

Policy: Freedom of Information Policy

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Approval route	College Leadership Team
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Contractual or Non-Contractual	Non-contractual
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1. Introduction

Franklin Sixth Form College is committed to transparency, accountability, and openness in its operations. This Freedom of Information (FOI) Policy sets out how we will comply with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and how staff, students, and third parties can request information from the College. This policy also outlines the procedures for responding to requests and the principles by which information will be disclosed.

2. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure that the College complies with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- Provide staff, students, and third parties with clear guidance on how to request information.
- Promote a culture of openness and transparency within the College.
- Clarify the responsibilities of staff in handling FOI requests.
- Establish procedures for responding to requests for information.

3. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to:

Staff: All employees, contractors, and volunteers working for the College.

Students: Individuals enrolled at the College, including those on full-time and part-time programmes.

Third Parties: External individuals or organisations making information requests from the College.

This policy covers all information held by the College, including documents, emails, records, and other forms of data.

4. Information Covered by the FOIA

The Freedom of Information Act gives individuals the right to access any recorded information held by the College, subject to certain exemptions. These exemptions include, but are not limited to, information that:

- Is protected by legal professional privilege.
- Could prejudice national security, law enforcement, or the College's commercial interests.
- Is personal data under the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation UK (GDPR).

The College will assess each request on a case-by-case basis to determine whether the information requested is disclosable, exempt or vexatious.

5. How to Make an Information Request

Requests for information should be made in writing (by email or letter) to the College. Requests should be as specific as possible, including the following details:

- A clear description of the information being requested.
- The preferred format for receiving the information (e.g., paper, email, or online).

Requests can be submitted via the following contact details:

- Email: Information.Governance@franklin.ac.uk
- Postal Address: [Data Protection Officer, Franklin College, Chelmsford Avenue, Grimsby, DN34 5BY]

6. Timescales for Response

The College is required to respond to FOI requests within 20 working days from the date the request is received. If additional time is required to process the request, we will inform the applicant of the delay and provide a revised response date.

7. Fees and Charges

In some cases, the College may charge a fee for processing a request. This may apply when:

- The costs of locating and retrieving the information incur additional administration expense.
- Photocopying or postage costs are incurred.

The College will notify the requester if a fee is applicable before processing the request further.

8. Exemptions and Refusals

The College may refuse to disclose certain information if it falls under any of the statutory exemptions outlined in the Freedom of Information Act. Common exemptions include, but are not limited to:

- Information that would compromise the College's commercial interests.
- Information that would endanger public safety or security.
- Personal data protected under the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation UK (GDPR).
- Information that required is vexatious and repeat requests to the College.

If a request is refused, the College will provide a clear explanation for the refusal, including the relevant exemption under the FOIA.

9. Review and Appeals

If a requester is dissatisfied with the College's decision to withhold or refuse information, they have the right to appeal the decision. The appeal should be submitted in writing to the Principal, who will review the request and make a final determination.

If the requester is still dissatisfied after the internal appeal process, they can appeal to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for further investigation.

10. Responsibilities of Staff, Students, and Third Parties

Staff: All staff members are responsible for ensuring that any information they hold that may be requested under the FOIA is made accessible in accordance with this policy. Staff should familiarise themselves with the FOI procedures and report any requests for information to the Data Protection Officer (DPO) via Information.Governance@franklin.ac.uk.

Students: Students should be aware of their rights under the FOIA to request information. They should submit any requests in writing.

Third Parties: External parties seeking information from the College must adhere to the procedures for submitting a formal request and must respect any decisions regarding fees, exemptions, or refusals.

11. Training and Awareness

To ensure compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, the College will provide training to staff on their responsibilities under this policy and the requirements of the FOIA.

12. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed by the College Leadership Team to ensure it remains up to date and effective. Any necessary amendments will be made in consultation with relevant parties.

13. Contact Information

For further information or assistance regarding Freedom of Information requests, please contact the Data Protection Officer:

Email: [Information.Governance@franklin.ac.uk]

Postal Address: [Data Protection Officer, Franklin College, Chelmsford Avenue, Grimsby, DN34 5BY]