

Policy name:	Freedom of Information
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Version	Date	Control reason
Version 1	4.3.08	Approved at full governors
Version 2		Changes to the number of working days
Final	28.6.11	Reviewed and approved at full governors
Reviewed and updated	June 2016	Reviewed and approved at full governors

Linked to other policies	Owner
ICO Model Publication Scheme for Further Education Colleges	ICO

Aquinas College, through its policies and day to day work is committed to promoting equality and fairness. This applies to everyone, regardless of gender, racial or ethnic background, disability, religion, sexual orientation or age and embraces the College's legal responsibility.

The persons/group responsible for this document reserve the right to amend this document at any time should the need arise. All appropriate staff will be informed should this occur.

Freedom of Information Policy and Procedure

The **Freedom of Information Act 2000** requires all public bodies to promote openness by making information available through a Publication Scheme.

The Scheme describes the information routinely published by the College. This is set out in groups and 'classes', which indicate the type of information published; how this can be accessed; and any associated charges.

The purpose of the Scheme is to ensure that information is readily available to the general public. Information can be accessed through the College and associated websites or may be paper-based.

The College has adopted the Model Publication Scheme for Further Education Colleges approved by the Information Commissioner.

Our basic requirements are:

- that we routinely put in the public domain as much information about ourselves as is reasonably possible
- that we ensure, where an individual requires information that we hold but have not already published, we provide the enquirer with the relevant information
- that we have in place a properly structured approach to managing records to ensure that essential records of our activities are maintained in appropriate detail (and hence relevant information is readily available to the public).

Requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act by third parties

From 1 January 2005, in addition to accessing standard information via publication schemes, requests can be made for specific information the College retains. These requests must be fair and reasonable under the terms of the FOI Act, legitimate exceptions are:

- Personal data.
 - Any information which, if disclosed, could affect the commercial operations of the College.
 - Information available elsewhere
 - Information intended for future publication
 - Health and safety data (where disclosure might endanger the physical or mental health or the safety of an individual)
 - Information provided in confidence
 - Legal professional privilege
- (This is not an exhaustive list.)

Charges

The College will endeavour to provide hard copy information within 20 working days although further reasonable details can be requested in order to identify and locate the information. If a fee is required, the period of 20 working days is extended by up to 3 months until the fee is paid. The College reserves the right to charge an appropriate fee for dealing with a specific request for information not listed in the publication scheme in accordance with the Act.

Handling requests for information

The College has a standard Information Request Form. This form covers both Data Protection requests and Freedom of Information requests. However, enquirers do not have to use the form to make a Freedom of Information request: so long as their enquiry is in writing, we will respond accordingly.

If contacted directly by an individual requiring information – either face-to-face, or on the telephone – this request will not be valid unless repeated in writing and addressed to the Freedom of Information officer.

Contact in writing by an individual requiring information, should be immediately treated as a Freedom of Information request and actions should be followed as set out below.

Examples of requests which fall under FOI – This list is not exhaustive:

- Minutes from a particular meeting.
- Figures for pass rate in GCSE Maths for the past 2 years.
- Number of staff employed in 1996/97, 2001/02 and 2005/06 and copies of the Statutory accounts for these years
- Details about planning application sent (not available on the public access website)

Responding to requests for information

Requests for information must be directed to the Freedom of Information Officer so that they can be logged, as per our requirements. Once logged, if the information is readily available in a department, a copy will be provided to the FOI officer so they can forward the information direct to the enquirer within 20 working days. Alternatively, if the College already publishes the information requested, the FOI officer must provide the enquirer with instructions on how to find the information. Usually, it should be enough to direct them to the College's Publication Scheme which can be found at <http://www.aquinas.ac.uk/about-us/college-policies/freedom-of-information-act/>

If you receive a request using a College Information Request Form, please forward this to the FOI officer immediately.

Relationship with other College policies

This policy has been drawn up within the context of College policies covering:

- * Data Protection policy
- * IT Acceptable Use Policy