Publication Scheme SOP

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Responsible Owner and Enquiries:
Records Manager

Summary of Contents

To meet its obligations towards transparency, the College must proactively publish business information.

This document outlines and directs individuals towards information which is readily available on the SERC/third party websites. It has been developed with reference to ICO Definition Documents for FE Colleges and NDPB's (NI).

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1.0 Change History

Changes to this SOP are documented in Appendix 1 of this document. When reading electronic copies of this document, you can click here to view the change history.

Publication Scheme

2.0 Introduction

Further Education (FE) Colleges are the main providers of vocational and technical education and training in Northern Ireland (NI). The nature of College provision is diverse and broad-based ranging from A levels and GCSEs to BTECs, HNCs, HNDs, Apprenticeships, Foundation Degrees, Degrees and other specific training programmes. The FE Sector plays a central role in raising levels of literacy and numeracy and in up-skilling and re-skilling the population through a broad range of courses leading to qualification, particularly in Level 2 to Level 6.

There are 6 FE Colleges within Northern Ireland: Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC), Northern Regional College (NRC, North West Regional College (NWRC), South Eastern Regional College (SERC), South West College (SWC) and Southern Regional College (SRC).

As Non-Departmental Public Bodies, the Colleges are subject to legislation regarding information governance such as the Freedom of Information (2000).

The Freedom of Information Act (2000) (FOIA) gives everyone the Right to request information from public authorities, helping them to understand better how the College works, how we spend public money and how and why we make our decisions.

The Colleges encourage collaboration across the FE Sector where similar functions exist to embed a coordinated strategy towards best practice. The Sector has collaborated to develop a joint Publication Scheme and adopt agreed protocols regarding the release of information which is subject to FOIA.

2.1 What is the Publication Scheme and why do we have one?

Section 19 of the FOIA requires Public Authorities (i.e., Government and other public sector bodies, including Universities and Further Education Colleges) to produce "Publication Schemes", which are schedules of information to be routinely published by the Public Authorities.

In this context, *'publish'* is defined as 'to make information routinely available'.

The publication of information is designed to increase the transparency and accountability of the Public Authority by enabling members of the public to routinely access information relating to its functions. Information may be available via links to website information, documents and where possible it should be made available in a re-usable format (dataset).

In compliance with our obligations, the FE Sector will:

- Proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information, including environmental information, which is held by the College and falls within the classifications below.

- Specify the information which is held by the authority and falls within the classifications below.
- Proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information in line with the statements contained within this scheme.
- Produce and publish the methods by which the specific information is made routinely available so that it can be easily identified and accessed by members of the public.
- Review and update on a regular basis the information the authority makes available under this scheme.
- Produce a schedule of any fees charged for access to information which is made proactively available.
- Make this Publication Scheme available to the public.

The format is in compliance with the ICO Model Publication Scheme, and the FE Sector has based the categories of information we publish primarily on the Definition Document - Northern Ireland Non Departmental Public Bodies v 4.0 and in addition, guidance from the ICO to use Definition Document - Colleges of Further Education Classifications of information

The Publication Scheme is a structured way of presenting this information to the public.

The FE Sector is committed to publishing the following categories of information:

- Who we are and what we do
- What we spend and how we spend it
- What are our priorities and how are we doing
- How we make decisions
- Policies and Procedures
- Lists and Registers
- The Services we offer

2.2 Information not covered by the Publication Scheme

Information held by the College but not listed as available via the Publication Scheme may be requested by submitting a Freedom of Information request to the College. Details on how to make this request and how the College will process it are available in the FE Sector Freedom of Information Policy. All requests will be processed in compliance with the FOIA and the FE Sector Freedom of Information SOP.

2.3 How to use the Publication Scheme

The FE Sector has provided the table below to enable individuals to browse our index of published information.

The Publication Scheme is divided into the categories listed above (See section 3). Next to each category, the Colleges have provided the method by which the information is available. In most cases, a hyperlink will be provided to the information directly.

In some instances, e.g. where the information is too voluminous to publish online, the College will provide this upon request. Where this applies, the Publication Scheme will detail the appropriate contact details to direct such requests.

Requests for information which are or form part of a dataset or where the requester expresses a preference for the information to be electronic, will be released in.

Data sets published via the Publication Scheme will be periodically refreshed. This time will be determined by the business area.

2.4 Fees

Information which is published on the website, or which can be transmitted electronically will incur no fee.

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 and will not exceed the costs accrued by the College or staff time.

If we intend to charge, we will tell you:

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

The requester will be made aware of any charges in advance of the information being collated.

