

Freedom of Information Act 2000

Definition document for universities and other higher education institutions

This guidance gives examples of the kinds of information that we would expect universities and other higher education institutions (collectively all known for the purpose of this document as HEIs) to provide in order to meet their commitments under the model publication scheme. We would expect HEIs to make the information in this definition document available unless:

- they do not hold the information;
- the information is exempt under one of the FOIA exemptions or Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) exceptions, or its release is prohibited under another statute;
- the information is readily and publicly available from an external website to which the HEI has already provided it - the HEI must provide a direct link to that information;
- the information is archived, out of date or otherwise inaccessible; or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.

The guidance is not meant to give an exhaustive list of everything that should be covered by a publication scheme. The legal commitment is to the model publication scheme, and HEIs should look to provide as much information as possible on a routine basis.

Re-use – format and licensing – good practice

The ICO will provide further guidance on the datasets amendments to FOIA, in the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, before they are commenced in 2013. This will be specific guidance on legal obligations relating to re-usable formats and licences and charges for re-use; it will be specifically focused on datasets.

In the meantime the ICO recommends that in order to maximise use and re-use of any information made available under a publication scheme, where relevant, all HEIs adopt an open licence for re-use. This could be Creative Commons or the Open Government Licence (OGL) developed by the National Archives, acknowledging that the

OGI will not apply to information where third parties hold intellectual property rights. The ICO acknowledges that open licensing will only be applied to information in certain categories e.g. publicly funded research.

To complement this, so far as reasonably practicable, the HEI should make the information available in an open, machine readable format which can be easily re-used.

Who we are and what we do

Organisational information, structures, locations and contacts.

We would expect information in this class to be current information only.

- **Legal framework**

Information relating to the legal and corporate status of the institution.

- **How the institution is organised**

Information about the management structure of the institution, including a description of the Statutory Bodies and the organisational structure together with a description of the work of each unit and the names and responsibilities of key personnel. The information should include faculty and department structures and identify senior personnel. Institutions should also provide terms of reference, membership and description of all boards and committees.

- **Location and contact details**

If possible, named contacts should be given in addition to contact phone numbers and email addresses.

- **Lists of and information relating to organisations which the HEI has responsibility for, those it works in partnership with, those it sponsors and companies wholly or partially owned by it.**

On the basis that most of these bodies will be responsible for their own affairs, this information only needs to be sufficient to identify the relationship between these bodies (such as business, the professions and the community) and the HEI.

- **Student activities**

Information relating to the operation and activities of the Student Union and other clubs, associations and non-academic activities that are organised for or by the students can also be included where this information is held by the HEI.

What we spend and how we spend it

Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, procurement, contracts and financial audit.

We would expect as a minimum that financial information for the current and previous two financial years should be available.

- **Funding / income**

Information on the sources of funding and income, such as Funding Council grants, tuition fees, endowment, rents and investment income (including investment strategy).

- **Financial statements, budgets and variance reports**

Details of expenditure over £25,000, including costs, supplier and transaction information. This should be published at least annually and, where practical, we would also expect it to be published on a half yearly or quarterly basis.

Financial information in enough detail to allow the public to see where money is being spent, where an HEI is or has been planning to spend it, and the difference between the two. Financial information should be published at least annually and, where practical, we would also expect half yearly or quarterly financial reports to be provided. Revenue budgets and budgets for capital expenditure should be included.

- **Financial audit reports**

- **Capital programme**

Information on major plans for capital expenditure including any private finance initiative and public private partnership contracts.

- **Financial regulations and procedures**

- **Staff allowances and expenses**

Details of the allowances and expenses that can be claimed or

incurred. It should include the total of the allowances and expenses paid to individual senior staff members by reference to categories. The definition of "senior staff" is given below. These categories should be produced in line with the HEI's policies, practices and procedures and must at least include travel, subsistence and entertainment.

