

FE Sector Publication Scheme

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Publication Scheme

1. Introduction

Further Education (FE) Colleges are the main providers of vocational and technical education and training in Northern Ireland (NI). The nature of College provision is diverse and broad based ranging from A levels and GCSEs to BTECs, HNCs, HNDs, Apprenticeships, Foundation Degrees, Degrees and other specific training programmes. The FE Sector plays a central role in raising levels of literacy and numeracy and in up-skilling and re-skilling the population through a broad range of courses leading to qualification, particularly in Level 2 to Level 6.

There are 6 FE Colleges within Northern Ireland; Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC), Northern Regional College (NRC, North West Regional College (NWRC), South Eastern Regional College (SERC), South West College (SWC) and Southern Regional College (SRC).

As Non-Departmental Public Bodies, the Colleges are subject to legislation regarding information governance such as the Freedom of Information (2000).

The Freedom of Information Act (2000) (FOIA) gives everyone the right to request information from public authorities, helping them to understand better how the College works, how we spend public money and how and why we make our decisions.

The Colleges encourage collaboration across the FE Sector where similar functions exist to embed a coordinated strategy towards best practice. The Sector has collaborated to develop a joint Publication Scheme and adopt agreed protocols regarding the release of information which is subject to FOIA.

2. What is the Publication Scheme and why do we have one?

Section 19 of the FOIA requires Public Authorities (i.e., Government and other public sector bodies, including Universities and Further Education Colleges) to produce "Publication Schemes", which are schedules of information to be routinely published by the Public Authorities.

In this context, '*publish*' is defined as 'to make information routinely available'.

The publication of information is designed to increase the transparency and accountability of the Public Authority by enabling members of the public to routinely access information relating to its functions. Information may be available via links to website information, documents and where possible it should be made available in a re-usable format (dataset).

In compliance with our obligations, the FE Sector will:

1. Proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information, including environmental information, which is held by the College and falls within the classifications below.
2. Specify the information which is held by the authority and falls within the classifications below.
3. Proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information in line with the statements contained within this scheme.
4. Produce and publish the methods by which the specific information is made routinely available so that it can be easily identified and accessed by members of the public.
5. Review and update on a regular basis the information the authority makes available under this scheme.
6. Produce a schedule of any fees charged for access to information which is made proactively available.
7. Make this publication scheme available to the public.

The format is in compliance with the ICO Model Publication Scheme and the FE Sector has based the categories of information we publish primarily on the [ICO Definition Document \(Definition document for Northern Ireland Non-Departmental Public Bodies and other public authorities\)](#) and in addition, guidance from the ICO to use [definition-document-colleges-of-further-education.pdf \(ico.org.uk\)](#)

3. Classifications of information

The Publication Scheme is a structured way of presenting this information to the public.

The FE Sector is committed to publishing the following categories of information:

1. Who we are and what we do
2. What we spend and how we spend it
3. What are our priorities and how are we doing
4. How we make decisions
5. Policies and Procedures
6. Lists and Registers
7. The Services we offer

4. Information not covered by the Publication Scheme

Information held by the College but not listed as available via the Publication Scheme may be requested by submitting a Freedom of Information request to the College. Details on how to make this request and how the College will process it are available in the FE Sector Access to Information Policy. All requests will be processed in compliance with the FOIA and the FE Sector Freedom of Information Procedure.

5. How to use the Publication Scheme

The FE Sector has provided the table below to enable individuals to browse our index of published information.

The Publication Scheme is divided into the categories listed above (See section 3). Next to each category, the Colleges have provided the method by which the information is available. In most cases, a hyperlink will be provided to the information directly.

In some instances, e.g. where the information is too voluminous to publish online, the College will provide this upon request. Where this applies, the Publication Scheme will detail the appropriate contact details to direct such requests.

Requests for information which are or form part of a dataset or where the requester expresses a preference for the information to be electronic, will be released.

Data sets published via the Publication Scheme will be periodically refreshed. This time will be determined by the business area.

6. Fees

Information which is published on the website or which can be transmitted electronically will incur no fee.

We may charge for providing information in paper copy or on removable storage devices such as Computer discs or USB drives. Charges will reflect the actual costs of reproduction, consumables, and postage and will not exceed the costs accrued by the College or staff time.

