

Freedom of Information Publication Scheme

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Freedom of Information Publication Scheme

Adopting a publication scheme is a requirement of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. This Act promotes greater openness and accountability across the public sector.

Abingdon & Witney College Publication Scheme

1. Who we are and what we do

Who we are

Abingdon & Witney College is a general further education college with specialist land-based status. There are 3 main campuses nearing the final stage of a comprehensive development plan: Abingdon, Witney and the Common Leys Farm campus (near Hailey, approximately 2 miles outside Witney).

The main catchment area for 16-18 year old students for the college is rural south and west Oxfordshire together with its market towns, and for Adult Learning, county wide following the transfer of the EFA and SFA contracts for the County Council's Adult Learning and Skills Service at the start of 2015/16.

We are the most successful college in Oxfordshire, in the top 10% of colleges nationally, and first in England for 16-18 year old Apprentice success.

The College enjoys strong and active partnerships with local secondary schools, Oxford Brookes University, the University of Gloucestershire, the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and the wider business, public service, voluntary and cultural communities in Oxfordshire. We pride ourselves on our innovative approaches to education and were proud to win two national Sector Awards in 2014, one for governance and one for peer coaching. These awards rightly recognise some of the national best practice on show at the college. In 2015, the College won a further national Sector Award for its work on Transferrable Skills, the *Futures* Programme, and a prestigious Queen's Anniversary Prize for services to the Equine Industry.

Abingdon and Witney College is an ambitious and increasingly proactive College. Our Strategic Plan, *20/20 Vision*, sets out our core mission and values which place the College at the heart of the vocational training and education sector across Oxfordshire and its wider regions. The College strategy emphasises a strong commitment to innovative partnership working, but the clear intention of the College is to remain a high performing, independent and autonomous organisation.

Governance The Board of Governors is responsible for determining the overall mission of the College, with responsibility for the day to day running of the College resting with the Principal and Deputy Principal. See: <http://www.abingdon-witney.ac.uk/about-us/governance/>

What we do

The college provides vocational education and training ranging from pre-entry to full degree level. The college ceased to offer an A Level programme for new starts from 2012/13.

In 2015/16, the college has approximately 10,700 students of which 1,700 are full time 16-18 year olds. The majority of 19+ students are part-time, with approximately 7,000 of these on Community Learning courses. 243 full time students have high level additional learning support needs.

In 2015/16 409 students are on apprenticeship programmes. The college has 350 higher education students and 100 14–16 students.

The college is a recognised specialist provider for students with high level support needs; NEETS and home educated young people; and a designated specialist provider of Land-based provision with full membership of LANDEX.

With regard to its higher education provision, the college is an Associate Partner of Oxford Brookes University and offers degree programmes validated by OBU and the University of Gloucestershire. The college has a direct contract with HEFCE, funding our HNC and HND programmes.

See:

<http://www.abingdon-witney.ac.uk/about-us/our-offer/> and the Course Search tab at <http://www.abingdon-witney.ac.uk/>

What we spend and how we spend it

The College publishes its financial accounts annually. See: <http://www.abingdon-witney.ac.uk/key-documents/>

The College's Financial Regulations and information on tendering, procurement and contracts are available in hard copy or electronically. Contact the Freedom of Information Officer - see the 'Contacting us' section of this document for details.

What our priorities are and how we are doing

The College's current strategy extends to 2020. Our key purpose is to ensure that we provide all our students, at whatever level of ability, with the skills to progress to a positive and meaningful destination that will enable them to lead successful lives and contribute to the societies they live and work in. See: <http://www.abingdon-witney.ac.uk/key-documents/>

Quality

We were inspected by Ofsted in January 2014 and were graded "Good" with "Outstanding" Leadership and Management. In March 2014 we were also "Commended" by the QAA for the enhancement of learning opportunities for our HE students. See <http://www.abingdon-witney.ac.uk/about-us/governance/>

All courses meet the requirements of the government's inspection agencies, Ofsted and the Quality Assurance Agency.

How we make decisions

The following committees meet regularly to inform decision making:

- Board of Governors and its committees
- Senior Management Team
- College Leadership Team

For further information on these committees contact the Freedom of Information Officer. See the 'Contacting us' section of this document for details.