- **Staff pay and grading structures**

This may be provided as part of the organisational structure and should include, as a minimum, the salaries for senior staff, which, for the purpose of this document, means staff earning over £100,000 per annum and on the Senior Management Team or equivalent level. The salaries should be stated in bands of £10,000. For more junior posts, levels of pay should be identified by salary range.

The 'pay multiple' – the ratio between the highest paid salary and the median average salary of the whole of the HEI's workforce.

- **Register of suppliers**

- **Procurement and tender procedures and reports**

Details of procedures used for the acquisition of goods and services. Contracts available for public tender and reports of successful tenders.

- **Contracts**

We would normally only expect HEIs to publish details of contracts that exceed £25,000.

- **Research funding**

High level information about research funding from public sector sources and research funding from commercial sources where appropriate.

What our priorities are and how we are doing

Strategies and plans, performance indicators, audits, inspections and reviews.

We would expect information in this class to be available at least for the current and previous three years.

Below is a list of the type of information that we would expect

universities to have readily available for publication. Any other reports or recorded information demonstrating the university's planned or actual performance should normally be included.

- **Annual report**
- **Corporate and business plans**
- **Teaching and learning strategy**
- **Academic quality and standards**
- **Privacy impact assessments (in full or summary format)**

Information, or a direct link to publicly available information, on the University's current internal procedures for assuring academic quality and standards and recent qualitative data on the quality and standards of learning and teaching.

- **External and internal audit; review information**

This will include information such as the annual monitoring and review process together with a statement of roles, responsibilities and authority of different bodies within the institution involved in programme approval and review.

- **Corporate relations**

Information relating to the HEI's links with employers and sponsors, in both the public and private sectors, and the development of learning programmes.

- **Government and regulatory reports**

For example, accreditation and monitoring reports by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies and information that an institution is legally obliged to make available to its funding and/or monitoring bodies. Where information provided to regulatory bodies is publicly available via those bodies, the HEI may instead provide a direct link to that information.

- **The HEI's compliance with its duties under the Equality Act 2010**

This includes any information produced as part of these duties.

How we make decisions

Decision making processes and records of decisions.

Minutes of formal meetings where key decisions are made about the operation of the HEI should be available. HEIs may decide not to

publish particular minutes on a case by case basis. Information in this class should be available at least for the current and previous three years.

Information published will depend on the governance structure of HEIs, which can vary. Examples of this class of information include:

- **Agendas, officers' reports, background papers and minutes from governing body, Council / Senate, academic boards, steering groups and committees**
- **Teaching and learning committee minutes**
- **Minutes of staff / student consultation meetings**
- **Appointment committees and procedures**

Our policies and procedures

Current written protocols, policies and procedures for delivering our services and responsibilities.

We would expect information in this class to be current information only.

- **Policies and procedures for conducting HEI business**

Codes of practice, memoranda of understanding, procedural rules, standing orders and similar information should be included. Procedures for handling requests for information should be included. In Wales it will include the Welsh Language Scheme in accordance with the Welsh Language Act 1993, and in Northern Ireland the equality scheme/statement produced in accordance with section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

- **Procedures and policies relating to academic services**

Some of these policies may already be covered in class 3 'What our priorities are and how we are doing' in the context of external review and academic quality and standards. Additional policies under this heading may include such matters as policies and procedures relating to honorary degrees, procedures for changing course, regulations and policy on student assessment, appeal procedures and policy on breach of assessment regulations.

- **Procedures and policies relating to student services**

This will include relevant policies and procedures as they apply, for example, to student admission and registration, accommodation, management of the student records system, the assessment of external qualifications, internal student complaints and appeals, student support services and code of student discipline.

- **Procedures and policies relating to human resources**

This will include the full range of human resources policies and procedures such as generic terms and conditions of employment, collective bargaining and consultation with trade unions, grievance, disciplinary, harassment and bullying, public interest disclosure and staff development (such as induction, probation, appraisal, promotions).

A number of policies, such as equality duties and health and safety will cover both the provision of services and the employment of staff. Some of these policies may already be covered in class 3 'What our priorities are and how we are doing'.

