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# Freedom of Information Policy

Document status	
Document owner	Vice Principal Finance and Resources
Document author	Assistant Principal MIS
Document type	Policy
Date of document	November 2023
Version number	10
Review requirements	Annual
Date of next review	November 2024
Approval body	SLT
Publication	Staff intranet/website
Code	PO58

## **Contents**

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
1. Legal requirement	<b>3</b>
2. What is a publication scheme	<b>3</b>
3. Environmental information	<b>4</b>
4. Who we are	<b>4</b>
5. Accessing information covered by the publication scheme	<b>4</b>
6. Charges	<b>5</b>
7. What about information not covered in the publication scheme	<b>5</b>
8. Feedback	<b>5</b>
9. Further Information	<b>6</b>
<b>Guide to information</b>	<b>7-10</b>

## **Introduction**

### **1. Legal requirement**

1.1 Section 19 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (The Act) requires every public authority to adopt and maintain a publication scheme which has been approved by the Information Commissioner, and to publish information in accordance with the scheme. The scheme should specify:

- classes of information which the public authority publishes or intends to publish;
- how the information will be published, for example, online or in hard copy; and,
- if there is any charge for the information.

1.2 The scheme represents a commitment to publishing information within certain broad classes. It does not specify particular pieces of information or charges. The model scheme should not be altered. To show the actual information it makes available, a public authority should produce a guide to information which specifies the particular information it publishes, how it will be published and what charge, if any will be made.

1.4 The model scheme has been revised to encourage and help public authorities to improve and expand publication schemes through:

- proactively disseminating information
- consistently making information available
- providing uncomplicated and swift access to the information they routinely make available.

1.5 'Public authorities' are defined in the Act and include universities, further education colleges and sixth form colleges.

### **2. What is a publication scheme?**

2.1 A publication scheme is a document which sets out the kinds of information that a public authority should make routinely available. The information should be easy for the authority and any individual to find and use. The scheme is not a list of the actual publications, because this will change as new material is published or existing material revised. It is, however, the public authority's commitment to make available the information described.

2.2 The Model Publication Scheme and definitions provided by the Information Commissioners Office, [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk) for Colleges of Further Education, has been adopted by Wirral Metropolitan College with effect from January 2009.

2.3 A publication scheme must set out the classes, or categories, of information published. It must also make clear how the information described can be accessed and whether or not charges will be made. The model specifies seven classes of information:

- Class 1 Who we are and what we do

- Class 2 What we spend and how we spend it
- Class 3 What our priorities are and how we are doing
- Class 4 How we make decisions
- Class 5 Our policies and procedures
- Class 6 lists and registers
- Class 7 The services we offer

2.4 The College will be expected to make information in the model available unless:

- they do not hold the information
- the information is exempt under one of the Freedom of Information exemptions or Environmental Information Regulations (EIRs) exceptions, or its release is prohibited under another statute;
- the information is archived, out of date or otherwise inaccessible; or,
- it would be impractical or resource intensive to prepare the material for routine release.

### **3. Environmental Information**

3.1 The Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) require public authorities to make environmental information progressively available electronically.

3.2 Environmental information may feature in all seven classes of the scheme.

### **4. Who we are**

4.1 Wirral Metropolitan College is a general further education college, established as an independent Further and Higher Education Corporation with exempt charitable status under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.

### **5. Accessing information covered by the publication scheme**

5.1 The classes of information the College publishes are described in more detail in the Guide to Information.

5.2 Next to each class, the Guide indicates the manner in which the information described will be available. It also indicates whether charges apply to material in each class.

5.3 To request information available through our publication scheme, please contact:

**Freedom of Information Officer, Wirral Metropolitan College, Conway Park  
Campus, Birkenhead, Wirral, CH41 4NT**

5.4 Please note that a publication scheme relates to 'published' information. Therefore, material covered has already been prepared in a format ready for distribution.

