

Equality Impact Assessment Tool

Name of Policy: Freedom of Information Policy

		Yes/No	Comments
1	Does the policy/guidance affect one group less or more favourably than another on the basis of:		
	Race or ethnicity	N	
	Disability	N	
	Gender	N	
	Religion or belief	N	
	Sexual orientation	N	
	Age	N	
	Marriage and Civil Partnership	N	
	Maternity and Pregnancy	N	
	Gender Reassignment	N	
2	Is there any evidence that some groups are affected differently?		

Suffolk New College

Freedom of Information Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Suffolk New College is committed to making as much information about College activities as possible generally available to the public either through published documents (including those published on the College Website), or on request.
- 1.2 Adopting a publication scheme is a requirement of the Freedom of Information Act (2000) (“the Act”). The Act promotes greater openness and accountability across the public sector by requiring all ‘public authorities’ to make information available in a pro-active manner through a publication scheme.
- 1.3 ‘Public authorities’ are defined in the Act and include further education colleges.

2. What is a Publication Scheme

- 2.1 A publication scheme is a guide to the type of information regularly published by a public authority, or that which it is intended to publish. These descriptions are called ‘classes of information’. The scheme is not a list of actual publications, because this will change as new material is published or existing material revised. It is however a public authority’s commitment to make available the information described.
- 2.2 The publication scheme must also make clear how the information described can be accessed and whether or not charges will be made.

3. The ‘Model’ Publication Scheme

- 3.1 Suffolk New College has adopted the model publication scheme published by the Information Commissioner’s Office (See Appendix 1), and applies the standard data definitions as set out in the definition document for further education colleges.
- 3.2 This model is designed for further education colleges across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The purpose of the model is to save institutions duplicating effort in producing individual schemes and to assist the public in accessing information from across the sector. However, to reflect the diversity in size and function of an institution, a number of optional classes of information are included. As a result,

models within the sector will vary slightly. Any optional classes relevant to Suffolk New College have been included in our scheme.

3.3 The details of actual information routinely published are set out in the

officer of the College within 5 working days to invite you into the College at a mutually convenient time to view the information.

- 4.6 Please note that a publication scheme relates to 'published' information. If the information you require is not available in a single document already produced in the College as a matter of routine, we will do our best to direct you to a number of other documents that may provide the information you are requesting.

5. What about information not covered by the Publication Scheme?

- 5.1 From 1 January 2005 you have the right, under the Act to request any information held by a public authority which it has not already made available through its publication scheme.
- 5.2 Requests for information that is not routinely available under the College's publication scheme will have to be made in writing, or completion of the appropriate form (see Appendix 2). Under the terms of the Act public authorities have 20 working days to respond to such requests.

6. Exemptions

- 6.1 The College will not be required to release information under the Act if any of the information requested falls under any of the 23 exemptions outlined in the Act.
- 6.2 If however the exemption only covers part of one specific document, the College will be required to release the information that is not exempt, and explain to the applicant why we are not releasing the exempt information.
- 6.3 The exemptions relevant to the College cover the following areas:

Information already accessible by other means.

Information which is not yet published, but is intended for publication.

Information which relates to an investigation or was obtained from a confidential source.

Information which, if released, could cause significant harm to the purposes of law enforcement, taxation or regulatory activity.

Communications with the Queen or the Royal Household.

Information that would endanger the physical or mental health or safety of an individual.

Personal information relating to an individual or a third party (dealt with via the Data Protection Act).

Information obtained by the College in confidence.

Information likely to prejudice the commercial interests of another person.

Where the release of information is prohibited.

- 6.4 It is worth noting that the eligibility of any exemption to a particular piece of information may change over time. For example, information contained in a contract that is commercially sensitive during the negotiation phase may lose its confidentiality once the contract has been
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Appendix 1

Model Publication Scheme

This model publication scheme has been prepared and approved by the Information Commissioner. It may be adopted without modification by any public authority without further approval and will be valid until further notice.

Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, tendering, procurement and contracts.

What our priorities are and how we are doing

Strategy and performance information, plans, assessments, inspections and reviews.

How we make decisions

Policy proposals and decisions. Decision making processes, internal criteria and procedures, consultations.

Our policies and procedures

Current written protocols for delivering our functions and responsibilities.

Lists and Registers

Information held in registers required by law and other lists and registers relating to the functions of the authority.

The services we offer

Advice and guidance, booklets and leaflets, transactions and media releases. A description of the services offered.

The classes of information will not generally include:

Information the disclosure of which is prevented by law, or exempt under the Freedom of Information Act, or is otherwise properly considered to be protected from disclosure.

Information in draft form.

Information that is no longer readily available as it is contained in files that have been placed in archive storage, or is difficult to access for similar reasons.

The method by which information published under this scheme will be made available

The authority will indicate clearly to the public what information is covered by this scheme and how it can be obtained.

Where it is within the capacity of a public authority, information will be provided on a website. Where it is impractical to make information available on a website or when an individual does not wish to access the information by the website,

a public authority will indicate how information can be obtained by other means and provide it by those means.

In exceptional circumstances some information may be available only by viewing in person. Where this manner is specified, contact details will be provided. An appointment to view information will be arranged within a reasonable timescale.

Information will be provided in the language in which it is held or in such other language that is legally required. Where an authority is legally required to translate any information, it will do so.

Obligations under disability and discrimination legislation and any other legislation to provide information in other forms and formats will be adhered to when providing information in accordance with this scheme.

Charges which may be made for information published under this scheme

The purpose of this scheme is to make the maximum amount of information readily available at minimum inconvenience and cost to the public. Charges made by the authority for routinely published material will be justified and transparent and kept to a minimum.

Material which is published and accessed on a website will be provided free of charge.

Charges may be made for information subject to a charging regime specified by Parliament.

Charges may be made for actual disbursements incurred such as:

- photocopying
- postage and packaging
- the costs directly incurred as a result of viewing information

Appendix 2

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000

Information Access Request Form

Please read carefully the College's Freedom of Information Policy and Guide to Information before you complete this form. These documents explain what information is already routinely published by the College, what your entitlements are and what you can expect from us.

Please complete all parts of the form in as much detail as possible.

1. Personal Details of the Applicant

Title (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms) -----

Please provide any other details to identify or locate the information which would help us process your request e.g. your preferred format of the information requested, contact details of staff that may have your requested information, numbers of copies you would like etc.

4. Data Protection Notice

The personal data that you have provided to Suffolk New College on this form will be used to process your request for information. The College will create a log of disclosure requests which will show your name and the information requested. This disclosure log is accessible to the public for personal inspection under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) 5(2)(D) - 3.99825(he)14.0