



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY

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Freedom of Information Policy

1. PURPOSE

This policy sets out how Leeds College of Building complies with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). The aims of the policy are to:

- Promote openness and transparency.
- Ensure all FOI request are processed lawfully, consistently, and within statutory deadlines.
- Support the public's right to access recorded information held by the College.
- Establish responsibilities and clear internal processes for handling FOI requests.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- All recorded information held by the College, regardless of format.
- All permanent, temporary, and agency staff.
- Contractors and third parties handling information on behalf of the College.
- Information held by staff that relates to College business, even if held on personal devices.

It does not apply to personal data requested by an individual about themselves (Subject Access Requests under UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018).

3. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

This policy ensures compliance with:

- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Environmental Information Regulations 2004
- UK GDPR & Data Protection Act 2018
- Human Rights Act 1998
- College Records Management Policy
- College Data Protection Procedures (including FOI/1 forms and FOI logs).

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Governing Body / Principal

Ensures the College meets statutory FOI duties.

4.2 Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO)

Provides overall oversight of information risk and compliance.

4.3 Data Protection Officer / Information Governance Lead

- Acts as the FOI Lead.
- Co-ordinates and responds to all FOI requests.
- Maintains the FOI request log (as referenced in DPA Procedures).
- Advises on use of FOI exemptions.

4.4 Managers and Staff

- Must promptly forward an FOI requests to the FOI Lead.
- Must supply information when instructed.
- Must follow College information-handling and retention procedures.

5. WHAT IS AN FOI OR AN EIR REQUEST?

A valid FOI request must:

- Be in writing (email, letter, online form).
- Provide a name and contact address.
- Describe the information requested.

An EIR request does not have to be in writing, but the College encourages written requests for clarity.

Anyone, anywhere in the world, can make a request. An applicant does not need to state why they want the information.

6. FOI HANDLING PROCESS

6.1 Receipt and Logging

- Requests must be sent immediately to: FreedomOfInformation@lcb.ac.uk
- The FOI Lead logs the request in the FOI Register / Log (FOI/1 form processes referenced internally).

6.2 Acknowledgement

An acknowledgement should be issued within **3 working days**.

6.3 Statutory Deadline

FOIA: A response must be provided within **20 working days** of receipt.

EIR: A response must be provided within **20 working days**, extendable to **40** if the request is complex or voluminous.

Public holidays and College closure days do not count as working days.

If more time is required to consider the public interest test (FOIA), the College may extend the deadline by a reasonable period and will inform the applicant.

6.4 Searching for information

The FOI Lead co-ordinates searches across departments and systems, ensuring:

- All relevant systems are checked.
- Data sources and verification steps follow existing College procedures.

6.5 Applying Exemptions

The College may refuse or partially refuse requests where exemptions apply, such as:

- Personal data
- Commercial interests
- Prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs
- Information intended for future publication.

A refusal notice outlining the reasons will be provided.

6.6 Internal Reviews

If an applicant is dissatisfied, they may request an internal review.

The review will be carried out by a senior manager not previously involved.

6.7 Assistance

The College will meet its Section 16 duty to advise and assist applicants, helping them refine requests where appropriate.

6.8 ICO Complaints

Applicants may escalate unresolved concerns to:
Information Commissioner's Officer (ICO)
www.ico.org.uk

7. FEES AND CHARGES

Most requests are free. Charges may apply for:

- Disbursements (printing, postage).
- Requests costing over £450 of staff time (Section 12 FOIA).

8. RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Good records management underpins FOI compliance. The College will:

- Maintain an up-to-date retention schedule.
- Keep records accurate, accessible, and secure.
- Support staff with training in FOI and information governance (aligned with existing DPA / FOI procedures).

9. PUBLICATION SCHEME

The College adopts the **ICO Model Publication Scheme** and proactively publishes information in classes such as:

- Governance
- Financial information
- Strategies and policies
- Student information
- Procurement information
- Contact details.

The College's Publication Scheme is published on the website.

10. TRAINING

All staff handling information must receive appropriate training. Induction and refresher training is provided, consistent with College data protection and FOI processes.

11. POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every **2 years**, or sooner if legislative or operational changes require it.