### **6. Charges**

6.1 Printed information on courses and services offered by the College is available free of charge, as are packs issued to people responding to notices of job vacancies. If requested, the College will produce publications and documents in other formats where it is reasonably

practical to do so. For items not routinely available on request free of charge, or for items in requested formats which incur additional cost, the College will make a charge. The charge will normally comprise the cost of photocopying or scanning (current photocopying charges are 10p per mono paper copy and 50p per colour copy per page) or the direct cost of putting the other information into requested formats, plus postage if applicable. Electronic copies downloaded from the website or via e-mail are free. The College will take into account the costs it reasonably expects to incur in:

- determining whether it holds the information;
- locating the information, or a document containing it;
- retrieving the information, or a document containing it; and
- extracting the information from a document containing it

6.2 The College can take into account the costs attributable to the time that the staff would be expected to spend on these activities. Such costs are calculated at £25 per hour preparation. The upper limit of fees chargeable in respect of requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act (2000) currently stands at £450 as per section 6 of the Fees Regulations.

## **7. What about information not covered by the publication scheme?**

7.1 From 1 January 2005 you will have the right, under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, to request any information held by a public authority which it has not already made available through its publication scheme.

7.2 Requests will have to be made in writing and, in general, public authorities will have 20 working days to respond. We will not be required to release Information to which an exemption in the Act legitimately applies. However, public authorities may be required to explain to the applicant why they are not releasing information and may also have to justify this to the Information Commissioner.

## **8. Feedback**

8.1 It is important that this publication scheme meets your needs. If you find the scheme difficult to understand, please let the College know. The College also welcomes suggestions as to how our scheme might be improved. Any questions, comments or complaints about this scheme should be sent in writing to:

**Freedom of Information Officer**  
**Wirral Metropolitan College**  
**Conway Park Campus**  
**Birkenhead**  
**Wirral, CH41 4NT**  
**Phone number: 0151 551 7777**  
**E-mail address: [FOIEnquiries@wmc.ac.uk](mailto:FOIEnquiries@wmc.ac.uk)**

8.2 If the College are unable to resolve any complaint, you can complain to the Information Commissioner, the independent body who oversees the Freedom of Information Act:

**Information Commissioner's Office**  
**Wycliffe House**

**Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF**

## **9. Further information**

More information about the Freedom of Information Act is available on the Information Commissioner's website at:

[www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)

## **Guide to information**

## 1. Who we are and what we do

This section covers information relating to the organisational information, structures, locations and contact. The information in this class is current information only.

	Category	Description	Format
1.1.	Legal framework	Information relating to the legal and corporate status of Wirral Metropolitan College.	Paper/electronic
1.2	How the institution is organised	Information relating to the organisation of the institution's management structure, and the function and purpose of each part of the management structure. Terms of reference, membership and description of all boards and committees would be provided under this section.	Paper/electronic
1.3	Location and contact details	Information about how to locate and contact representatives of Wirral Metropolitan College.	Paper/electronic
1.4	Student activities and committees	Information relating to the operation and activities of the Students' Union and other clubs, associations and non-academic activities that are organised for or by the students.	Paper/electronic

## 2. What we spend and how we spend it

This section covers financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, procurement, contracts and financial audit. The information in this class is for the current and previous to financial years.

	Category	Description	Format
2.1	Funding/income	Information on the sources of funding and income, such as funding grants, tuition fees, endowment and investment income.	Paper/electronic
2.2	Budgetary and account income	Annual statement of accounts and other information to allow the public to see where money is being spent, where it is or has been planned to spend it, and the difference between one and another. The information would include revenue budgets and budgets for capital expenditure.	Paper/electronic
2.3	Financial audit reports	Copies of financial audit reports.	Paper/electronic
2.4	Capital programme	Information on major plans for capital expenditure, including any public private partnership contracts.	Paper/electronic
2.5	Financial regulations and procedures	Copies of the financial regulations and procedures.	Paper/electronic
2.6	Staff pay and grading structures	This would be provided as part of the organisational structure and should indicate, for most posts, levels of pay rather than individual salaries.	Paper/electronic
2.7	Register of suppliers	Copies of the approved suppliers list.	Paper

2.8	Procurement and tender procedures and reports	Details of procedures used for the acquisition of goods and services are included within the College financial regulations and procedures.  Details of contracts currently available for public tender and reports of successful tenders.	Paper/electronic  Paper
2.9	Contracts	Details of contracts that are of sufficient size to have gone through a formal tendering process.	Paper

### 3. What our priorities are and how we are doing

This section covers information relating to strategies and plans, performance indicators, audits, inspections and reviews. The information in this class is current and previous three years.