If we intend to charge, we will tell you:

- the charge
- how it has been calculated
- how to pay

The requester will be made aware of any charges in advance of the information being collated.

7. Other formats

If you would like this scheme, or any of the information it covers, in a more accessible format, please contact the **Freedom of Information Officer** to discuss additional ways in which the information may be made available to you.

8. Contact details

Further details regarding this document please contact:

Eoin Coyle

Compliance Officer

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9. ICO Guidance

The FE Sector will continually refer to legislation and ICO guidance when processing Publication Scheme information requests.

Further information is available to the public on the ICO website at <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-freedom-of-information/publication-scheme/>

Who we are and what we do

Organisational information, structures, locations and contacts.

Expected scope of information: Current information

Definition document	Explanation	Availability
Legal framework / Instrument of Government / Articles of Association	Information relating to the legal and corporate status of the institution.	Annual Accounts Report
Roles and responsibilities	NDPBs should be providing both outline and detailed information about their roles and responsibilities and the roles and responsibilities of those working in them at senior level.	Annual Accounts Report Governing Body
Organisational structure	An explanation of the internal structures of the NDPB, referring to its functions and how the structure relates to the roles and responsibilities.	Information available on request.
Information relating to the legislation relevant to the authority's functions	An explanation of the legislative basis of the activities of the NDPB. If appropriate an explanation of any legislation for which the NDPB takes the lead.	The Further Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 Management Statement and Financial Memorandum
Student activities	Information relating to the operation and activities of the Student Union or its equivalent and other clubs, associations and non-academic activities that are organised for or by the students may also be included, where this information is held by the college.	NWRC Students Union NWRC Clubs and Societies

Lists of and information relating to organisations with which the NDPB works in partnership	It is expected that this information need be only sufficient for the purposes of identifying the relationship between these bodies and the NDPB. This will include the identity of the sponsoring government department.	Annual Accounts Report Our Partners
Meetings of Chief Executive or Board members with Ministers and external organisations (including meetings with newspaper and other media proprietors, editors, and senior executives)		Information not held.
Senior executives and management board members	Identification of, responsibilities of and biographical details of those making strategic and operational decisions about the provision of the NDPB's services. Any biographical details that are not work related should be published only with consent.	Governing Body Committee Meetings Meetings of Leadership and Management Team are available on request.
Location and contact details of the NDPB	This should cover the NDPB at all levels from the central body to any offices open to the public for the conduct of the NDPB's business. It always assists to provide a named contact where this can be done	Campus and Facilities

What we spend and how we spend it

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

Expected scope of information: Expect a minimum that financial information for the current and previous two financial years to be available

Definition document	Explanation	Availability
Funding / income	Information on the sources of funding and income, such as funding grants, tuition fees, endowment, rents, and investment income (including investment strategy), as well as income generation schemes.	Annual Accounts Report
Financial statements, budgets, and variance reports	Details of authority spending over £25,000 (monthly). Details of authority contracts and tender's worth over £10,000. Details of government procurement card spend over £500.	Information available on request.
Capital programme	Information should be made available on major plans for capital expenditure including any private finance initiative and public private partnership contracts.	Estates Strategy available on request.
Spending reviews		Information not held.
Financial audit reports		Annual Accounts Report
Senior staff and board members' allowances and expenses	For the purposes of this document, senior staff are defined as those earning at least £63,994 per annum (equivalent to Grade 5 NICS). Details of the allowances and expenses that can be claimed or incurred. It should include the total of the allowances and expenses, by reference to categories, paid to or incurred by individual members of senior staff and management board members produced in line with the NDPB's policies, practices and procedures. Categories will be under such	Annual Accounts Report

	headings as travel, subsistence, accommodation.	
Pay Policy	The statement of the college's policy and procedures regarding staff pay	Annual Accounts Report
Pay and grading structures	This may be provided as part of the organisational structure and should also identify, as a minimum, senior staff, and £5,000 salary bands for them. For junior posts, levels of pay should be identified by salary ranges.	Annual Accounts Report Pay Scales information available on request.
Procurement and tendering procedures	Details of procedures used for the acquisition of goods and services. Contracts currently available for public tender.	Information available on request.
Governors' allowances	Details of allowances or expenses that can be claimed or incurred, and a record of total payments made to individual governors.	Annual Accounts Report
Register of Suppliers		Information available on request.
Contracts	We would expect normally that it should be necessary only to publish details of contracts that are of sufficient size to have gone through a formal tendering process.	Information available on request.
Financial statements for projects and events	Where there are identifiable projects, we would expect the publication scheme to cover at least the financial reports that indicate actual expenditure against original project budgets. The larger the project, the greater the detail that should be available. Similarly, where organised events are publicised, their cost should be made available through the scheme.	Annual Accounts Report
Internal financial regulations	The College has various financial policies and regulations available.	Information available on request.

