POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Freedom of Information Publication Scheme

Policy Owner:	Freedom of Information Officer
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1 Background

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 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.

1.1.2 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).

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

1.1.4 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.

1.1.5 The Colleges encourage collaboration across the FE Sector where similar functions exist to embed a co-ordinated 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.

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

1.2.1 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.

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

1.2.3 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).

1.2.4 In compliance with our obligations, the FE Sector will:

(i) 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.

(ii) Specify the information which is held by the authority and falls within the classifications below.

(iii) Proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information in line with the statements contained within this scheme.

(iv) 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.

(v) Review and update on a regular basis the information the authority makes available under this scheme.

(vi) Produce a schedule of any fees charged for access to information which is made proactively available.

(vii) Make this publication scheme available to the public.

1.2.5 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 Classifications of Information.

1.3 Classifications of information

1.3.1 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:

(i) Who we are and what we do

(ii) What we spend and how we spend it

(iii) What our priorities are and how we are doing

(iv) How we make decisions

(v) Policies and Procedures

(vi) Lists and Registers

(vii) The Services we offer

1.4 Information not covered by the Publication Scheme

1.4.1 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 Freedom of Information Policy. All requests will be processed in compliance with the FOIA and the FE Sector Freedom of Information SOP.

1.5 How to use the Publication Scheme

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

1.5.2 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 provide access to the information directly.

1.5.3 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 specify the appropriate contact details required to direct such requests.

1.5.4 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 in electronic format.

1.5.5 Data sets published via the Publication Scheme will be periodically refreshed. The timeframes will be determined by the business area.

1.6 Fees

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

1.6.2 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.

1.6.3 If we intend to charge, we will tell you:

- The charge;
- How it has been calculated; and
- How to pay.

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

1.7 Other formats

1.7.1 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.

1.8 Contact details

1.8.1 For further details regarding this document contact:

Freedom of Information Officer
South West College
Mountjoy Road
Omagh, Co Tyrone BT79 7AH
Telephone No: 028 8225 0109
Email: foi@swc.ac.uk

1.9 ICO Guidance

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

1.9.2 Further information is available to the public on the ICO website at Publication Schemes: A Guide | ICO.

1.10 Scheme Review

1.10.1 This scheme will be reviewed annually to reflect any changes in legislation, college operations or public expectations.

2 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.	Paper copy, by purchase from The Stationery Office 16 Arthur Street Belfast BT1 4GD www.legislation.gov.uk Governance section of website
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.	Available on request Annual Reports and Financial Statements
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.	Paper copy or website: Governance section of website
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.	Paper copy, by purchase from The Stationery Office 16 Arthur Street Belfast BT1 4GD www.legislation.gov.uk Governance section of website The Further Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 Partnership Agreement between DfE and FE Colleges | Department for the Economy

Definition document	Explanation	Availability
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.	SWC Student Life
Lists of and information relating to organisations with which the NDPB works in partnership	It is expected that this information need only be 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 Reports and Financial Statements
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 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.	Paper copy available from the Secretary to the Board of Governors or link to Governance section of SWC website. Governance section of website College Management Team minutes 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 in providing a named contact where this can be done.	Governance section of website SWC Contact Page

3 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 Reports and Financial Statements
Financial statements, budgets, and variance reports	Details of authority spending over £25,000 monthly). Details of authority contracts and tenders worth over £10,000. Details of government procurement card spend over £500.	Annual Reports and Financial Statements
Capital programme	Information should be made available on major plans for capital expenditure including any private finance initiative and public private partnership contracts.	Available on request
Spending reviews	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 headings as travel, subsistence, accommodation.	Included in the College financial statements. Annual Reports and Financial Statements

Definition document	Explanation	Availability
Financial audit reports	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 headings as travel, subsistence, accommodation.	Included in the College Financial statements. Annual Reports and Financial Statements
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 headings as travel, subsistence, accommodation.	Included in the College financial statements. Annual Reports and Financial Statements
Pay Policy	The statement of the college's policy and procedures regarding staff pay.	NILGOSC Department of Education NI
Pay and grading structures	This may be provided as part of the organisational structure and should also identify, as a minimum,	Available on request.

Definition document	Explanation	Availability
	senior staff, and £5,000 salary bands for them. For junior posts, levels of pay should be identified by salary ranges.	
Procurement and tendering procedures	Details of procedures used for the acquisition of goods and services. Contracts currently available for public tender.	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.	Included in the College financial statements. Annual Reports and Financial Statements
Register of Suppliers		E-TendersNI Website Also 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.	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.	Available on request. Annual Reports and Financial Statements
Internal financial regulations		Available on request.

