

ROEHAMPTON UNIVERSITY
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY

Originated by: Information Strategy Committee

Impact Assessment: *(to be confirmed)*

Recommended by Senate: 26 May 2010

Approved by Council: 28 June 2010

Review Date: May 2010

ROEHAMPTON UNIVERSITY
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1. Introduction

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act) is intended to foster a culture of openness and transparency in public authorities, including Universities.

The Act establishes a right of access to all types of recorded information, and imposes obligations on the University to disclose information, subject to a range of exemptions.

Phase One of the Act requires the University to adopt, maintain and review a 'publication scheme' (see *Annex A1 for further information*).

Phase Two, relating to public enquiries for information, came into force on 1st January 2005 (see *Annex A2 for further information*).

2. Scope

This policy applies to all the recorded information created, received and maintained by the University in the course of its work. Information can be held in any media.

3. Policy

In compliance with the Act the University will be open and transparent in its recording and provision of information, whilst having regard for the requirements and sensibilities of confidentiality.

The University has adopted the Information Commissioner's Model Publication Scheme for Higher Education.

The University recognises its duty to provide advice and assistance in relation to requests for information.

The University will respond to requests for information promptly and will endeavour to deal with all requests within the time limit of 20 working days specified in the Act.

In the implementation of this policy the University reserves the right to charge fees for the provision of information in accordance with regulations made under the Act.

4. Responsibilities

It is the University's responsibility to comply with legislation relating to Freedom of Information in the management of public requests for information.

Departments and Colleges are accountable within this requirement for providing information and in the application of exemptions in co-operation with the Freedom of Information Officer.

The University has appointed a Freedom of Information Manager who will work with Departments and Colleges to facilitate compliance.

Overall responsibility for ensuring compliance by the University lies with the University Secretary and Registrar.

All members of staff are responsible for ensuring that any request for information they receive is handled in compliance with this policy and in accordance with applicable University guidelines and procedures.

5. Review

The University will review this policy document and key supporting procedures on a regular basis, and will make amendments as required in order to meet the needs of stakeholders and ensure continued compliance with the Act.

The University's Publication Scheme will be reviewed periodically to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of users as expressed in the pattern of individual requests for information.

The University recognises the importance of stakeholder engagement in the review process and feedback is actively encouraged.

6. Relationships with Existing Policies

This Policy has been formulated within the context of the following University documents:

- Archiving Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Guidelines on Copyright
- Guidelines on producing publications accessible to those with a disability
- Integrated Information Strategy
- Intellectual Property Policy
- Records Management Policy
- Records Retention Schedule

Compliance with this policy will facilitate compliance with other information related legislation such as the Data Protection Act 1998.

Annexes

A1. Publication Scheme

Adopting, maintaining and reviewing a publication scheme is a requirement of the Act. A publication scheme is a document which describes the information a public authority publishes, or intends to publish. These descriptions are called classes of information. The scheme must also include a description of the manner in which the information is or will be made available and whether or not a charge will be applied. The University's Publication Scheme has been approved by the Information Commissioner and is available via our website.

A2. Requests for information

From 1st January 2005 members of the public will be able to request any recorded information held by the University, regardless of when it was created, and by whom, or the form in which it is now recorded, subject to certain exemptions. The Act gives applicants two new rights:

- to be informed in writing by the public authority whether it holds information of the description specified in the request and,
- if that is the case, to have that information communicated to them.

These rights are subject to a number of exemptions which allow the University to withhold information. In such cases a Refusal Notice will be sent to the applicant by the Freedom of Information Officer, explaining our decision.

Information listed in our Publication Scheme can be requested by any means, including telephone. Requests for other information must be in writing (including E-mail).

Any requests received from journalists will be referred, in the first instance, to the Press Officer and the Pro Vice-Chancellor concerned.

A3. Implementation

Implementation will focus on the following key areas:

- Maintenance and review of our Publication Scheme.
- Development of a procedural framework for dealing with requests for information and complaints.
- Records management.
- Training front line staff and raising the general level of awareness of the Act across the University.

In the implementation of the Policy the University will be guided by Codes of Practice published by the Information Commissioner.

A4. For further information contact

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