What our priorities are and how we are doing

Strategies and plans, performance indicators, audits, inspections and reviews. Any other reports or recorded information demonstrating the NDPB's planned or actual performance should normally be included.

Expected scope of information: Expect information in this class to be available at least for the current and previous three years.

Definition document	Description	Availability
Strategic plans	College Annual Accounts Report Curriculum Development Plan	Corporate Information and Reports
Self-assessment report	College Annual Accounts Report	Corporate Information and Reports ETI Website
Teaching and learning strategy	Curriculum Development Plan	Corporate Information and Reports
Academic quality and standards	Curriculum Development Plan	Corporate Information and Reports
Annual business plan	Curriculum Development Plan	Corporate Information and Reports
Annual report	College Annual Accounts Report Curriculum Development Plan	Corporate Information and Reports
Internal and external performance reviews	College Annual Accounts Report Curriculum Development Plan	Corporate Information and Reports
Reports to Assembly	Information not held internally.	Committee for the Economy
Inspection reports where the NDPB is subject to formal inspection	Includes Internal Audit in Annual Report and QAA Reports.	Corporate Information and Reports ETI Website
Privacy impact assessments (in full or summary format)		Information is available on request.
Corporate Relations		Information not held
Government and Regulatory Reports		Corporate Information and Reports
Service standards		Annual Accounts Report
Statistics produced in accordance with the NDPB's requirements		Annual Accounts Report
Public service agreements		Information available on request.

How we make decisions

Decision making processes and records of decisions.

Expected scope of information: Expect information in this class to be available at least for the current and previous three years.

Definition document	Description	Availability
Major policy proposals and decisions	Information that can be made available to the public without damaging international relations or internal policy development.	Information available on request. Equality/Rural screening information available at NWRC Equality
Background information relating to major policy proposals and decisions	This will include facts, and analyses of facts, relevant and important to the framing of major policy proposals and decisions.	NWRC Equality
Public consultations	Details of consultation exercises with access to the consultation papers or information about where the papers can be obtained. The results of consultation exercises.	NWRC Equality
Minutes of senior level meetings	We would expect management board minutes and the minutes of similar meetings where decisions are made about the provision of services, excluding material that is properly considered to be private, to be readily available to the public.	This information is readily available via Governing Body Committee Minutes Leadership and Management Team information available on request.
Reports and papers provided for consideration at senior level meetings	Information presented to those at meetings making executive	Information available on request.

<p>Minutes, agendas and papers from governing body, council, academic boards, steering groups, and committees.</p>	<p>We would expect minutes of meetings where key decisions are made about the operation of the college, excluding material that is properly considered to be private, to be readily available to the public. These may include, but are not limited to, such items as teaching and learning committee minutes, minutes of staff / student consultation meetings and appointment committees.</p>	<p>This information is readily available and can be accessed via Governing Body Committee Minutes</p> <p>Leadership and Management Team information available on request.</p>
<p>Internal communications guidance and criteria used for decision making i.e. process systems and key personnel</p>	<p>Where access to internal instructions, manuals, and guidelines for dealing with the business of the NDPB would assist public understanding of the way decisions are made these should be readily available. We would not expect information that might damage the operations of the NDPB to be revealed.</p>	<p>Information available on request.</p>

Policies and Procedures

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

Expected scope of information: We would expect information in this class to be current information only. If there is particular reason to provide information that is not still current, this should also be included.

