

Freedom of Information Policy

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The Freedom of Information Policy will be reviewed regularly by our Senior Management Team (SMT) in line with our Policy Review Schedule. A review may also be triggered because of changes in the legislative requirements. Any amendments require the approval of our Senior Management Team.

1. Introduction

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA 2000) gives the public a right of access to recorded information held by public authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and by UK-wide public authorities based in Scotland.

Recorded information includes printed documents, computer files, letters, emails, photographs, sound or video recordings and does not exclude unofficial documents like drafts and notes. Our [Records Management Policy](#)¹ establishes a framework and accountabilities for records management and should be read in conjunction with this policy.

Bloomsbury Institute, as a public authority in England, recognises its responsibility and is committed to promoting a culture of openness and transparency with all the information it holds to meet the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

2. Purpose and scope

This policy has been produced to ensure compliance with the provisions of the FOIA 2000 and incorporates guidance from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). It provides a framework for compliance and is supported by appropriate procedures and guidance documents to provide advice and maintain good practice.

This policy applies to all members of staff including temporary, casual or agency staff as well as contractors and suppliers working for, or on behalf of Bloomsbury Institute.

3. Publication Scheme

We publish information proactively on our website through a [publication scheme](#)² which is approved by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). This information can be accessed freely by members of the public or organisations.

4. Making a request for information

For information that is not included in our publication scheme, a freedom of information request can be made to access that information. Anyone can make a freedom of information request. They do not have to be a UK citizen, or a resident in the UK to make a request. Freedom of information requests can also be made by organisations.

Requests for information can be processed on receipt of a specific written request if we have the information in our records that answers your question.

For a request to be considered valid under the FOIA 2000, it must:

- be in writing (this could be either letter or email);
- include your real name and address for correspondence (email address is sufficient);
- detail the information requested.

All requests should be made to the Data Protection Officer by email at dpo@bil.ac.uk or by post to:

¹ <https://www.bil.ac.uk/qem/section-3/>

² <https://www.bil.ac.uk/qem/section-3/>

The Data Protection Officer
Bloomsbury Institute
7 Bedford Square
Bloomsbury
London
WC1B 3RA

You can specify your preferred means of communication in your initial request. You also do not have to mention the Act or direct your request to a designated member of staff to receive a response from us.

5. Responding to a request

We will provide requested information in the normal course of business.

Upon receiving a request, we have the responsibility to:

- tell you whether we hold any information falling within the scope of your request; and
- provide that information (subject to any exceptions. See Section 8)

We will respond to a request within 20 working days following receipt of the request, counting the first working day after the request is received as the first day.

If the information is included in the publication scheme, we will provide a link to where the information can be accessed.

If we require further information to enable us to respond to your request, we will seek clarification and the time for making a response will be paused until your response is received.

Although we are not required to answer a question if we do not already have the relevant information in recorded form, we will still communicate with you and provide you with explanations, advice and assistance. If we know that the information is held by another public authority, we could transfer the request to them or advise you to redirect your request.

6. Freedom of information and data protection

When you make a request for information that includes someone else's personal data, we will need to carefully balance the case for transparency and openness under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 against the data subject's right to privacy under the data protection legislation. We will need to decide whether we can release the information without infringing the UK GDPR data protection principles³.

7. Costs

When complying with a request, the FOIA 2000 allows us to recover our communication costs, such as (but not limited to) photocopying, printing and postage as well as other costs if the costs of complying with the request exceed the cost limit referred to in the legislation⁴.

8. Refusing a request

We are not always obliged to provide requested information. In some cases, there will be a good reason why we should not make public some or all of the information requested.

We can also refuse an entire request under the following circumstances:

³ See our Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy, which sets out these principles in detail.

⁴ <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-freedom-of-information/receiving-a-request/>

- the request will take too much staff time to deal with, and is unreasonable burden on our resources, time, energy and costs;
- the request is vexatious;
- the request repeats a previous request from the same person;
- the request infringes UK GDPR data protection principles.

We will provide you with a written refusal notice if we are either refusing to say whether or not we hold information or confirming that we hold the information but are unable to release it.

8.1 Exemptions to releasing information

In addition, the Freedom of Information Act 2000 contains several exemptions that allow us to withhold information. In some cases, we will not have to confirm whether we hold the information.

We can automatically withhold information if an exemption is ‘absolute’ such as information we receive from the security services. However, most exemptions are not absolute and will require us to apply a public interest test. This means we will disclose information if it is in the public interest to do so.

A full list of the exemptions can be found [here](#)⁵.

9. Complaints

If you are not happy with the way in which your request has been handled, you can request a review by contacting the Deputy Chief Operating Officer by email at deputycoo@bil.ac.uk or by post to:

Deputy Chief Operating Officer
Bloomsbury Institute
7 Bedford Square
Bloomsbury
London
WC1B 3RA

You must submit a request for an internal review within 40 days of receiving our response to your request. You must specify why you disagree with the initial response and what factors you would like to be considered as part of the review. This should include any public interest arguments for disclosure.

The request for a review will be dealt with within 20 working days of receipt. If the review will take longer to conduct, you will be informed why and when to expect a response.

If, after the review, you remain dissatisfied with the handling of your request or complaint, you have a right to appeal to the ICO at:

The Information Commissioner’s Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire, SK9 5AF.
Telephone: 0303 123 1113
Website: www.ico.org.uk

⁵ <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-freedom-of-information/refusing-a-request/>

10. Related regulations, policies and procedures

External

- Data Protection Act 2018
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010

Internal

- Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy
- Privacy Notice
- Student Complaints Policy and Procedures

11. Review of the Freedom of Information Policy

This Freedom of Information Policy will be reviewed regularly by our Senior Management Team (SMT) in line with our Policy Review Schedule. A review may also be triggered because of changes in the legislative requirements. Any amendments require the approval of our Senior Management Team.