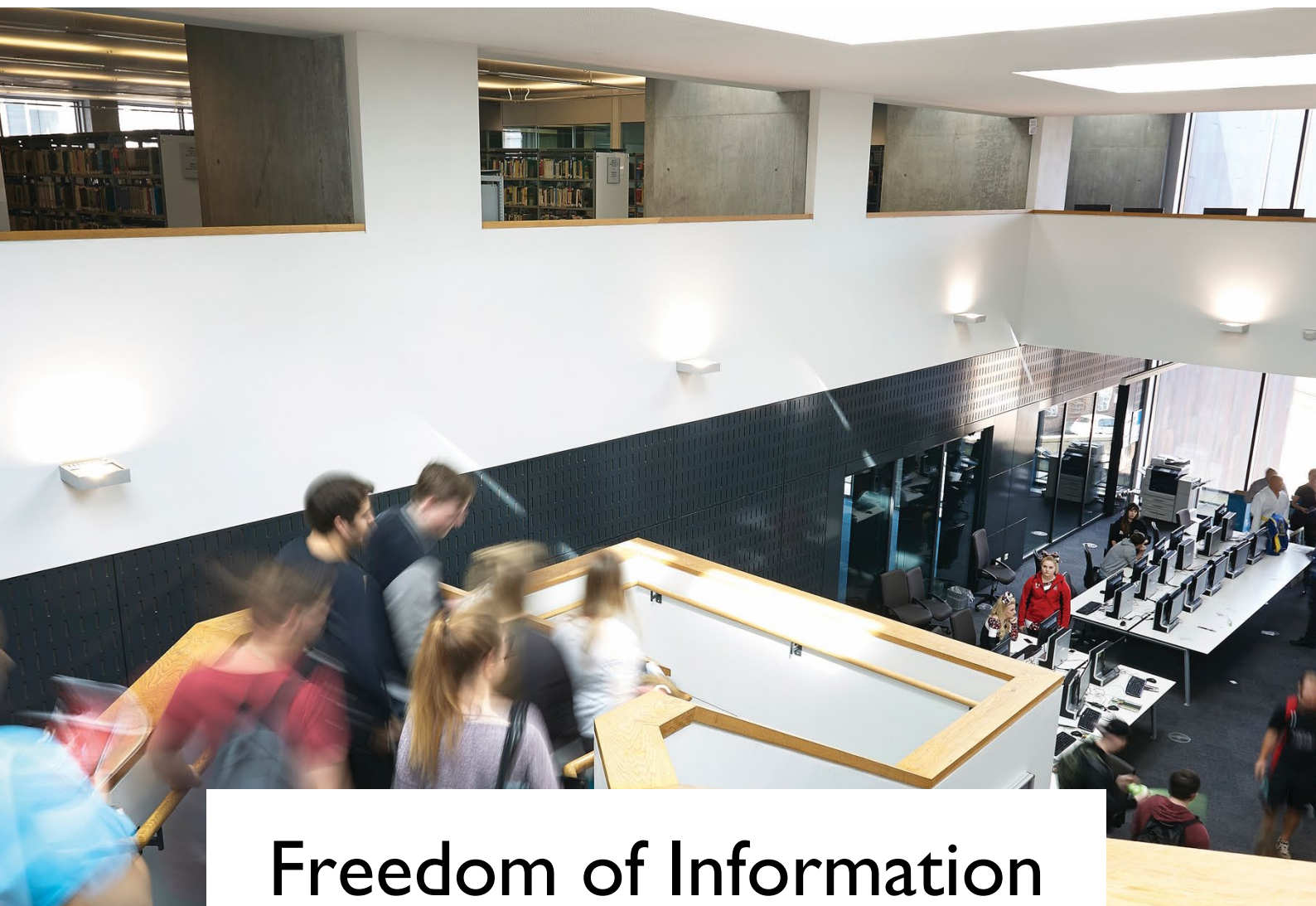




BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
NEW UNIVERSITY

EST. 1891



Freedom of Information Policy



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This document has been designed to be accessible for readers. However, should you require the document in an alternative format please contact the University Secretariat.

Purpose

- 1 The University holds and processes information of many different types. Information about people is covered by the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the university's Data Protection Policy. All other information is covered by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). The University is defined under Schedule 1 S53 of FOIA as a Governing body and therefore the activities it undertakes as a public authority are subject to the Act.
- 2 The main aim of the FOIA is to give the public the right of access to a wide range of official information and greater access rights to personal information. The intention is to ensure the release of information, except where disclosure would harm specified interests or is contrary to the public interest. The Act covers information produced by central and local government, the NHS, the education sector (including universities), and other public bodies.
- 3 Buckinghamshire New University (BNU) is fully committed to compliance with the FOIA and its principle of public access to official information, wherever lawful, feasible and in the public interest.

