

# **VIGIL MECHANISM / WHISTLE BLOWER POLICY**

**IIM LUCKNOW  
ENTERPRISE INCUBATION CENTER  
[IIML EIC]**

**Date of Adoption: 01st September 2022**

IIM Lucknow Enterprise Incubation Centre (hereinafter referred to as “IIML-EIC” or “the Company”), believes in promoting a fair, transparent, ethical and professional work environment. Towards this end, the Company has adopted the Code of Conduct (hereinafter referred to as “Code”), which lays down the principles and standards that govern the Company and its employees. Any actual or potential violation of the Code, insignificant or perceived, would be a matter of serious concern for the Company. The role of the stakeholders of the Company in pointing out the violations of the Code is an important one. The Code of Conduct of IIML-EIC strongly encourages raising concerns regarding any violation of the Code and to report these immediately.

Accordingly, this Whistleblower Policy (“the Policy”) has been formulated with a view to provide a mechanism for a Whistle Blower to approach the Company.

## **A. POLICY DETAILS**

### **i) Scope & Applicability**

This Policy is applicable to the Company and covers all their employees (including their representative bodies) and directors. The Policy also extends to all consultants, vendors, suppliers, dealers, customers and contractors working for and/ or on behalf of the Company. There are no exclusions of this Policy.

### **ii) Coverage**

Any allegation which may fall within the scope of the concerns identified below will be considered and investigated accordingly. These “concerns” would include but are not restricted to following:

- a. Inaccuracy in maintaining and/or manipulating the Company’s books of account and financial records, confidential information
- b. Financial misappropriation and fraud including suspected fraud
- c. Misappropriation or fraud while procuring goods or services for the Company
- d. Conflict of interest with company interest or incubatee or investors in incubatee
- e. False expense reimbursement
- f. Misuse of Company’s assets and resources, position, power or authority for personal gain
- g. Inappropriate sharing of Company’s sensitive information
- h. Corruption and bribery
- i. Non-adherence to Code of Conduct including applicable laws/regulations and policies/procedures of IIML-EIC suppressing or trying to suppress such misconduct
- j. Any other matter or activity which may affect the interest or reputation of the Company.

The Whistle Blower may raise a concern in good faith that discloses or demonstrates information that may evidence unethical behavior or improper activity.

Nevertheless, any significant issue which individuals may feel is in the Company's interest to resolve, whether or not it technically falls within the definition above, should be reported internally in accordance with this Policy.

The Whistle Blowers' role is that of a reporting party with reliable information. They are not required or expected to act as investigators or finder of facts, nor would they determine the appropriate corrective or remedial action that may be warranted in a given case.

Whistle Blowers should not act on their own in conducting any investigative activities, nor do they have a right to participate in any investigative activities other than as requested by the person investigating the matter.

### C. DEFINITIONS

The definitions of some of the key terms used in this Policy are given below.

- a) **“Committee”** means the committee constituted by Faculty in charge and/or Managing Director for investigating matters arising out of whistleblower complaint and referred to the committee by the Faculty in charge and/or Managing Director
- b) **“Company”** or **“IIML-EIC”** means IIM Lucknow Enterprise Incubation Centre.
- c) **“Competent authority”** will be head of operations
- d) **“Corrupt”** means having or showing a willingness to act dishonestly in return for money or wrongful personal gain.
- e) **“Disciplinary Action”** means any action that can be taken on completion of/ during the investigation proceedings including but not limited to a warning, imposition of fine, suspension / termination from official duties or any such action as is deemed to be fit considering the seriousness of the matter.
- f) **“Employee”** means any employee or director of the Company and includes contract employees, apprentices, interns and trainees.
- g) **“Incubatee”** means startup enrolled for incubation at the company and having valid incubation agreement
- h) **“Fraud”** includes any act, omission, concealment of any fact or abuse of position committed by any person with intent to deceive, to gain undue advantage from, or to injure the interests of, the Company or its shareholders or its creditors or any other person, whether or not there is any wrongful gain or wrongful loss. This may include the embezzlement of Company funds or the misappropriation of Company assets in the form of money, property, data or intellectual property. The term “fraudulent” would be construed accordingly.

