

Freedom of Information Charging Policy

1. Publication Scheme 2009

The purpose of the college's publication scheme is to make the maximum amount of information readily available at minimum inconvenience and cost to the public. **(See Model Publication Scheme and Guide to Information Provided Under the Model Publication Scheme).**

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

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.

2. Freedom of Information Act 2000

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives rights of public access to information held by public authorities.

The Freedom of Information (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004 (the Fees Regulations) govern the college's ability to charge for information requests under the above act. The regulations detail the requirements placed upon public bodies on what is considered appropriate for them to charge for requests made under the Freedom of Information Act. Full details of the regulations can be found under Statutory Instrument 2004 No. 3244, available at the website of the Office of Public Sector Information www.opsi.gov.uk.

In summary, the college is allowed to charge a fee for providing information in response to a Freedom of Information Act request, and the fee must be determined in accordance with the Fees Regulations.

Copies of publications/information listed in the publication scheme are available free of charge. Printed information on courses and services offered by the College is also available free of charge, as are packs issued to people responding to notices of job vacancies. However, requests for multiple copies will usually be charged for at a cost amounting to the cost of producing those copies, with a minimum charge of £5.

If requested, we will produce publications in other formats (e.g. audio, Braille etc). In these cases, we will usually make a charge, amounting to the cost of producing the item in the format requested and sending it, with a minimum charge of £5.

There may be a fee for finding and providing the information. If there is a fee we will contact you as soon as possible to inform you of the amount. We will not conduct a search or provide you with the information until you pay the fee. If you do not pay within 30 days of the date of the notification your request will be deemed to be cancelled.

In certain circumstances the College may waive the charge.

PLEASE NOTE: The College does not have to comply with a request for information if the cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit as set out in the Fees Regulations. The appropriate limit for the college is £450.

The college must still confirm or deny whether it holds the information requested unless the cost of this alone would exceed the appropriate limit.

In estimating whether complying with a request would exceed the appropriate limit, the college can only take into account the costs it reasonably expects to incur in:

- determining whether it holds the information;
- locating the information, or a document containing it;
- retrieving the information, or a document containing it; and
- extracting the information from a document containing it.

The four activities are sequential, covering the retrieval process of the information from the college's information store.

The college can take into account the costs attributable to the time that persons (both the college's staff and external contractors) are expected to spend on these activities. Such costs are calculated at £25 per hour per person for all public authorities regardless of the actual cost or rate of pay, which means that the limit will be exceeded if these activities exceed 18 hours. The college does not have to make a precise calculation of the costs of complying with a request. Only a reasonable estimate is required. Where the cost of compliance does not exceed the appropriate limit, the request must be complied with and the information released, unless an exemption under the act applies.

Other requests where charges may be made:

- Where there is a specific statutory scheme under which information is provided for a fee, such as information from the local land charges registry.
- Where the information is provided under the college publication scheme and the scheme indicates that a charge may be made for information falling within a particular class (this is outlined in Section 2 Publication Scheme, above).

- Educational records: Where the request is for unstructured personal information, the college is entitled to ask for a description of the information to help us find it. We do not have to supply the information, or confirm whether or not it exists, if it would cost more than £450 to do either of these things. This cost structure is as set out in The Freedom of Information (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004, detailed above.

Charging Summary

Chargeable Items	Charge £
Material which is published and accessed on a website	Free of charge
Publications/information listed in the publication scheme	Free of charge
Printed information on courses and services offered	Free of charge
Requests for multiple copies of printed material	Minimum charge of £5
Request for information in following format; audio, Braille etc	Minimum charge of £5
Disbursements i.e. photocopying, postage & packaging	Fee, if applicable, will be advised prior to action
Information from the local land charges registry	Fee, if applicable, will be advised prior to action
Information falling within a particular class (this is outlined in Section 2 Publication Scheme)	Fee, if applicable, will be advised prior to action
Educational records	As per Freedom of Information (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004
Fee for finding and providing the information	Fee, if applicable, will be advised prior to action
Staffing costs for accessing, retrieving and extracting information	£25 per hour – maximum 18 hours
College can refuse to provide information if costs exceed maximum indicated in Fees Regulations	Maximum charge £450