



Suffolk  
New  
College

## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY

Policy Title:	Freedom of Information Policy
Author(s):	Deputy CEO
Approved by:	Audit & Risk Committee
Last Review	02/2025
Review date:	02/2026
Related Policies and Procedures:	Data Protection Policy (GDPR)



## Equality Impact Assessment Tool

Name of Policy: Freedom of Information Policy

		Yes/No	Comments
1	<b>Does the policy/guidance affect one group less or more favourably than another on the basis of:</b>		
	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	<b>Is there any evidence that some groups are affected differently?</b>	N	
3	<b>If you have identified potential discrimination, are any exceptions valid, legal and/or justifiable?</b>	N	
4	<b>Is the impact of the policy/guidance likely to be negative/</b>	N	
5	<b>If so, can the impact be avoided?</b>		
6	<b>What alternatives are there to achieving the policy/guidance without the impact?</b>	N/A	
7	<b>Can we reduce the impact by taking different action?</b>	N/A	

# **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 routinely 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 College's "Guide to Information", and the College undertakes to make this generally available unless:
- We do not hold the information.
  - The information is exempt under one of the exemptions in the Act, the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) exemptions, 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.

#### **4. Accessing Information Covered by the Publication Scheme**

- 4.1 The College's policy on freedom of information is available:
- On the College's Website – [www.suffolk.ac.uk](http://www.suffolk.ac.uk).
  - In the Learning Curve
  - In writing from the address below.
- 4.2 Next to each description in the guide we have indicated the manner in which the information described in the Policy is available. Please refer to Section 7 of this document with regards to the College's charging policy.
- 4.3 To request information available through our publication scheme, please contact:

Data Protection Team  
Suffolk New College  
Ipswich  
Suffolk  
IP4 1LT

Tel: 01473 382453  
Email: [dataprotection@suffolk.ac.uk](mailto:dataprotection@suffolk.ac.uk)

- 4.4 Many of the routinely published documents are available for free download on the College's website, [www.suffolk.ac.uk](http://www.suffolk.ac.uk) or we will provide hard copies of the documents within 5 working days upon receipt of the appropriate fee.
- 4.5 If we have indicated that some information is available to view in the College by appointment only, you will need to contact the Data

Protection Team. You will then be contacted by an appropriate 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 King 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 signed and is in operation.

6.5 Most of the exemptions listed above are also qualified exemptions, in that they are subject to a 'public interest' test. The exemption may be overridden if it is deemed to be in the public interest to do so.

## **7. Charging**

7.1 Information contained in the College's publication scheme made available on the College's website or is available for inspection by appointment is provided free of charge.

7.2 Printed information on courses and services offered by the College is provided free of charge, as are packs issued to people responding to notices of job vacancies.

7.3 Information supplied via e-mail is provided free of charge provided that the information is routinely published in electronic form by the College, and is readily available.

7.4 The College will make a charge for information requested in hard copy, or formats other than that in which it is normally published. This includes scanning, photocopying or printing (currently 10p +VAT per page) or the direct costs of putting information into other formats, plus postage and packaging if applicable. Where levied, charges will be subject to a minimum charge of £10 per request.

7.5 For information not covered under the publication scheme, the College is required to assess the costs of obtaining the information requested. If the cost of providing the information is likely to exceed £450 (or the current prevailing limit as set by the Ministry of Justice from time to time), we may be able to deny your request, or charge you in full for the cost of providing the information.

7.6 In certain circumstances the College may waive the fee as its absolute discretion.

## **8. Feedback**

- 8.1 It is important that this guide to information meets your needs. The College also welcome suggestions as to how the guide might be improved. Any questions or complaints about this guide should be sent in the first instance in writing to:

Data Protection Team  
Suffolk New College  
Ipswich  
Suffolk  
IP4 1LT

- 8.2 If you do not receive a resolution to your complaint informally, please write to the Assistant Principal at the above address.

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

Information Commissioners Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK8 5AF

Tel: 0303 123 1113  
Web: <https://ico.org.uk/>

## **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.

This publication scheme commits an authority to make information available to the public as part of its normal business activities. The information covered is included in the classes of information mentioned below, where this information is held by the authority. Additional assistance is provided to the definition of these classes in sector specific guidance manuals issued by the Information Commissioner.

The scheme commits an authority:

- To proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information, including environmental information, which is held by the authority and falls within the classifications below.
- To specify the information which is held by the authority and falls within the classifications below.
- To proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information in line with the statements contained within this scheme.
- To produce and publish the methods by which the specific information is made routinely available so that it can be easily identified and accessed by members of the public.
- To review and update on a regular basis the information the authority makes available under this scheme.
- To produce a schedule of any fees charged for access to information which is made proactively available.
- To make this publication scheme available to the public.

### **Classes of Information**

#### Who we are and what we do

Organisational information, locations and contacts, constitutional and legal governance.

#### What we spend and how we spend it

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

Charges may also be made for information provided under this scheme where they are legally authorised, they are in all circumstances, including the general principles of the right of access to information held by public authorities, justified and are in accordance with a published schedule or schedules of fees which is readily available to the public.

If a charge is to be made, confirmation of the payment due will be given before the information is provided. Payment may be requested prior to provision of the information.

### **Written Requests**

Information held by a public authority that is not published under this scheme can be requested in writing, when its provision will be considered in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.

Requests can be made to the Data Protection Team by completing the online form available via the College's website: <https://www.suffolk.ac.uk/privacy-freedom-of-information-notice/#FOI>