

Freedom of Information: A Briefing Paper

Approved by:	Effective date:	Next review:
Data Protection Officer	1 May 2022	1 May 2025

Guidance

Freedom of Information: A Briefing Paper

Who needs to know about the Guidance?

All Members of Staff

Purpose of the Guidance

To provide a briefing for staff on the obligations placed on the University by the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Contacts

Governance and Legal Service is responsible for:

- Providing advice and assistance
- Guidance and templates
- Organising training

The team can be contacted by emailing: dp.officer@canterbury.ac.uk.

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The Freedom of Information Act 2000

- The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000 gives the public a right of access to information held by the University
- It covers all computerised, digital and paper records and information held by the University, whether current or archived
- It is retrospective and includes all records created before 1 January 2005
- FOI does not mean you have to divulge all University information. Reasons such as data protection, confidentiality, and the commercial interests of the University may still mean that the information should not be released.
- Therefore, there are situations where information is not required to be released and should not be released. Such cases are to be referred to the Data Protection Officer for attention.

The University Publication Scheme

- To help with our obligations under FOI, the University has produced a Publication Scheme
- The Publication Scheme details the types of information the University routinely provides to the public and how the public may access the information
- The Publication Scheme includes things like the University structure and organisation, its services and procedures, practices, and guidelines
- In addition, since 1 January 2005, the public has had a right to ask for information not contained in the Publication Scheme

Members of Staff and Requests for Information

What does Freedom of Information mean for me?

- As an employee of the University, you need to be aware of the Act and if you receive a request for information, be prepared to respond quickly

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- All University records, including the records you keep, are potentially open to greater scrutiny by the public

What do I need to know if someone requests information from me about the University or about any other information we hold here?

- The request must be made in writing, e.g. a letter or email, by an identifiable individual
- The person requesting the information does not need to tell you it is an FOI request. All the person needs to do is to request the information
- You are not entitled to know why the person wants the information or to check the identity of the person requesting the information
- A request for information may come to any part of the University. It may come from anywhere in the world and from any person, including an organisation.
- By law, the University must respond to the request for information within 20 working days

What should I do if I receive a request for information?

How you handle a request depends on its nature and your role in the University. There is Guidance in the leaflet [Handling Freedom of Information Requests](#)

- If you routinely give out specific information to the public, staff and students, continue to give this out
- Should you receive a request for information which mentions Freedom of Information OR is NOT information you routinely provide but forms part of your work, you should consider how best to release the information. You may need to consult your line manager or head of department.
- If you are unsure OR the request is unusual, pass the request immediately to your line manager or head of department. If this person is unavailable for an extended period, for example, on leave, give the request directly and without delay to the person to whom the person reports or consult the Data Protection Officer

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Document Information	Description of Document Information
Document Title	Freedom of Information: A Briefing Paper
Department Owner	Governance and Legal Services
Guidance Category	Administrative Practice - Documents of an administrative or operational nature Governance- Documents relating to the governance of the University
Document Owner	Data Protection Officer
Document Manager	Data Protection Officer
Related University Documents	FOI Questions and Answers
Related University Procedures	Handling Freedom of Information Requests FOI Fees Regulations
Approved by	Data Protection Officer
Date Approved	1 May 2022
Date of Commencement	1 May 2022
Review Date	1 May 2025
Version	Version 1.1, 1 May 2022
History of revisions of the Document	Version 1 March 2019
Web Address	Freedom of Information Briefing Paper