- i) **“Investigators”** means persons authorized, appointed, consulted or approached by Faculty in charge and/or Managing Director of the Company.
- j) **“Protected Disclosure”** means a concern raised by a written communication made in good faith that discloses or demonstrates information that may evidence unethical or improper activity within the Company. Protected disclosure should be factual and not speculative in nature.
- k) **“Subject”** means a person against whom or in relation to whom a Protected Disclosure is made.
- l) **“Whistle Blower”** means an employee or any person associated with IIML-EIC making a Protected Disclosure in terms of this Policy.

#### **D. SAFEGUARD**

This Policy is designed to offer protection to individuals who make Protected Disclosure, provided the same is:

- made in good faith;
- in the reasonable belief of the individual making the disclosure that the concern tends to show malpractice or impropriety; and
- made to an appropriate person.

The faculty in charge and /or Managing Director would ensure protection of the Whistle Blower from discrimination, victimization, retaliation, or adoption of any unfair employment practices. However, if the concern raised is found to be completely false or frivolous or malafide, appropriate disciplinary action may be taken against the Whistle Blower.

#### **E. CONFIDENTIALITY**

This Policy encourages individuals to put their names to any disclosure they make. A Whistle Blower would be given the option to keep his/her identity anonymous while reporting an incidence. The Company will make no attempt to discover the identity of an anonymous Whistleblower. If the Whistle Blower’s identity becomes known during the course of the investigation, IIML-EIC will ensure that the identity of the Whistle Blower will be kept anonymous and confidential to the extent possible, unless required by law or in legal proceedings. However, the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and the individual making the disclosure may need to provide a statement as part of the evidence required and be prepared (if required) to participate in any investigation proceedings that may follow.

A Whistle Blower reporting major issues like child labour, corruption, fraud etc. would necessarily need to disclose their identity to enable effective investigation. Any other employee serving as witness or assisting in the said investigation would also be protected to the same extent as the Whistle Blower.

#### **F. UNTRUE ALLEGATIONS**

In making a disclosure, the Whistle Blower should exercise due care to ensure the accuracy of the information. If a Whistle Blower makes an allegation in good faith, which is not confirmed by subsequent

investigation, no action will be taken against that Whistle Blower. If however, a Whistle Blower makes malicious or aggravating allegations, and particularly if he/she persists despite the outcome of the investigation, disciplinary action may be taken against the Whistle Blower.

## **G. PROCEDURE FOR MAKING A DISCLOSURE**

The purpose of the Policy is to ensure that all concerns are dealt with in a consistent and fair manner. It aims at encouraging Whistle Blowers to make Protected Disclosures by following the procedure below.

In addition to the Company's internal procedures, certain law enforcement agencies are authorized to review questionable accounting or auditing matters or potentially fraudulent financial reports or data.

Nothing in this Policy is intended to prevent a Whistle Blower from reporting information to the appropriate agencies when the Whistle Blower has reasonable cause to believe that there is a violation of law. However, in forming such an opinion, the Whistle Blower must approach the Faculty in charge and/or Managing Director first. Only if the internal procedure for dealing with such situations is improper or inadequate, should an individual resort to reporting his/her concern to an external party.

### **H.1 RAISING A CONCERN**

The faculty in charge and/or Managing Director, on receiving the complaint shall manage the Vigil Mechanism by committee. The Committee will be responsible to act on the incident reports received from the Ethics Email or other Protected Disclosures as may be received in an unbiased manner and shall take necessary actions to maintain confidentiality. The Committee will identify the resources who would conduct the investigation, based on the nature of the issue reported.

The Whistle Blowers may raise their concerns to the Committee by way of Ethics Email established by the Company or by making Protected Disclosures. If the complaint is against any member of the Committee, or in any way, is related to the actions of the Committee, it should be raised to the Faculty in charge and/or Managing Director of the Company and any further complaint against the Faculty in charge and/or Managing Director should be raised to the other directors of the Board. The Directors of the Company will nominate an appropriate person to investigate the matter.

