Freedom of Information

Guide to Information

Introduction: What is the Guide to Information?

Freedom of information legislation requires the University to proactively publish certain types of information through what is called a "publication scheme". For example we publish information about:

- how we make decisions and governance arrangements
- policies and procedures
- the services we provide to students, staff and others
- how we manage research
- our finances

This "Guide to Information" helps you to find and access the information we make available through our publication scheme. This Guide contains:

1. This explanatory sheet
2. An index of the information we publish in the form of interlinked web pages:

Index of published information

If you require this document in an alternative format, such as large print or a coloured background, please contact the Records Management Section on 0131 651 4099 or email recordsmanagement@ed.ac.uk

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Why do we have a publication scheme?

The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA) requires 'public authorities', like the University of Edinburgh to adopt a 'publication scheme'. Public authorities must adopt a publication scheme which is approved by the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner (OSIC). When creating their publication scheme, public authorities must consider the public interest in publishing information they hold, especially information about service provision and the basis of important decisions.

The Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2002 (EISR) require the University to actively disseminate 'environmental information'. This Guide to Information includes links to the environmental information we publish under these regulations.

The University has adopted the 'Model Publication Scheme' produced by OSIC. The Model Publication Scheme and information about the publication scheme requirements are on the OSIC website

[OSIC Model Publication Scheme](#)

How the University decides what to publish

We publish information in line with the Scottish Higher Education Information Practitioners Group (SHEIP) publication scheme template, which was approved by the Universities Scotland Secretaries Group. This template includes:

1. The classes of information in OSIC's Model Publication Scheme
2. Information specific to the Scottish Higher Education sector where publication was identified by SHEIP as being in the public interest.

The University reviews the types of information made available through the Guide, and adds new information when it is identified. For example, where appropriate, we may add information which is frequently requested.

How to access information

Browse our index of published information to find information the University publishes through our publication scheme.

[Index of published information](#)

To search the Guide to Information instead go to the Freedom of information homepage:

[Freedom of information homepage](#)

Type your search term into the search box at the top right of the webpage. This will bring up results for the whole University website by default. If you want to limit your search to just the Guide to Information site select "Freedom of information results". If you have difficulty, please contact the Records Management Section and we will be happy to help.

We have provided information about the timing of publication where information is published to a regular timescale, for example annually. Unless otherwise stated other information is published within 4 weeks of being updated or approved.

If you prefer not to use the internet or do not have access to the internet, we can provide printouts of the information in our index.

Nearly all information we publish as part of our index is available through the University website or on other trusted external websites. The index contains links to the information.

Very occasionally, the index provides details about how to access the information described, rather than a link to it. When this happens it is because the information is not available on the Internet.

Website accessibility

The University is committed to ensuring our websites are accessible to the widest possible audience, including disabled users. If you need accessibility assistance to access information through our website we will either

- alter the necessary content if possible or
- provide the information in an alternative format at no cost within a reasonable timeframe

See the University's Website Accessibility Policy for full details.

[Website Accessibility Policy](#)

If you prefer not to use the internet

Where possible we offer an alternative way to access information if you do not have access to the Internet, or prefer not to use the Internet. Normally we will send you paper printouts. We may charge a small fee to cover our costs. If there is a charge, we will tell you what it is before sending the information to you. Our charging policy (below) provides details of our charges.

Alternative formats are not always available for "open data". OSIC does not require us to provide alternative formats for open data because, by its nature, open data is normally only available in electronic or digital format and cannot easily be provided in other formats. However where practical we will do what we can to help you.

How to request alternative formats

To request an alternative format contact the Records Management Section by email, phone or post. When contacting us please:

1. Explain you are asking about information in our "publication scheme", for example by using the words 'publication scheme' in the subject line of your email.
2. Give full details of the information or documents you would like to receive.
3. Include your name and address for correspondence.

Our charging policy

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. If we intend to charge we will tell you:

- the charge
- how it has been calculated
- how to pay

We will not send information to you until we receive payment.

Disabled users and alternative formats

Please tell us if you need an alternative format to facilitate your access to information owing to a disability. We will not charge for alternative formats falling within our responsibility under the Equality Act 2010. Please say what format you require.

Reproduction costs

Paper copies

Photocopied or printed information will be charged at a standard rate of 10 pence for each A4 side of paper (black and white copy) and 30 pence for each A4 side of paper (colour copy).

Electronic copies

In some cases we may provide electronic copies of information as files on removable storage devices.

Computer discs will be charged at the rate of £1.00 for each CD-ROM.

USB drives and any other forms of removable media will be charged based on the cheapest cost price as offered by the University's main Office, Computer and Library supplies contract at the date of request. For example in June 2017 an 8GB USB drive cost £2.39 and a 16 GB USB drive cost £4.06.

Let us know if you would like to discuss the options that meet your needs, we will be happy to do so.

Postage cost

We will ask you to pay the cost of sending the information by first class post.

Publications cost

The University sells a small number of publications on a commercial basis. These publications are charged at the cover price, plus postage costs.

Information which is withheld

In some cases we are not able to publish all information within a particular category because Scotland's freedom of information law recognises disclosure would be

inappropriate and has provided an exemption. Where this is the case, we will remove, 'black out' or 'redact' the relevant information. For example we will withhold personal information where release would be unfair under data protection legislation. We may also withhold information about a substantial policy decision before the decision is taken where early release would damage the effective conduct of the University's legitimate business. We will always inform you if we have removed information and explain why.

Detailed information about the circumstances in which information is exempt from disclosure under freedom of information legislation is available on the OSIC website.

[Scottish Information Commissioner's Exemption Briefing Series](#)

Re-use of Public Sector Information

The Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2015 (PSI Regulations) apply to Edinburgh University Library. For information about requesting reuse of information in their collections under these regulations, refer to the Edinburgh University Library Statement of public task. The PSI Regulations do not apply to other parts of the University.

[Edinburgh University Library statement of public task in relation to PSI Regulations](#)

Our copyright policy

In most cases copyright in information available through the publication scheme belongs to the University. Useful guidance on the use of copyright material is available from the United Kingdom government website, and also from CopyrightUser.org which is an independent online resource that tries to make United Kingdom copyright law accessible to members of the public.

[Government Intellectual Property Office copyright guidance](#)

[Copyright User website](#)

Some of the information described in the index is available under an "open licence". Open licences permit information to be reused under certain conditions. For example much of our research data is made available under Creative Commons CC-BY licences. Where this is the case it will be stated, usually on the webpage containing the information.

Otherwise unless it has been stated, information should not be copied or reproduced without formal permission. Permission will usually be granted as long as information is copied or reproduced accurately, is not used in a misleading context and the source of the material is identified and the copyright status acknowledged.

The publication scheme may also contain information where the copyright holder is not the University. In most cases the copyright holder will be obvious from the documents. In cases where the copyright holder is unclear it is the responsibility of the person accessing the information to locate and seek the permission of the copyright holder. When possible, we will indicate if we do not own the copyright.

Request information which is not published

Contact the Records Management Section to request recorded, University-held information not included in the publication scheme.

Guidance on making a request

Further information, comments or feedback

Contact the Records Management Section for assistance with any aspect of this Guide to Information. We will be pleased to hear your comments and suggestions and try to resolve any problems.

Contact details

You can contact us by post, email or phone:

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About this document

Version control	Author/editor	Date	Edits made
1	Sara Cranston	11 July 2017	Initial version
2	Sara Cranston	11 December 2018	Updated guidance on searching website and inserted explanation of how Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations apply to University