

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR MAKING A FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST (FOI)

How do I make a Freedom of Information request?

You will need to put your request in writing.

- Letter
- Email

If writing a letter, please address it to:

Tim Hulme
Executive Director, Resources and Organisational Development
East Sussex College Group
Cross Levels Way
Eastbourne
East Sussex
BN21 2UF

Email:

Tim.Hulme@sussexdowns.ac.uk

What information can I request?

You can ask for any information you think will may hold. Information that is held on computers, in emails and in printed / handwritten documents as well as images, video and audio recordings.

Before you make a request

You might not need to make a Freedom of Information (FOI) request to get the information. For example, is the information you are requesting available on our website?

The aim of the Freedom of Information Act is to make information available to the general public. You can only obtain information that would be given to anybody who asked for it, or would be suitable for the general public to see.

Please consider the 'Do's & Don'ts' below and think about your request objectively. Your request will be much more effective if it is clear, specific and focused.

What information should I include in my request?

You should include:

- Your name.
- A contact address – postal or email.
- A detailed description of the information you are requesting. For example, you may want all information held on a subject, or just a summary. You do not, however, need to say why you want the information.
- If writing, please ensure the letter is dated and keep a copy.

You can request a response in a particular format that is accessible to you, such as:

- Paper or electronic copies
- Audio format
- Large print
- Braille

When will I receive the information requested?

- You will receive an acknowledgment of your request and should receive the information within 20 working days. If further time is needed, we will let you know when to expect the information.

Will there be a cost?

Most requests are free but you may be asked to pay a nominal fee for photocopies and/or postage (this is known as 'disbursements'). We will let you know in advance if this is the case.

Copyright

Please check the copyright status of information you receive if you plan to reproduce it.

Will I always get the information I ask for?

The Freedom of Information Act recognises that some sensitive information is not available to members of the public. If this is the case, we will tell you why we cannot give you all or some of the information. It may be that you need to be more specific so we can provide just the information you need.

We can also refuse your Freedom of Information (FOI) request if it will cost more than £450 to find and extract the information.

In addition, the Act does not provide the right of access to personal information about yourself. This is instead available under the Data Protection Act, subject to certain exemptions, and is known as a subject access request.

Can I complain if my request is refused or I am dissatisfied with the way it has been dealt with?

If we do not provide you with the information you request, you can ask us to review our decision. Please do this as soon as possible and within two months of receiving our original response.

If you are still not satisfied, you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office.

In writing:

The Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

By email:

<https://ico.org.uk/>
0303 123 1113

Further Information

More information about the Freedom of Information Act is available on the Information Commissioner's website at:
<https://ico.org.uk/>

DO's & DON'TS FOR MAKING A FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST (FOI)
Obtained from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)

<u>DO</u>	<u>DON'T</u>
Find out who to send your request to. Please address your request directly to Tim Hulme, Executive Director Resources & Organisational Development.	Use offensive or threatening language.
Include your name, address and any other contact details in the request.	Level unfounded accusations at the College or its staff.
Clearly state that you are making your request under the Freedom of Information Act.	Make personal attacks against employees.
Be as specific as possible about the information you want rather than asking general questions.	Use FOI to open grievances which have already been fully addressed.
Re-read your request to check for any wording which is unclear or open to interpretation.	Make assumptions about how information is organised or tell the College how to search for the information.
Use straightforward, polite language; avoid basing your request or question on assumptions or opinions, or mixing requests with complaints or comments.	Use requests as a way of 'scoring points'.
Specify whether you have any preferences as to how you would like to receive the information, for example if you would prefer a paper copy of to receive an email.	Send 'catch-all' requests for information (eg please provide me with everything you hold for 'x') if you are not sure what specific documents to ask for. If in doubt, try searching on our website or ask us for some advice.
Give East Sussex College ample opportunity to address any previous requests you have made before submitting new ones.	Please do not submit frivolous or trivial requests.
Stay focused on your line of enquiry. Do not let your attention start to drift onto issues of minor relevance.	Deliberately 'fish' for information by submitting a very broad or random request in the hope something of interest is revealed. Requests should be directed towards obtaining information on a particular issue.
Think about whether making a request is the best way of achieving what you want.	Make repeat requests unless circumstances, or the information itself, have changed to the extent that there are justifiable grounds to ask for the information again.