2.5 Other formats

If you would like this scheme, or any of the information it covers, in a more accessible format, please contact the Records Manager to discuss additional ways in which the information may be made available to you.

2.6 Contact details

Further details regarding this document can be obtained by contacting the Records

Manager at the following:

Records Manager
SERC
Bangor Campus
Castle Park Road
Bangor
BT20 4TD

- informationrights@serc.ac.uk

2.7 ICO Guidance

The FE Sector will continually refer to legislation and ICO guidance when processing Publication Scheme information requests.

Further information is available to the public on the ICO website at Publication schemes: a guide | ICO

3.0 Who we are and what we do

Organisational information, structures, locations and contacts.

Expected scope of information: Current information

Definition document	Explanation	Availability
Legal framework / Instrument of Government / Articles of Association	Information relating to the legal and corporate status of the institution.	Governing Body Information
Roles and responsibilities	NDPBs should be providing both outline and detailed information about their roles and responsibilities and the roles and responsibilities of those working in them at senior level.	College Management Team
Organisational structure	An explanation of the internal structures of the NDPB, referring to its functions and how the structure relates to the roles and responsibilities.	SERC Organisation Structure
Information relating to the legislation relevant to the authority's functions	An explanation of the legislative basis of the activities of the NDPB. If appropriate an explanation of any legislation for which the NDPB takes the lead.	The Further Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 (legislation.gov.uk) Partnership agreements between DfE and FE colleges | Department for the Economy
Student activities	Information relating to the operation and activities of the Student Union or its equivalent and other clubs, associations and non-academic activities that are organised for or by the students may also be included, where this information is held by the college.	SERC Students' Union

Definition document	Explanation	Availability
Lists of and information relating to organisations with which the NDPB works in partnership	It is expected that this information need be only sufficient for the purposes of identifying the relationship between these bodies and the NDPB. This will include the identity of the sponsoring government department.	SERC Annual Accounts
Meetings of Chief Executive or Board members with Ministers and external organisations (including meetings with newspaper and other media proprietors, editors, and senior executives)		Not held.
Senior executives and management board members	Identification of, responsibilities of and biographical details of those making strategic and operational decisions about the provision of the NDPB's services. Any biographical details that are not work related should be published only with consent.	Governing Body Information College Management Team minutes available on request: informationrights@serc.ac.uk
Location and contact details of the NDPB	This should cover the NDPB at all levels from the central body to any offices open to the public for the conduct of the NDPB's business. It always assists to provide a named contact where this can be done	SERC Campus Information

4.0 What we spend and how we spend it

Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, procurement, contracts and financial audit

Expected scope of information: Expect a minimum that financial information for the current and previous two financial years to be available

Definition document	Explanation	Availability
Funding / income	Information on the sources of funding and income, such as funding grants, tuition fees, endowment, rents, and investment income (including investment strategy), as well as income generation schemes.	SERC Annual Accounts
Financial statements, budgets, and variance reports	Details of authority spending over £25,000 (monthly). Details of authority contracts and tender's worth over £10,000. Details of government procurement card spend over £500.	SERC Annual Accounts
Capital programme	Information should be made available on major plans for capital expenditure including any private finance initiative and public private partnership contracts.	SERC Annual Accounts Estates Strategy available on request: informationrights@serc.ac.uk
Spending reviews	For the purposes of this document, senior staff are defined as those earning at least £63,994 per annum (equivalent to Grade 5 NICS). Details of the allowances and expenses that can be claimed or incurred. It should include the total of the allowances and expenses, by reference to categories, paid to or incurred by individual members of senior staff and management board members produced in line with the NDPB's policies, practices and procedures. Categories will be under such headings as travel, subsistence, accommodation.	SERC Annual Accounts

Definition document	Explanation	Availability
Financial audit reports	For the purposes of this document, senior staff are defined as those earning at least £63,994 per annum (equivalent to Grade 5 NICS). Details of the allowances and expenses that can be claimed or incurred. It should include the total of the allowances and expenses, by reference to categories, paid to or incurred by individual members of senior staff and management board members produced in line with the NDPB's policies, practices and procedures. Categories will be under such headings as travel, subsistence, accommodation.	SERC Annual Accounts
Senior staff and board members' allowances and expenses	For the purposes of this document, senior staff are defined as those earning at least £63,994 per annum (equivalent to Grade 5 NICS). Details of the allowances and expenses that can be claimed or incurred. It should include the total of the allowances and expenses, by reference to categories, paid to or incurred by individual members of senior staff and management board members produced in line with the NDPB's policies, practices and procedures. Categories will be under such headings as travel, subsistence, accommodation.	SERC Annual Accounts
Pay Policy	The statement of the college's policy and procedures regarding staff pay	See 'Pay and Grading Structures' below
Pay and grading structures	This may be provided as part of the organisational structure and should also identify, as a minimum, senior staff, and £5,000 salary bands for them. For junior posts, levels of pay should be identified by salary ranges.	SERC Annual Accounts Pay Scales (Lecturing Staff) Pay Scales (Senior Staff) Pay Scales (Non-Teaching)