<p>Policies and procedures for the conduct of College business.</p>	<p>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 this 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.</p>	<p>College Policies</p>
<p>Procedures and policies relating to student services</p>	<p>This will include relevant policies and procedures as they apply, for example, to student admission and registration, accommodation, management of the student records system, internal student complaints and appeals, student support services and code of student discipline.</p>	<p>Admissions Policy Academic Assessment Appeals Fees and Charges Policy Learning Support Policy Student Disciplinary Procedures Complaints & Compliments Policy Course Changes, Suspension & Closure Policy</p>
<p>Policies and procedures for the provision of academic services</p>	<p>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 changing course, regulations and policy on student assessment, appeal procedures and policy on breach of assessment regulations.</p>	<p>College Policies</p>

Policies and procedures for the recruitment and employment of staff	Codes of practice, memoranda of understanding and the like should be included. If vacancies are advertised as part of recruitment policies, details of current vacancies will be readily available. A number of policies, for example equality and diversity, health, and safety, will cover both the provision of services and the employment of staff.	Job Vacancies
Customer service	Standards for the provision of services to the NDPB's customers, including the complaint procedure. Complaints procedures will include those covering requests for information and operating the publication scheme.	College Policies
Records management and personal data policies	This will include information security policies, records retention, destruction and archive policies, and data protection (including data	Data Protection Policy FE Sector Retention & Disposal Schedule Privacy Notices Access to Information Policy
Equality and Diversity policies; Equality Scheme	This will also include policies, statements, procedures and guidelines	NWRC Equality
Health and Safety		Information available on request.
Estate management	This will include disposals policy, estates strategy and plan, facilities management policies, grounds and building maintenance.	Information available on request.
Complaints policies and procedures	Complaints procedures will include those covering requests for information and operating the publication scheme.	College Policies
Fileplans (high level, for current records management systems)	FE Sector Retention and Disposal available at FE Sector Retention & Disposal Schedule	Information not held.
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.	FOI Charging Fees

Lists and Registers

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

Expected scope of information: We would expect information in this class to be current information only

<p>Public registers and registers held as public records.</p>	<p>Where an NDPB is obliged to maintain a register and to make the information in it available for inspection by the public, it is accepted that in most circumstances the existing provisions covering access will suffice. We would expect however that NDPBs do publicise which public registers they hold and how the information in them is to be made public. Where registers contain personal information, NDPBs must ensure that this is protected by the data protection principles.</p>	<p>Information not held.</p>
<p>Asset registers and Information Asset Register</p>	<p>We would not expect NDPBs 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. If an NDPB has prepared an information asset register for the Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2005, it should publish the contents.</p>	<p>Information Asset Register and Capital Asset Register available on request.</p> <p>Building Locations Annual Accounts Report</p>
<p>CCTV</p>	<p>Details of the locations of any overt CCTV surveillance cameras operated by or on behalf of the NDPB. The NDPB should decide on the level of detail which is appropriate. This could be by building or more general geographic locations, such as postcodes or partial postcodes, depending on the security issues raised.</p>	<p>Information available on request.</p>

Disclosure logs	Where an NDPB produces a disclosure log indicating the information that has been provided in response to FOI requests it should be readily available. Disclosure logs are themselves recommended as good practice.	NWRC Freedom of Information
Register of gifts and hospitality provided to Board members and senior staff	Details of gifts given or received; hospitality and from which organisation; travel (including overseas, detailed unless properly regarded as non-routine).	Information available on request.
Any register of interests kept in the department. Other lists required by law		Information available on request.

The Services we offer

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 NDPB, this class includes details of the services which are provided by the NDPB, internationally, nationally and locally as a result of them. It will be of public benefit to have ready access, for example, to everything from information about the services provided to the government to the information readily available at a public counter.

Expected scope of information: Information about the services we currently provide including leaflets, guidance and newsletters produced.

Definition Document	Description	Availability
Regulatory responsibilities		Competition and Markets Authority Information Commissioner's Office Equality Commission NI Public Services Ombudsman Ofqual QAA AccessNI Northern Ireland Audit Office Education Training Inspectorate (ETI) CCEA Regulation
Prospectus and course content		NWRC Prospectus
Welfare and counselling services		Safeguarding
Careers advice		Careers Academy
Chaplaincy services and multi-faith provision		Services available, information available on request
Sports and recreational facilities		Campus and Facilities Clubs and Societies
Facilities relating to music, art and other cultural activities		Campus and Facilities
Services for public authorities		Business Support Centre
Services for industry		Business Support Centre
Services for other organisations		About NWRC
Services for members of the public		About NWRC
Services for which the NDPB is entitled to recover a fee together with those fees		Information not held.

Leaflets, booklets, and newsletters	NWRC News
Advice and guidance	Student Support
Media releases	NWRC News