If initial enquiries by the Faculty in charge and/or Managing Director or Board indicate that the concern has no basis, or it is not a matter to be investigated /

pursued under this policy, it may be dismissed at that stage and the decision shall be documented.

## **H.2 HOW TO REPORT PROTECTED DISCLOSURE**

A Whistle Blower may raise a concern or complaint through any of the reporting channels as per the details given in Appendix A. The Whistle Blowers will be provided with a reference number for their Protected Disclosures that can be used to provide any additional information or seek feedback or updates on actions taken by the Company.

## **H.3 INVESTIGATION PROCEDURE**

Any person (coming within the Scope of this Policy as a Whistle Blower) is encouraged to, in good faith, promptly disclose information about any 'Serious Violation' in relation to the Organization. Such disclosure of information may be done in writing through electronic mail to: **whistleblower@iiml.ac.in** or through the offline mode i.e. the physical mode in a sealed/ closed envelop and should be addressed to **Competent Authority (COO / Head-Operations), IIM Lucknow-EIC(Noida Campus); B-1, Front Ave, Institutional Area, Block B, Industrial Area, Sector-62, Noida, Uttar Pradesh 201307**

The Head of the operations shall be the 'Competent Authority' responsible to operate/open the above email/envelop.

In all instances of disclosure of information relating to any 'Unethical Behaviour', the 'competent authority' shall undertake a preliminary review of the matter and decide whether or not it should be referred to the concerned Disciplinary Authority of the organization for any further necessary action. Upon such a referral, the concerned Disciplinary Authority of IIML EIC shall proceed to review the facts of the matter, and if found necessary, set up an investigating committee to investigate the matter and to recommend the action to be taken, if any. The Disciplinary Authority, while constituting an investigating committee, shall ensure that members bear the necessary competence and expertise to address the nature of issues involved in the particular matter.

If the complaint is made against the Senior Executive or against any Directors, then it may be referred directly to the Chairman of the Designated Committee, by taking due care.

### **Investigating Timeline Process**

<b>Process Action</b>	<b>Time limit</b>
Acknowledgement of email/letter by the competent authority	Within 48 hours

Preliminary review and any referral to the concerned investigating committee by the competent authority	Within 7 working days from the date of acknowledgement
Information on referral to the whistle Blower by the competent authority	Within 4 working dates from the date of referral
Review, investigation, any enquiry, and formal completion of proceedings by the concerned Investigating committee	Within 45-60 days from the date of acknowledgement
Information on decision of the Investigating Committee to the whistle blower by the Competent Authority	Within 2 working days from the date of the completion of proceedings

The competent authority will prepare a report based on the information provided by the Whistle Blower and will share the same with the Faculty in charge and/or Managing Director in the next 3 business days.

The investigation will be carried out to determine the authenticity of the allegations and for fact-finding process. The investigation team should not consist of any member with possible involvement in the said allegation.

During the investigation, full details and clarification of the Protected Disclosure will be obtained from the Whistle Blower as soon as the concern/ Protected Disclosure is received and it should be in writing. Though, the Whistle Blower need not prove the truth of the allegation, yet he/she will be expected to demonstrate that there is sufficient ground for the concern raised.

Each Protected Disclosure shall be reviewed by the Faculty in charge and/or Managing Director, which may consult with any member of management or employee, or external party who is believed to have appropriate expertise or information to assist the investigation.

The Faculty in charge and/or Managing Director shall have the right to dismiss a complaint on the basis of the type of complaint, quality and accuracy of the preliminary evidence provided or any other valid factor(s) in view of the Faculty in charge and/or Managing Director.

Where initial enquiries indicate that further investigation is necessary, it will be conducted by the Committee constituted in an unbiased manner, without presumption of guilt. The Committee may, at its sole discretion and if considered appropriate, shall be free to engage outside auditors, counsel or other experts to assist in the investigation and in the analysis of the results. All decisions will be minuted.

If there is an evidence to support that alleged conduct involves criminal activity, the

Committee in consultation with Faculty in charge and/or Managing Director may inform the appropriate authorities.

The Company will ensure that any internal investigation does not hinder a formal police investigation.

