

# FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY

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## **1. Background & Context**

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 the College must allow individuals access to the information it holds. Bury College takes its responsibilities with regard to the Freedom of Information Act very seriously. This document provides a code of practice through which those responsibilities will be effectively managed.

## **2. Authority & Scope of these Guidelines**

The purpose of this Code of Practice is to ensure that the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 are adhered to and that:

- A significant volume of routinely published information is made available to the public as a matter of course via the Publication Scheme.
- Other information not included in the Publication Scheme is readily available on request and such a request is dealt with in a timely manner, and
- In cases where information is covered by an exemption, consideration is given as to whether or not the information should be released.

This guidance does not form part of the formal contract of employment. However, it is a condition of employment that employees abide by any policies, procedures, codes of practice and values, issued by Bury College.

## **3. Ownership**

Overall responsibility for this Code of Practice lies with the Data Protection/Freedom of Information Officer who will promote compliance with the Act within the College.

## **4. Responsibilities**

Compliance with the Freedom of Information Act is the responsibility of all Bury College employees. Any breach of this Act or of this document may lead to disciplinary action.

New members of staff will receive an introductory briefing on the Freedom of Information Act at induction. Guidelines and relevant information will be made available to existing members of staff electronically via the intranet or in alternative formats via requests to the Data Protection Officer / Freedom of Information Officer.

## 5. Systems & Processes

### 5.1 Available Guidance

Guidance on the procedures necessary to comply with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act is available on the intranet or from the Data Protection / Freedom of Information Officer.

### 5.2 The College Publication Scheme

The College's Publication Scheme is available electronically on the College website or on the intranet. Alternative formats will be made available upon request through the Data Protection / Freedom of Information Officer. The Publication Scheme will specify:

- What information the College makes routinely available to the public
- In what format that information is routinely available, and
- Whether or not there is a cost of providing that information

### 5.3 Specific Requests for Information

The Freedom of Information Act introduces two basic rights to individuals:

- The right to be told whether information exists, and
- The right to receive the information in a specific format

Information not made routinely available according to the College's Publication Scheme is available through a specific request for information.

Anybody can make a request for information and all requests will be dealt with the Data Protection / Freedom of Information officer or his/her nominees.

Request for information which is not routinely made available should be made in writing and a charge may be made for processing them. If information is requested which is subject to exemptions, this will be reviewed by the Data Protection / Freedom of Information Officer and requests may be denied. Anyone requesting such information will be advised of this fact in writing.

The College will respond to requests within 20 working days unless additional time is required to locate any information requested. If a fee is chargeable, this response period may be extended until the fee is paid. If there is likely to be a delay for either of these reasons, the applicant will be advised in writing by the Data Protection / Freedom of Information Officer or his/her nominees.

### 5.4 Fees & Charges

Unless otherwise specified information made available through the College's Publication Scheme will be free of charge.

The College reserves the right to charge an appropriate fee for processing

specific requests, this is in accordance with the Act and applicants will be advised of any such charges upon receipt of the request.

### *5.5 Complaints*

Complaints should be address to the Executive Director Students & Staff in the first instance. Complaints will be acknowledged immediately and a more comprehensive reply will normally be received within 21 days.

In the event that an applicant is unhappy with the outcome of the Complaints Procedure, she/he may request an independent review. Requests for an independent review should be made in writing to:

The Information Commissioner  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF