

Freedom of Information

Freedom of Information Policy





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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Freedom of Information Act 2000 provides public access to information held by Public Authorities.
- 1.2 It does this by requiring Public Authorities to:
- provide information in response to requests made under the Act;
 - publish certain information about their activities in a Publication Scheme; and
 - provide advice and assistance as appropriate
- 1.3 As a Public Authority, the University is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- 1.4 Any person has the right to:
- access all the information in the University's Publication scheme;
 - request information held by the University; and
 - be informed whether the University holds such information and if so, subject to the exemptions under the Act, to have that information communicated to them.
- 1.5 The University is committed to its obligations under the Act.

2 Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all recorded information held by the University and includes both paper and electronic records.
- 2.2 The Act also applies to companies wholly owned by the University and those jointly owned by the University and other Public Authorities.

University of Bradford Union of Students

- 2.3 As a registered charity with its own, independent board of Trustees, the University of Bradford Union of Students (UBU) is not a Public Authority and so it, its information and information held and processed by the University on behalf of UBU is not subject to the Act.
- 2.4 UBU sabbatical officers and members of staff are, however, employees of the University of Bradford and so information relating to employment matters may be held by the University for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act and therefore may be disclosed in response to a request. Information about individual UBU officers and staff, however, is likely to be exempt under section 40 of the Act.

3 Responsibilities

- 3.1 The University Secretary has overall responsibility for the University's compliance with the Act and ensuring that the necessary resources are available to ensure that University complies with its obligations under the Act.
- 3.2 Day to day operational responsibility is delegated to the Risk and Compliance Manager.
- 3.3 Senior Managers, i.e. DVCs, PVCs, Deans of Faculties and Directors of Professional Services, are responsible for ensuring that the necessary resources are available at a local level to identify, locate, retrieve and extract information requested.

4 General Principles

Compliance with the Act

- 4.1 The University shall comply with the requirements of the Act, the codes of practice issued under sections 45 and 46 of the Act and other requirements issued in accordance with the Act.
- 4.2 Notwithstanding the commitment in paragraph 4.1 above the University shall encourage informal requests for information to be made in the first instance and for any "business as usual" requests to be dealt with as such at a local level.
- 4.3 Complex requests and those specifically made as requests under the Act shall be passed to the Legal and Governance Office.

Requests for Information

- 4.4 Under the terms of the Act, individuals may submit written requests for information to the University.
- 4.5 The contact details for submitting a request are as follows:
foi@bradford.ac.uk.
- 4.6 The University must inform the requester within 20 working days whether the requested information is held and if it is, subject to paragraph 6, to have it communicated to them.
- 4.7 The University shall, in accordance with section 16 of the Act, provide advice and assistance to those making requests, as appropriate.

Refusing Requests

- 4.8 The University shall not normally process requests where it is estimated that the cost of the following will exceed £450 (or 18 hours, based on a statutory hourly rate of £25):
- determining whether the information is held;
 - locating the information, or a document which may contain the information;
 - retrieving the information, or a document which may contain the information; and
 - extracting the information from a document containing it,
- 4.9 In accordance with section 14 of the Act, the University shall refuse requests deemed to be vexatious or repeated requests.
- 4.10 There are 23 exemptions under the Act which permit the University to withhold information if it considers it is appropriate to do so and, in certain cases, where it is in the public interest to do so.
- 4.11 The Vice Chancellor, as the University's qualified person, is the only person who may agree to the engagement of the section 36 exemption covering information whose disclosure may or may be likely to prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs.
- 4.12 If the decision is made to withhold the information in accordance with paragraphs 4.9 to 4.11 above, the University will issue a refusal notice as defined by the Act.

Fees

- 4.13 Information made available through the Publication Scheme will be provided free of charge unless otherwise stated.
- 4.14 The University shall not routinely charge for costs such as printing or copying and postage but reserves the right to make a charge where significant amounts of printing or copying are required. If this is the case, it will publish a list of costs for such disbursements.

Publication Scheme

- 4.15 The University shall comply with the requirements under section 19 of the Act and adopt and maintain a Publication Scheme and proactively publish information about its activities in accordance with that Scheme as defined by:
- the Information Commissioner's Model Publication Scheme; and
 - the FOI code of practice issued under section 45 of the Act
 - the definition document for universities and other higher education institutions; and
 - and other requirements issued in accordance with the Act.

- 4.16 The University shall include in the Publication Scheme information which is requested on a regular basis to enable requesters to more easily access this information and to reduce the burden on staff.
- 4.17 Where the University is under a statutory or regulatory requirement to publish specific types or sets of information, these will be included in the Publication Scheme.
- 4.18 The Publication Scheme will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Internal Review and Complaints

- 4.19 Requesters have the right to ask for an internal review of how their request has been handled.
- 4.20 The University shall have in place a procedure for dealing with such requests.

5 Policy Enforcement and Sanctions

- 5.1 Compliance with this policy is the responsibility of all members of the University who may receive requests for information.
- 5.2 Breach of the Freedom of Information Policy may lead to disciplinary action.
- 5.3 Anyone found to be acting in breach of this policy or who is negligent in their responsibilities to enforce it may be subject to disciplinary or capability procedures.