- **Pay policy statement**

- **Procedures and policies relating to recruitment**

If vacancies are advertised as part of recruitment policies, details of current vacancies will be readily available.

- **Code of Conduct for members of governing bodies**

- **Equality and Diversity policies; Equality Scheme**

This will also include policies, statements, procedures and guidelines relating to equal opportunities.

- **Health and Safety**

- **Estate management**

This will include disposals policy, estates strategy and plan, facilities management policies, grounds and building maintenance.

- **Complaints policy**

Complaints procedures will include those covering requests for information and operating the publication scheme.

- **Records management and personal data policies**

This will include information security policies, records retention, destruction and archive policies, and data protection (including data sharing) policies.

- **Fileplans**
- **Research policy and strategy**

This will include quality assurance procedures, policy and procedures relating to intellectual property, ethics committee terms of reference, applications and their approval, and any other relevant codes of practice. It will also include policy, strategy and procedures relating to knowledge transfer and enterprise.

- **Publicly funded research outputs and data**

In line with the overall direction of travel towards greater transparency, we expect HEIs to progressively publish information on publicly funded research, or to provide a direct link to it. Where appropriate we recommend HEIs ask researchers to follow the Research Councils UK's Policy and Guidance on Access to Research Outputs. In future the "Gateway to Research", under development by Research Councils UK, will open up access to Research Council funded research information and related data outputs. It is hoped that this will be available by 2014. The ICO will keep the position under review.

- **Charging regimes and policies**

Details of any statutory charging regimes should be provided. Charging policies should include charges made for information routinely published and clearly state what costs are to be recovered together with the basis on which they are made and how they are calculated.

Lists and registers

We expect this to be information contained only in currently maintained lists and registers.

- **Any information we are currently legally required to hold in publicly available registers**
- **Asset registers**
- **Information asset register**

We would not expect universities to publish all details from all asset registers. We would, however, expect the location of public land and building assets and key attribute information that is normally recorded on an asset register to be available, along with some other information from capital asset registers.

- **CCTV**

Details of the locations of any overt CCTV surveillance cameras operated by or on behalf of the HEI. The HEI should decide on the level of detail which is appropriate. This could be by building, campus area or more general geographic locations e.g. postcodes or partial postcodes, depending on the security issues raised.

- **Disclosure logs**

Where a university produces a disclosure log indicating the information that has been provided in response to requests, it should be readily available. Disclosure logs are themselves recommended as good practice.

- **Any register of interests kept in the HEI.**

- **Register of gifts and hospitality provided to senior staff**

This should include details of gifts given or received; details of any hospitality afforded and by which organisation. The definition of "senior staff" is as stated above.

- **Senior staff's declaration of interests**

This should include the names, faculties, departments and job titles of all senior staff who have made entries. Any information recorded in the 'professional' element of the register should also be disclosed subject to the redaction of, for example, home address, or any third party personal data or sensitive personal data.

The services we offer

Information about the services we offer, including leaflets, guidance and newsletters.

Generally this is an extension of part of the first class of information. While the first class provides information on the roles and responsibilities of the university, this class includes details of the services which are provided by the university, internationally, nationally and locally as a result of them. It will also relate to

information covered in other classes. Examples of other services that could be included are:

- **Prospectus**
- **Services for outside bodies**
- **Course content**
- **Course fees**
- **Funding, such as grants and bursaries, available to students from the HEI**
- **Services for which the university is entitled to recover a fee together with those fees**
- **Welfare and counselling services**
- **Health including medical services**
- **Careers**
- **Chaplaincy services**
- **Sports and recreational facilities**
- **Facilities relating to music, art and other cultural activities**
- **Museums, libraries, special collections and archives**

It is expected that this will include guides to collections and scope and availability of catalogues. (Further guidance is available in that provided for bodies responsible for managing museums, collections and archives.)

- **Conference facilities**
- **Advice and guidance**
- **Media releases**