MERCURY

Whistleblowing & Complaint Handling

25 – 29 January 2027
Cape Town (South Africa)



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Ref: 16395_1070727 **Date:** 25 – 29 January 2027 **Location:** Cape Town (South Africa) **Fees:** 5300 Euro

Introduction:

The Whistleblowing and Complaint Handling course equips participants with deep theoretical foundations and practical frameworks for managing internal reports of wrongdoing, grievances, and complaints. The course explores the ethical, legal, organizational, and procedural dimensions of whistleblower systems and complaint resolution.

The Whistleblowing and Complaint Handling scope covers both internal reporting systems and external escalation processes. Learners will examine the relationships between compliance, transparency, and protection against retaliation. They will learn how to design, implement, review, and govern effective complaint handling channels, as well as foster a speak-up culture and maintain robust complaint governance.

Targeted Groups:

This Whistleblowing and Complaint Handling training targets professionals seeking specialized knowledge and skills:

- Compliance officers and ethics managers.
- Human resources professionals and HR managers.
- Internal audit and risk management staff.
- Legal counsels working in organizational governance.
- Managers and supervisors are responsible for handling employee reports.
- Organizational development consultants.
- Regulatory and public sector officers involved with complaint systems.

Course Objectives:

Participants will achieve the following objectives by completing the Whistleblowing and Complaint Handling course:

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- Understand the core principles, definitions, and legal foundations of whistleblowing and complaint handling in organizational settings and across jurisdictions.
- Analyze internal and external reporting channels and distinguish between grievances, misconduct, and whistleblower disclosures.
- Develop policy frameworks and procedural flows for intake, investigation, follow-up, and feedback in complaint handling systems.
- Evaluate risks of retaliation, confidentiality breaches, and procedural failures, and design mitigation measures.
- Apply structured decision criteria and escalation rules to assess reported concerns.
- Create monitoring, audit, and review mechanisms to ensure continuous improvement of whistleblowing systems.
- Communicate with complainants or whistleblowers in a way that preserves trust and transparency throughout the investigation lifecycle.

Targeted Competencies:

Participants will gain the following competencies during the Whistleblowing and Complaint Handling program:

- The ability to interpret and apply applicable laws, directives, or regulations on whistleblower protection in diverse jurisdictions.
- Ability to differentiate between various types of complaints, misconduct, and public interest disclosures.
- Competence in designing complaint intake systems, secure reporting channels, triage, and escalation protocols.
- Capability to plan, oversee, and audit complaint investigations in a fair, objective, and transparent manner.
- Aptitude in crafting communication strategies that maintain confidentiality, manage expectations, and prevent retaliation.
- Strength to embed a speak-up culture in organizations, including change management for leadership and staff.
- Dexterity in measuring key performance indicators, conducting periodic reviews, and refining complaint handling systems.

Studying Scenarios:

In this Whistleblowing and Complaint Handling training, participants will develop their skills through the analysis of the following scenarios:

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- An employee reports alleged financial fraud in a department via an anonymous hotline.
- The manager receives a harassment complaint and must distinguish between a grievance and a whistleblower report.
- Complainant claims retaliation after filing a report; the system must determine corrective steps.
- A confidential report raises cross-jurisdictional legal issues, prompting consideration of escalation to the external regulator.
- Pattern of minor complaints indicates systemic risk — participants must propose a structural change.
- Complainant requests updates and challenges delays—how to communicate without breaching confidentiality.

Course Content:

Unit 1: Foundations of Whistleblowing & Complaint Handling:

- Definitions and distinctions: whistleblowing, complaint, grievance.
- Ethical underpinnings and organizational culture of speaking up.
- Legal frameworks, statutory protections, and regulatory obligations.
- Comparative models: EU Directive, U.S. frameworks, other jurisdictions.
- Benefits, Challenges, and Risks of Implementing a Whistleblower System.
- Linkages between transparency, accountability, and complaint governance.

Unit 2: Designing Reporting Channels & Intake Systems:

- Types of reporting channels: hotlines, web portals, in-person, and third-party.
- Ensuring anonymity, confidentiality, and secure communication.
- Intake triage and preliminary assessment.
- Filtering and categorization of reports thresholds, jurisdiction.
- Escalation rules and routing rules.
- Balancing accessibility vs misuse risks.

Unit 3: Investigation, Case Management & Decision-Making:

- Investigation planning: scope, objectives, methodologies.
- Evidence gathering, interviewing techniques, and documentation.
- Conflict of interest and independence safeguards.
- Decision criteria: substantiation, closure, remediation.
- Feedback loops: communicating results to the complainant or reporter.
- Corrective actions, sanctions, and follow-up.
- Handling appeals, new evidence, or reopened cases.

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Unit 4: Protection, Retaliation & Communication:

- Non-retaliation principles and policy design.
- Monitoring for retaliation and remedial interventions.
- Communication best practices: updates, transparency, trust.
- Maintaining confidentiality while meeting disclosure obligations.
- Messaging to external stakeholders and regulators.
- Training investigators and case managers in sensitive communication.
- Escalation when legal or regulatory reporting is required.

Unit 5: Governance, Audit & Continuous Improvement:

- Key performance indicators and metrics for complaint systems.
- Periodic review, evaluation, and audit procedures.
- Root cause analysis and systemic risk detection.
- Embedding a speak-up culture in leadership, HR, and communications.
- Change management for adoption and trust building.
- Benchmarking and comparing with best practices.
- Sustainability: refreshing policies, updating channels, and stakeholder feedback.

Final Insights & Key Takeaways:

A well-designed whistleblowing and complaint handling framework strengthens organizational integrity and builds stakeholder trust. This course empowers participants to architect robust, legally sound, and ethically credible systems for internal reporting and complaints resolution.