4 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		SWC Strategic Plan 2025 - 2029
Self-assessment report		Available on request
Teaching and learning strategy		Available on request
Academic quality and standards		Available on request
Annual business plan		Available on request
Annual report		Annual Report and Financial Statements
Internal and external performance reviews		Available on request
Reports to Assembly		Committee for the Economy (DfE)
Inspection reports where the NDPB is subject to formal inspection		Education Training Inspectorate (ETI)
Privacy impact assessments (in full or summary format)		Available on request
Corporate Relations		information not held
Government and Regulatory Reports		Available on request SWC Governance
Service standards		Available on request.
Statistics produced in accordance with the NDPB's requirements		Annual Report and Financial Statements
Public service agreements		Available on request.

5 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.	SWC Governance Department for the Economy
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.	SWC Governance Department for the Economy
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.	SWC Governance
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.	SWC Governance
Reports and papers provided for consideration at senior level meetings	Information presented to support executive decision-making.	SWC Governance
Minutes, agendas and papers from governing body, council, academic boards, steering groups, and committees.	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.	Governing Body - SWC Governance Other papers available on request.

Definition document	Description	Availability
Internal communications guidance and criteria used for decision making i.e. process systems and key personnel	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.	Available on request.

6 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.

Definition document	Description	Availability
Policies and procedures for the conduct of College 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 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.	SWC Policy and Procedures
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, internal student complaints and appeals, student support services and code of student discipline.	SWC Policy and Procedures
Policies and procedures for the provision of 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 changing course, regulations and policy on student assessment, appeal procedures and policy on breach of assessment regulations.	SWC Policy and Procedures

Definition document	Description	Availability
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.	SWC Policy and Procedures Link to job opportunities
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.	SWC Policy and Procedures
Records management and personal data policies	This will include information security policies, records retention, destruction and archive policies, and data protection (including data).	SWC Policy and Procedures
Equality and Diversity policies; Equality Scheme	This will also include policies, statements, procedures and guidelines	Link to Equality Statement Link to SWC Policy and Procedures
Health and Safety		Available on request
Estate management	This will include disposals policy, estates. strategy and plan, facilities management policies, grounds and building maintenance.	Available on request.
Complaints policies and procedures	Complaints procedures will include those covering requests for information and operating the publication scheme.	SWC Policy and Procedures
Fileplans (high level, for current records management systems)		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.	SWC Policy and Procedures

7 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

Definition document	Description	Availability
Public registers and registers held as public records.	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.	Information not held
Asset registers and Information Asset Register	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.	Available on request.
CCTV	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.	Available on request

Definition document	Description	Availability
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.	Available on request
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).	Available on request
Any register of interests kept in the department. Other lists required by law		Available on request

8 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		AccessNI Link to QAA CCEA Competition & Markets Authority (CMA) Equality Commission Education & Training Inspectorate (ETI) Health and Safety Executive of NI Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) NI Public Service Ombudsman (NIPSO) OfQual OFCOM QAA
Prospectus and course content		SWC prospectuses
Welfare and counselling services		Link to Student Life
Careers advice		Link to Student Life
Chaplaincy services and multi-faith provision		Available on request
Sports and recreational facilities		Available on request
Facilities relating to music, art and other cultural activities		Available on request
Services for public authorities		Business Services
Services for industry		Business Services
Services for other organisations		Business Services
Services for members of the public		SWC prospectuses
Services for which the NDPB is entitled to recover a fee together with those fees		Not held
Leaflets, booklets, and newsletters		SWC prospectuses
Advice and guidance		application guidance
Media releases		Available on request

Change Log

Location	Change from deletion/addition	Change to
Throughout	Links updated	

Communication

Who needs to know (for action)	Freedom of Information Officer
Who needs to be aware	All Staff, Students, Public

Communication Plan

Action	By Whom	By When
Upload to Gateway and Website	Executive Support Officer	On approval
Circulation to key staff	Executive Support Officer	On approval

Document Development

Details of staff who were involved in the development of this policy:

Name	Role
Joanne Lucas	Risk & Compliance Officer

Details of staff, external groups or external organisations who were consulted in the development of this policy:

Name	Organisation	Date
Sector Information Governance Working Group		

Approval Dates

Approved by	Date
Governing Body	04 November 2026