

Protected Reporting Guide

Guidance on making a Protected Report to the Regulatory Authority

Version 2

Date Approved: 17 May 2022

Introduction

1. Protected reporting is also commonly known as "Whistleblowing". This protected reporting policy is used to establish an effective and independent framework that allows persons (including employees, customers, shareholders, vendors and suppliers) to confidentially submit reports of certain suspected misconduct within the Qatar Financial Centre ("QFC"), relating to QFC authorised firms or persons connected with the firm, to the Regulatory Authority.

Objective

2. The objective of this guide is to provide guidance regarding:
 - a. what can be reported to the Regulatory Authority under the Protected reporting regime;
 - b. how to make a protected report;
 - c. management of a protected report; and
 - d. protection of a protected reporter.

Lodging Protected Report

3. The following is the guidance for how to lodge a protected report under this policy:

Who should report?

4. Any person can report a concern of known or suspected misconduct regarding a QFC authorised firm or a person connected with a QFC authorised firm.

What should be reported?

5. Anyone who wants to raise concerns under this policy should report known or suspected misconduct by a QFC authorised firm or a connected person relating to the following:
 - a. Breaches of any law or regulations, regulatory directives or statutes (whether in the QFC, Qatar or another jurisdiction);
 - b. All forms of financial malpractice or impropriety, potential fraud and corruption;
 - c. Improper conduct or unethical behaviour;
 - d. Health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as to the employees;

- e. a breach of a QFC authorised firm's policies and procedures (including, for example, a breach of any code of conduct or policy in relation to ethical behaviour); and
- f. Attempts to conceal any of the above.

What should not be reported under this policy?

- 6. The following are examples of the concerns that should not be reported under this policy:
 - a. Employee grievances or complaints of harassment
 - b. Matters (complaints) that fall with the jurisdiction of the Customer Dispute Resolution Scheme ("CDRS").

How to make a Protected Report to the Regulatory Authority:

- 7. A protected report can be made via the following methods:

Through Website, (web portal)

- 8. A protected report can be made through a web portal available on the Regulatory Authority website by filling-in the necessary information into a Protected Report form.
- 9. Link to the web portal can be found at: <https://www.qfcra.com/Whistleblowing/>

Through Email

- 10. A protected report can be made through email to whistleblowing@QFCRA.COM.

Through a Letter

- 11. A protected report can be made in written form, and sent to the Regulatory Authority via post (PO Box no. 22989) addressed to the Protected Reporting Team at the QFC Regulatory Authority. The letter should be placed in a sealed envelope marked as "Private and Confidential" and "To be opened by Addressee only".

Management of Protected Reporting

- 12. The following shows the management of a Protected Report at the Regulatory Authority:

Action Description	Actions by Regulatory Authority
Acknowledgment	The Regulatory Authority will, if able to, acknowledge all reports.

Action Description	Actions by Regulatory Authority
Determining if the "Protected Report" is within the scope	Upon receiving the report, the Regulatory Authority will determine whether the report is within the scope. If the matters reported do not fall under the scope, the report will be classified as "Out of Scope". The Regulatory Authority may refer such out of scope matters to the respective QFC firms for their actions. However, the Regulatory Authority will maintain the confidentiality of the reporter while referring the matter to the firm.
Assessment and Investigation of protected reports	The Regulatory Authority will carry out investigations of all protected reports at its discretion considering the sensitivity of the reported matters and whether the matters reported involve victimisation or retaliation.
Feedback	The Regulatory Authority will provide feedback about initiating a review and completion of investigation to the protected reporter unless they are unable to contact the protected reporter or such feedback will be detrimental to the investigation or the QFC.

Protecting the protected reporter

13. A protected reporter is assured of the confidentiality of the information provided and is protected from any reprisal or victimisation.

Confidentiality

14. The individuals who will be reviewing a protected report at the Regulatory Authority will keep confidential the identity of a protected reporter and the information provided, unless required by law or as a necessary part of the investigation process.

No Victimisation or Retaliation

15. The Regulatory Authority will not tolerate any sort of harassment, victimisation and retaliation towards a protected reporter; towards anyone who assists in investigating a protected report; and towards anybody who cooperates with the investigation. Such harassment, victimisation or retaliation is prohibited: see the *General Rules 2005 (GENE)*, Chapter 4A¹.
16. In such situations where there is a protected report, anyone who assisted in investigating a protected report and anybody who cooperates with the investigation and who is subject to victimisation/retaliation, must inform the Regulatory Authority

¹ Victimising, or retaliating against, a person for making a protected report, or assisting in or cooperating with the investigation of such a report, is a contravention of a relevant requirement, and the Regulatory Authority may take action against a person for such victimisation or retaliation.

through the channels mentioned in paragraphs 8 - 11 of this policy. The Regulatory Authority will investigate all such allegations.

Protected Reporting- Specific matters

Report made in bad faith

17. If after a preliminary investigation, the Regulatory Authority finds that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the protected report is not made in good faith, it will not be further investigated and will be considered out of scope.

Reporter seeking protection from Disciplinary Review

18. If a person is involved in a contravention of a relevant requirement, and then makes a protected report about a contravention to the Regulatory Authority, the Regulatory Authority can still take disciplinary action against the person under the Financial Services Regulations.

Reports made in relation to Regulatory Authority staff

19. Protected reports made in relation to Regulatory Authority staff will be dealt with directly by the Protected Reporting Team at the Regulatory Authority unless the matter involves a grievance, which would be appropriately handled by HR.

Inquiries

20. All inquiries in relation to this policy can be made directly to the Protected Reporting Team by email whistleblowing@QFCRA.COM.