Gifts and Hospitality rules
- Contract Standing Orders and Financial Procedure Rules
- Section 117 of the Local Government Act 1972 (Disclosure of Interest in Contracts)
- Any Code of Conduct or Practice of a professional body of which the employee is a member
- Bribery Act 2010

- Fraud Act 2006

As stewards of public funds, employees must have, and be seen to have, high standards of personal integrity. Staff should not accept gifts, hospitality or benefits of any kind from a third party that might be seen to compromise their integrity.

Every employee has a duty to ensure public funds are safeguarded, whether they are involved with cash or payments systems, receipts, stocks or dealings with contractors or suppliers. Staff should alert their line manager when they believe the opportunity for fraud, corruption or bribery exists because of poor procedures or controls.

Where IT systems are being used, all parties are required to comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act and GDPR.

Staff are expected to raise concerns that they may have about the way the service is provided, or about any possible impropriety or serious breach of procedures.

A2L will consider disciplinary action against the employee raising the allegation in circumstances where:

- They are shown to have acted maliciously; or
- They are acting for personal gain.

Working with Others

An essential part of maintaining a positive approach to tackling fraud, corruption and bribery is to maintain good working relationships with other bodies administering public funds, or with investigation responsibilities. These include:

- Department for Works and Pensions;
- Jobcentre Plus;
- Other local authorities.

A2L also participates in the National Fraud Initiative, which is a data matching exercise largely around housing benefit claimants, employees and suppliers, and which complies with data protection requirements.

Detection and Investigation

It is often the alertness of staff, Members and the public to indicators of fraud, corruption and bribery that enables detection to occur and the appropriate action to take place.

Despite the best efforts of managers and auditors, many frauds are discovered by chance or by tip-off or whistle blowing. A2L has in place arrangements to enable such information to be properly dealt with.

Aim2Learn Ltd expects:

- Any suspected incidence of fraud, corruption and bribery to be promptly and fully investigated
- If fraud, corruption and/or bribery is found to have occurred, disciplinary action will be taken without delay
- That the findings of an investigation will, in most cases, be submitted to the police for consideration for prosecution.

A2L expects the fullest co-operation from all staff and officers who are called upon to assist with an investigation into suspected fraud, corruption and bribery.

Training

A2L recognises that the continuing success of its Anti-Fraud, Corruption and Bribery Policy and its general credibility will depend largely on the effectiveness of training programmes and responsiveness of staff throughout the organisation. To facilitate this, members and employees receive training on their responsibilities and duties in this respect as part of the induction process. This training is also reinforced and refreshed regularly. Employees are actively engaged in the prevention and detection of fraud, corruption and bribery are adequately trained in the special skills necessary to carry out these functions.

Conclusion

This policy statement outlines the emphasis and importance that A2L places on integrity, propriety and accountability in the conduct of its business. A2L has in place a clear network of systems and procedures to assist it in the fight against fraud, corruption and bribery. It is determined that these arrangements will keep pace with any future developments in both preventative and detection techniques regarding fraudulent or corrupt activity that may affect its operation. A2L will therefore periodically review and update its arrangements for the detection and prevention of fraud and corruption.