Our policies and procedures

The following College policies are available online:

Safeguarding: <http://www.abingdon-witney.ac.uk/about-us/safeguarding/>
Equality & Diversity: <http://www.abingdon-witney.ac.uk/infocentre/equality-and-diversity/>
Freedom of Information: <http://www.abingdon-witney.ac.uk/about-us/governance/>

For information on other policies and procedures contact the Freedom of Information Officer. See the 'Contacting us' section of this document for details.

The services we offer

A comprehensive website for prospective students is available. It provides detailed information, including courses, entry requirements, application procedures, further contacts for specific advice, and opportunities to visit the College. See: <http://www.abingdon-witney.ac.uk/infocentre/>

All students have access to the College Careers advice service. See: <http://www.abingdon-witney.ac.uk/student-life/careers-and-what-next/>

Web resources are also available for Business and Employers, see: <http://www.abingdon-witney.ac.uk/employer-services/>

A range of printed material is also available, including full-time, part-time, and Higher Education prospectuses, and individual course leaflets. Prospectuses are available online, see: <http://www.abingdon-witney.ac.uk/>. To request printed copies telephone 01235 555585 or 01993 703464 or email enquiries@abingdon-witney.ac.uk.

2. The method by which information published under this scheme will be made available

Where it is within the capability of the College, information will be provided on this website. Where it is impracticable to make information available on the website or when an individual does not wish to access the information by the website, information can be obtained by contacting the College's Freedom of Information Officer. See the 'Contacting us' section of this document for details.

Contacting us

You can contact the College's Freedom of Information Officer by email at freedomofinformation@abingdon-witney.ac.uk or by post, addressed to:

The Freedom of Information Officer, the Clerk to the Corporation
Abingdon & Witney College,
Wootton Road,
Abingdon, Oxon OX14 1GG

The college complies with its legal obligations under the Freedom of Information Act with respect to the methods by which information is made available.

3. Charges that may be made for information published under this scheme

The purpose of this scheme is to make the maximum amount of information readily available at minimum inconvenience and cost to the public. Charges made by the College for routinely published

material will be justified and transparent and kept to a minimum. Material which is published and accessed on a website will be provided free of charge. Charges may be made for information subject to a charging regime specified by Parliament.

Charges may be made for actual disbursements incurred such as:

- photocopying
- postage and packaging
- the costs directly incurred as a result of viewing information.

Charges may also be made for information provided under this scheme where they are legally authorised, they are in all the circumstances, including the general principles of the right of access to information held by public authorities, justified and are in accordance with a published schedule or schedules of fees. If a charge is to be made, confirmation of the payment due will be given before the information is provided. Payment may be requested prior to provision of the information.

Written requests

Information held by the college that is not published under this scheme can be requested in writing through the email and postal addresses noted above. Its provision will be considered in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.

Appendix One: SCALE OF CHARGES

TYPE OF CHARGE	DESCRIPTION	BASIS OF CHARGE
	Photocopying/printing, black on white	Actual cost incurred by the College, currently 4p per side
	Photocopying/printing, colour	Actual cost incurred by the College, currently 25p per side
	Postage	Actual cost of Royal Mail standard 2 nd class
Statutory Fee		In accordance with the relevant legislation
Staff costs of data retrieval	£25 per hour to the statutory Appropriate Limit of £450	In accordance with guidance from the Information Commissioner
Other	Decided on an annual basis	Fully costed to FOI requester

Appendix Two FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – FAQs FOR THE PUBLIC

Extracted from Information Commissioners Office website – www.ico.gov.uk

Q: What can I request under the Freedom of Information Act? You have the right to request any information held by public authorities. The Act allows access to recorded information, such as emails, meeting minutes, research or reports, held by public authorities in England, Northern Ireland and Wales and some authorities located in Scotland. Scottish public authorities are subject to the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

Q: Which Public Authorities are covered by the Freedom of Information Act? The Freedom of Information Act applies to information that is held by a public authority and sets out which bodies and offices are considered public authorities for the purpose of the Act:

- government departments (this includes Non Departmental Government Bodies);
- Parliament, the Northern Ireland Assembly and the National Assembly for Wales;
- the armed forces (but not Special Forces or units working with Government Communications Headquarters);
- local authorities;
- NHS bodies;
- the Police;
- other bodies and Offices such as regulators and advisory committees;
- Further Education Colleges;
- Wholly Owned Companies; and
- some bodies are only covered for certain sorts of information such as the BBC and Channel 4;

Other bodies not listed in the Act can be brought under the Act by a section 4 or section 5 order, these are laid by the Ministry of Justice.

