

Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002

Guidance for those holding honorary positions at the University

This guidance is intended for the University's honorary fellows and individuals holding similar honorary positions, such as honorary professors and honorary chaplains, who keep information relating to their work with the University. An honorary position is one where the holder is not an employee of the University, and has no contract of employment with the University, but works under the auspices of the University on an unpaid basis, for example by contributing to the teaching or research work of the University.

This guidance gives general advice on the issues you need to consider to ensure that the information you receive, create and hold as a result of your work with the University is managed in a way that is compliant with data protection legislation and the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

Why do freedom of information and data protection affect my role as an honorary member of staff?

Data protection legislation and the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 apply to all paper and electronic information created and received on behalf of the University, regardless of who has that information. As an honorary member of staff you are acting on behalf of the University whenever you perform an activity for the University. Any information that you hold pertaining to work for the University is covered by the University's obligations under these two pieces of legislation.

Data protection legislation permits people to see information that the University holds about them while the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act gives people the right to access any other recorded information that the University holds. Data protection legislation also requires us to hold information about living identifiable individuals for no longer than is necessary, to ensure that information is accurate, and to adopt appropriate security measures for this information to protect it from unauthorised access, amendment or deletion.

We have a month to respond to a data protection request and 20 working days for a freedom of information request. These deadlines mean that the University must be able to retrieve information quickly even if key individuals are away. The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act also includes a statutory code of practice on records management that describes the systems and procedures we should have in place for managing our information so that we can do this.

What do I need to do?

In practice the University does not anticipate that freedom of information and data protection will have a significant impact on you. However, as your contact details may be listed in University publications and you may have a University email account, it is possible for you to be the recipient of requests for information, and as you may hold information relating to your work with the University it is also possible that you may have information which is subject to a request. To ensure that the legislation has a minimal impact on you we ask that you adopt the following measures:

1. If anyone asks about information you hold as a result of your work with the University, log the date the enquiry was received, answer it if you can and you have no hesitation in doing so, or quickly pass the enquiry to the information practitioner for your School or unit. A full list of the University's practitioners is given on the Records Management Section website.

[Information practitioners](#)

If for some reason it is not possible to contact your local practitioner, please contact the Records Management Section, recordsmanagement@ed.ac.uk. Speed is essential as, if this is a freedom of information or data protection request, the response deadline is calculated from the date that you received the enquiry.

2. Ensure that you do not keep the only copy of a particular piece of information, document or e-mail arising from your work with the University. If necessary, provide copies of the information to the University colleagues with whom you are working so that they can be filed within the appropriate record keeping systems. This will ensure that the University's records are complete and, in the event that we receive a request for information about the work, we will not have to trouble you to search the information that you hold.
3. Only keep copies of information that you currently need to fulfil your role. For example, there may be no need to keep information about previous students, if necessary, you can obtain information from the University's record keeping systems.
4. At the end of your period of service, return any paper University of Edinburgh information to the University for disposal and delete any electronic University of Edinburgh information you may have, including e-mails. For example, if you have been supervising graduate students, once the supervision is complete, either pass relevant information to the School or subject group for filing, or destroy it securely.
5. Take appropriate security measures to protect University of Edinburgh information from loss or unauthorised access. The University's guidance on home working gives more information about how to assess what level of security is appropriate and some general guidance on security measures for electronic information.

[Information Security Division guidance on working from home](#)

6. Use appropriate methods to destroy information relating to your work with the University. While it would be acceptable to destroy paper copies of public domain information via your domestic or workplace refuse, some paper information should be destroyed using confidential waste services or shredded. If you do not have access to these sorts of facilities, then please pass papers for destruction to the School or unit secretary and they will arrange for their destruction. For electronic information it may sometimes be insufficient simply to press 'delete', as information deleted in this way can still be retrieved. If you have stored medium or highly sensitive University of Edinburgh information on a non-University of Edinburgh PC, please contact the Information Security Division for advice on how to delete this information securely.

About this guidance

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5	Sara Cranston	April 2018	Minor edits due to changes in data protection legislation and updated links.
4	Anne Grzybowski	October 2015	