Applicability and Scope

- 4 This policy applies to all members of staff including temporary or casual or agency staff, and contractors and suppliers working for, or on behalf of, the University.
- 5 This document is the University's policy for meeting its requirements under the FOIA and incorporates guidance from the Information Commissioners' Office (ICO).
- 6 The policy provides a framework for compliance and is supported by appropriate procedures and guidance documents to provide advice and maintain good practice.

Publication scheme

- 7 Section 19 of the FOIA places a duty on every public authority to:
 - a) to adopt and maintain a scheme which relates to the publication of information by the authority and is approved by the Commissioner;
 - b) to publish information in accordance with its publication scheme; and
 - c) from time to time to review its publication scheme..
- 8 The University has adopted the model publication scheme approved by the ICO.
- 9 The University's Publication Scheme is available publicly through the website, bucks.ac.uk, or can be provided in hard copy format by request from FOIOfficer@bucks.ac.uk . The Publication Scheme is reviewed on an annual basis.
- 10 The Publication Scheme sets out the types of information the University publishes in accordance with the guidelines set out by the ICO, and these are:
 - Who we are and what we do;
 - What we spend and how we spend it;

- What are our priorities and how we are doing;
- How we make decisions;
- Our policies and procedures;
- Lists and registers; and
- The services we offer.

Requests for Information

- 11 Requests for information not in the Publication Scheme can be made via email to FOIOfficer@bucks.ac.uk or by post to:
- Freedom of Information
 Buckinghamshire New University
 Queen Alexandra Road
 High Wycombe
 HP11 2JZ
- 12 For a request for information to be valid under the FOIA it must
- a) be in writing;
 - b) state the name of the applicant and an address for correspondence (email address is sufficient); and
 - c) describe the information requested.

Responding to a request

- 13 The University will respond to the request for information within twenty working days following receipt of the request. If we are unable to respond to the request within this time frame we will contact the requestor with an explanation and request an extension of time.
- 14 The response to the request will confirm whether or not the University holds the information; if it does hold the information, the University will release it. However, some information may be exempt from disclosure under one of the exemptions in the FOIA.
- 15 The University has the right to charge applicants for supplying the requested information but is under no obligation to provide information if the cost of doing so would be in excess of an 'appropriate limit'. Any fee for handling a request will be calculated in accordance with the provisions of the Fees Regulations.
- 16 If a fee will be charged in response to a request the University will issue a fees notice to the applicant. If a fees notice has been issued, the University will not begin to provide information until the correct fee has been received. The 20 working day compliance period is placed 'on hold' from the date of issue until the Fee is received. If no fee is received, the request will be closed three months from the date of Fees Notice.

Exemptions

- 17 There are a number of exemptions under the FOIA where the University is not required to provide the information requested. The Act also limits the circumstances in which information can be withheld.
- 18 In cases where the University considers a request is subject to an exemption, consideration will be given as to whether or not the information can be disclosed. This would take into account the public interest, the rights of data subjects, legal and contractual obligations and issues of information access and security.
- 19 Information will only be withheld in accordance with the exemptions specified by legislation, and the reasons for applying the exemption will be provided to the requester. A full list of the exemptions can be found on the ICO's website.

Review Procedure

- 20 If a requester is dissatisfied with the response they have received from the University, they may request a review by emailing the university at FOIOfficer@bucks.ac.uk or by post to:
Freedom of Information
Buckinghamshire New University
Queen Alexandra Road
High Wycombe
HP11 2JZ
- 21 The request for review must be made in writing giving full details of the original request, any response received and the reason for requesting the review.
- 22 In line with guidance from the ICO, a request for an internal review must be submitted within 40 days of the University's final response.
- 23 The University will deal with the request for review within 20 working days of receipt. If the review will take longer to complete, the requestor will be told why and when to expect a response.
- 24 If after the receiving the response the requestor is still dissatisfied with the university response they have a right to appeal to the ICO

Records Management

- 25 Section 46 of the FOIA requires the University to follow the guidelines set down in the Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the management of records. The University has a Records Management Policy and a Records Retention schedule supported by associated procedures and guidance to ensure that records are managed effectively.

Responsibilities

- 26 The Director of Digital & Technical Services (DTS) is responsible for coordinating the University's Freedom of Information function. This responsibility includes providing advice,

maintaining the Publication Scheme, developing guidance material and promoting compliance with the Act and this policy in such a way as to ensure the easy, appropriate and timely retrieval of information.