The investigation shall normally be completed within 45 to 60 days from the date of receipt of the concern / Protected Disclosure. The said period may extend depending upon seriousness of the concern raised.

To the extent possible, the Whistle Blower will be informed of the progress of the investigation and, if appropriate, of the final outcome. If the Whistle Blower is not satisfied that the concern raised is being properly dealt with by the Committee, he/she has the right to raise it to the Faculty in charge and/or Managing Director of the Company. However, where a Whistle Blower makes an appeal to the Faculty in charge and/or Managing Director of the Company, it will be mandatory for the Whistle Blowers to disclose their identity and provide their contact information and proper and verifiable evidence/data must be supported with the appeal.

A person who has committed or has been involved in unacceptable conduct will not be immune from disciplinary action, merely because he has reported the unacceptable conduct in accordance with the Policy.

## **I. PROTECTION**

- a. No unfair treatment will be meted out to a Whistle Blower by virtue of his/her having reported a Protected Disclosure under this Policy. The Company, as a policy, condemns any kind of discrimination, harassment, victimization or any other unfair employment practice being adopted against Whistle Blowers. Complete protection will, therefore, be given to Whistle Blowers against any unfair practice like retaliation, threat or intimidation of termination/suspension of service, disciplinary action, transfer, demotion, refusal of promotion, or the like including any direct or indirect use of authority to obstruct the Whistle Blower's right to continue to perform his/her duties/functions including making further Protected Disclosure. The Company will take steps to minimize difficulties, which the Whistle Blower may experience as a result of making the Protected Disclosure.
- b. If a Whistle Blower is victimized, discriminated or retaliated against, he/ she may lodge a complaint with the Committee. Such complaint shall be promptly investigated and appropriate actions shall be taken.

An employee who retaliates against a Whistle Blower will be subject to disciplinary action including termination of employment.

- c. Protection under this Policy will not mean protection from disciplinary action arising out of false or vague allegations made by a Whistle Blower knowing it to be false, vague or with malafide intention. A Whistle Blower, who makes a



Protected Disclosure, which is subsequently found to be malafide, frivolous or malicious, shall be liable to be prosecuted under the Company's Code of Conduct.

- d. Any other Employee assisting in the said investigation shall also be protected to the same extent as the Whistle Blower.
- e. This protection shall also be available to employees, consultants, contractors or other individuals who offer evidence or make written statements or otherwise participate in the investigation.
- f. This protection shall also be available to the Subjects against whom a complaint has been raised under this Policy. The right to punish the Subject, if found guilty, lies only with the Committee of the Company, as the case may be, and thus Subject should also be duly protected against any unnecessary harassment by the other employees of the Company.

#### **J. RECORD KEEPING**

The Committee will keep confidential records of all documents relating to allegations or concerns and report to the Committee on a regular basis. All documents relating to every complaint, including the report of the outcome of such complaint shall be retained by the Company for a period of 8 (eight) years.

#### **K. BREACH OF POLICY**

An Employee who:

- a. is guilty of an act with intent of breaching any provisions of the Policy; or
- b. hinders with the investigation being conducted by the Committee of the Company; or
- c. conceals or tampers with any evidence

shall be subject to such disciplinary action as decided by the Company, which may include wage freeze, suspension or termination from service. The disciplinary action taken by the Company will be in addition to any other penalty or re-course as may be prescribed under applicable statute(s) governing such matter or breach.

#### **L. REFERENCES**

The Policy should be referred to in conjunction, amongst others, with the following:

- Company's Code of Conduct and

#### **M. AMENDMENT**

The Company holds the right to amend or modify the Policy, without assigning any reason whatsoever, at least once in three years or as and when deemed suitable. Any amendment or modification of the Policy would be done by appropriate authority as mandated in law. The updated Vigil Mechanism/ Whistle Blower

Policy shall be made available to all the stakeholders of the Company as soon as the amended Policy becomes notified.

#### **APPENDIX A: Reporting Channels**

<b>Sl. No.</b>	<b>Reporting Channel</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Availability</b>
1.	E-mail	<b>whistleblower@iiml.ac.in</b>	24*7