If you wish to find out if a particular body is covered by the Act you should contact the Ministry of Justice who have responsibility for coverage. A basic guide to whether you are covered can be found on the website of the Department for Constitutional Affairs, although this is no longer updated.

Q: Who can request information? Under the Freedom of Information Act, any individual, anywhere in the world, is able to make a request to a public authority for information. An applicant is entitled to be informed in writing as to whether the information is held and have the information communicated to them. If any of the information is to be refused, the organisation must provide you with a Refusal notice which clearly states the reasons why it is withholding the information you have requested and making clear the appeals process.

Q: How do I make a request? Your request must:

- be made in writing (this can be electronically e.g., fax, email);
- state the name of the applicant and an address for correspondence; and
- describe the information requested.

Q: Will I be able to get any information I want? Not always. The Act recognises that there will be valid reasons why some kinds of information may be withheld, such as if its release would prejudice national security or commercial interests.

Public authorities are not obliged to deal with vexatious or repeated requests. In addition the Act does not provide the right of access to personal information about yourself. This information can be requested under the Data Protection Act 1998.

Q: What are the cost limits for a Freedom of Information Act request? There is no 'flat rate' fee to receive information and in many cases the information will be provided to you free of charge. An authority can refuse a request if it estimates that it will cost them in excess of the appropriate cost limit to fulfil your request. The limit is £600 for central government and Parliament and £450 for other public authorities.

Where the limit is not exceeded, the only charges that can be passed to you are those associated with providing the information, for example photocopying and postage. These are collectively known as disbursements.

An authority may be willing to provide the information even where the cost exceeds the limit if you are willing to pay the full costs in dealing with the request. They can also decide to provide the information free of charge, despite the application of the appropriate limit if they wish.

Q: What if I need to pay a fee? If you need to pay a fee for 'disbursements', such as photocopying and postage, or because the costs exceed the appropriate limit, you should be issued a Fees Notice within 20 working days of receipt of the request. When you are issued the Fees Notice, the 20 working day limit for responding stops, and then will start again when the public authority receive payment. If they do not receive the fee within three months they are not obliged to comply with the request.

Q: Can I choose how I receive the information? When making a request you can state a preference of how you want the information communicated to you. This could be providing a hard copy, or an electronic copy of the information, providing you an opportunity to inspect a record containing the information or providing a digest or summary of the information. The public authority should give effect to this as far as is reasonably practical, or notify you why it is not so.

Q: How quickly will I receive a response? You must be informed in writing whether the public authority holds the information requested and if so, have the information communicated to you, promptly, but not later than 20 working days after they receive the request. In some circumstances a request may be refused. If this is the case, generally a Refusal Notice should have been issued to you. This should state the exemption providing the basis for refusal within the Freedom of Information Act and why it applies to the information you requested. This notice must also be communicated to you within the 20 working day time period.

A limited number of factors could extend this period

Q: What are the rules in the Freedom of Information Act regarding repeated requests? Where an authority have previously complied with a request for information which was made by any person, they are not obliged to comply with a subsequent identical or substantially similar request from that person unless a reasonable interval has elapsed between compliance with the previous request and the making of the current request.

Although there is no definition in the Freedom of Information Act of a 'reasonable interval', the ICO has published guidance that will help you determine whether a request may be 'repeated' and provides guidance for public authorities on how to deal with them.

Q: Does the Freedom of Information Act apply to personal data? The Freedom of Information Act gives applicants the right to request information held by public authorities. It does not provide a right of access to personal information about you. If someone is requesting their personal data this should be handled as a Subject Access Request under the Data Protection Act. More can be found about this on the ICO website. Some data about others may be available, however it must not contravene any of the data protection principles of the Data Protection Act.