- 27 All staff are responsible for ensuring the records they manage are accurate and complete, and that all requests are handled efficiently and promptly.
- 28 Every member of staff must recognise that all recorded information may be provided to the public and that in every case, the law require there to be full and unconditional disclosure unless one of the statutory exemptions / exceptions applies.
- 29 All University staff should be aware that any breach of the FOIA may result in the University's disciplinary procedures being instigated. It is also a criminal offence to intentionally conceal, destroy or alter information that is the subject of a Freedom of Information request, to prevent it from being released.

Enforcement

- 30 Any actual or suspected breach of this policy must be reported to the Director of DTS via the most suitable channel. The Director of DTS will take appropriate action and inform the relevant internal and external authorities.
- 31 Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action in accordance with the relevant process.

Key Relevant Documents

- Data Protection Policy
- FOI Publication Scheme
- Records Management Policy and Records Retention Schedule

Table of Definitions

FOI	Freedom of Information
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act 2020
ICO	Information Commisioners Office
Publication Scheme	Sets out the Univerity's high-level commitment to proactively publish information. This includes information made readily available on the University website.
UK GDPR	UK General Data Protection Regulation

Appendix: Equality Impact Assessment

1. What is changing and why?				
The policy has been reviewed in accordance with the review schedule.				
2. What do you know?				
This policy ensures that the University is meeting its obligations under the Freedom of Information Act. It provides the policy framework through which effective compliance with the Act can be achieved, maintained and audited.				
3. Assessing the impact				
	Could benefit	May adversely impact	What does this mean? <i>Impacts identified from what you know (actual and potential)</i>	What can you do? <i>Actions (or why no action is possible) to advance equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination, and foster good relations</i>
a) How could this affect different ethnicities? <i>Including Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showmen and Boaters, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	This policy could have a positive impact on those who have English as a second language as it is designed to signpost individuals to information about the university.	Providing information allows anyone to become more informed on the decisions being made that affect them.
b) How could this affect cisgender and transgender men and women (including maternity/pregnancy impact), as well as non-binary people?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	This policy benefits everyone regardless of gender, gender reassignment whether on maternity or paternity leave including whether the woman is pregnant or is/has previously been absent due to maternity leave.	
c) How could this affect disabled people or carers? <i>Including neurodiversity, invisible disabilities and mental health conditions.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	This policy will increase transparency which could have a positive impact on those with a disability.	
d) How could this affect people from different faith groups?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	This policy benefits everyone regardless of religion or belief. It protects the interest of all users.	
e) How could this affect people with different sexual orientations?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	This policy benefits everyone regardless of sexual orientation. It protects the interest of all users.	

f) How could this affect different age groups or generations?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	This policy benefits everyone regardless of age. It protects the interest of all users.	
g) How could this affect those who are married or in a civil partnership?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	This policy benefits everyone regardless of marital status. It protects the interest of all users.	
h) How could this affect people from different backgrounds such as: socio-economic disadvantage, homeless, alcohol and/or substance misuse, people experiencing domestic and/or sexual violence, ex-armed forces, looked after children and care leavers.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	This policy could have a positive impact on those from different backgrounds.	Access to official information about the University can improve public confidence and trust as it will demonstrate the University as being an open all-inclusive organisation.
i) How could this affect people with multiple intersectional experiences?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	This policy benefits everyone in different ways therefore there is no cumulative impact on users.	
4. Overall outcome				
No major change needed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Adjust approach <input type="checkbox"/>	Adverse impact but continue <input type="checkbox"/>	Stop and remove <input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Details of further actions needed				
None required				
6. Arrangements for delivery and future monitoring				
The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it still meets the requirement of the Freedom of Information Act. Any changes to the Act and analysis of the policy in practise will inform future changes.				
7. Completed by:	Jenny Horwood	Technical Project Manager	Date	25/05/2022
8. Signed off by:	Nicholas Roussel-Milner	Director DTS	Date	23/02/2023



High Wycombe Campus
Queen Alexandra Road
High Wycombe
Buckinghamshire
HP11 2JZ

Aylesbury Campus
59 Walton Street
Aylesbury
Buckinghamshire
HP21 7QG

Uxbridge Campus
106 Oxford Road
Uxbridge
Middlesex
UB8 1NA

BNU based at
Pinewood Studios

Pinewood Studios
Pinewood Road
Iver Heath
Buckinghamshire
SL0 0NH

Missenden Abbey
London Road
Great Missenden
Buckinghamshire
HP16 0BD

Telephone: 01494 522 141

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