	Category	Description	Format
3.1	Planned and actual performance	Information relating to reports or recorded information demonstrating the College's planned or actual performance, including Annual Reports and Strategic Plans.	Paper/electronic
3.2	Academic quality and standards	Information such as the annual monitoring and review process, together with a statement of roles, responsibilities and authority of different bodies within the institution involved in assuring academic quality standards.	Paper/electronic
3.3	Corporate relations	Information relating to the College's links with employers and other stakeholders.	Paper/electronic
3.4	External review	This includes accreditation and monitoring reports by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies and information that an institution is legally obliged to make available to its funding and/or monitoring bodies.	Paper/electronic

### 4. How we make decisions

This section covers information on the College's decision making processes and its records of decisions. The information in this class is available for the current and previous three years.

	Category	Description	Format
4.1	Minutes from Corporation Board and Committees	This includes minutes of meetings where key decisions are made about the operation of the College, excluding material that is properly considered to be private, to be made readily available to the public, e.g. Corporation Board minutes,	Paper/electronic



		Audit Committee minutes, Academic Boards, College Executive Team.	
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## 5. Our policies and procedures

This section covers information on current written protocols, policies and procedures for delivering our services and responsibilities.

	Category	Description	Format
5.1	Policies and procedures for conducting College business.	Information including codes of practice, memoranda of understanding, procedural rules, standing orders and similar information. It also includes procedures for handling requests for information.	Paper/electronic
5.2	Policies and procedures relating to academic services	Some of these policies may already be covered in class 3 above, in the context of external review and academic quality and standards. Additional policies under this heading may include policies and procedures relating to student assessment, academic appeals, validation of external programmes.	Paper/electronic
5.3	Policies and procedures relating to student services	This will include relevant policies and procedures as they apply, for example, to student admission and registration, management of the student records system, the assessment of external qualifications, internal student complaints and appeals, and code of student discipline.	Paper/electronic
5.4	Policies and procedures relating to human resources	This includes the full range of human resources policies and procedures such as generic terms and conditions of employment, collective bargaining and consultation with trade unions, grievance, disciplinary, capability, public interest disclosure, staff development (such as induction, probation, appraisal).	Paper/electronic
5.5	Policies and procedures relating to recruitment	This includes policies and procedures relating to recruitment, pay and reward, job vacancies.	Paper/electronic
5.6	Policies and procedures relating to Health and Safety	This will include policies, procedures, statements and guidelines relating to health and safety.	Paper/electronic
5.7	Policies and procedures relating to Equality and Diversity	This will include policies, procedures, statements and guidelines relating to equal opportunities, equality and diversity.	Paper/electronic
5.8	Policies and procedures relating to Estates Management	This includes Estates Strategy and plan, facilities management policies, disposals policy, grounds and building maintenance, environmental sustainability.	Paper/electronic
5.9	Policies and procedures relating to complaints	This includes complaints, appeals, statement of whistleblowing, requests for	Paper/electronic

		information and operating the publication scheme.	
5.10	Policies and procedures relating to records management and personal data policies	This includes information security policies, records retention and archive policies, and data protection (including data sharing) policies.	Paper/electronic

## 6. Lists and Registers

This section covers information contained in currently maintained lists and registers.

	Category	Description	Format
6.1	Any information the College is currently legally required to hold in publicly available registers	Copies of publically available registers the College is legally required to hold.	Paper
6.2	Asset registers	Colleges are not expected to publish all details from all asset registers. This includes financial statements, estates and buildings, information technology.	Paper
6.3	Register of interests in the College.	Declaration of interests.	Paper

## 7. The services we offer

This section covers information about the services we offer, and may include information covered in other classes.

	Category	Description	Format
7.1	Prospectus and course content	Information available includes prospectuses, course guides, course leaflets.	Paper/electronic
7.2	Welfare and counselling	Information available includes welfare advice, counselling services, financial support.	Paper/electronic
7.3	Careers	Information available includes careers advice and guidance.	Paper/electronic
7.4	Media releases	Information available includes local campaigns and media releases, newsletters and magazines.	Paper/electronic