Definition document	Explanation	Availability
Procurement and tendering procedures	Details of procedures used for the acquisition of goods and services. Contracts currently available for public tender.	Financial Governance Policy
Governors' allowances	Details of allowances or expenses that can be claimed or incurred, and a record of total payments made to individual governors.	SERC Annual Accounts
Register of Suppliers		E-TendersNI website Also available on request: informationrights@serc.ac.uk
Contracts	We would expect normally that it should be necessary only to publish details of contracts that are of sufficient size to have gone through a formal tendering process.	Available on request: informationrights@serc.ac.uk
Financial statements for projects and events	Where there are identifiable projects, we would expect the publication scheme to cover at least the financial reports that indicate actual expenditure against original project budgets. The larger the project, the greater the detail that should be available. Similarly, where organised events are publicised, their cost should be made available through the scheme.	SERC Annual Accounts
Internal financial regulations		Financial Governance Policy

5.0 What our priorities are and how we are doing

Strategies and plans, performance indicators, audits, inspections and reviews. Any other reports or recorded information demonstrating the NDPB's planned, or actual performance should normally be included.

Expected scope of information: Expect information in this class to be available at least for the current and previous three years.

Definition document	Explanation	Availability
Strategic Plans		SERC Strategic Plan
Self-assessment report		Home | Education Training Inspectorate (etini.gov.uk) QAA Institutional Review
Teaching and learning strategy		SERC Annual Accounts
Academic quality and standards		SERC Annual Accounts
Annual business plan		College Development Plan (CDP)
Annual report		SERC Annual Accounts
Internal and external performance reviews		SERC Annual Accounts
Reports to Assembly		Committee for the Economy (DfE)
Inspection reports where the NDPB is subject to formal inspection		Home | Education Training Inspectorate (etini.gov.uk)
Privacy impact assessments (in full or summary format)		Available on request: informationrights@serc.ac.uk

Definition document	Explanation	Availability
Corporate Relations		Not held
Government and Regulatory Reports		SERC Annual Accounts
Service standards		AccessNI Competitions and Markets Authority Equality Commission for NI Health and Safety Executive of NI Information Commissioners Office Northern Ireland Audit Office Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman | NIPSO OFQUAL OFCOM QAA
Statistics produced in accordance with the NDPB's requirements		Statistics and economic research | Department for the Economy (economy-ni.gov.uk)
Public service agreements		Not held

6.0 How we make decisions

Decision making processes and records of decisions.

Expected scope of information: Expect information in this class to be available at least for the current and previous three years.

Definition document	Explanation	Availability
Major policy proposals and decisions	Information that can be made available to the public without damaging international relations or internal policy development.	Home | Department for the Economy (economy-ni.gov.uk)
Background information relating to major policy proposals and decisions	This will include facts, and analyses of facts, relevant and important to the framing of major policy proposals and decisions.	Home | Department for the Economy (economy-ni.gov.uk)
Public consultations	Details of consultation exercises with access to the consultation papers or information about where the papers can be obtained. The results of consultation exercises.	Not held
Minutes of senior level meetings	We would expect management board minutes and the minutes of similar meetings where decisions are made about the provision of services, excluding material that is properly considered to be private, to be readily available to the public.	Governing Body Information
Reports and papers provided for consideration at senior level meetings	Information presented to those at meetings making executive	Available on request: informationrights@serc.ac.uk
Minutes, agendas and papers from governing body, council, academic boards, steering groups, and committees.	We would expect minutes of meetings where key decisions are made about the operation of the college, excluding material that is properly considered to be private, to be readily available to the public. These may include, but are	Governing Body Information Papers available on request:

Definition document	Explanation	Availability
	not limited to, such items as teaching and learning committee minutes, minutes of staff / student consultation meetings and appointment committees.	informationrights@serc.ac.uk
Internal communications guidance and criteria used for decision making i.e. process systems and key personnel	Where access to internal instructions, manuals, and guidelines for dealing with the business of the NDPB would assist public understanding of the way decisions are made these should be readily available. We would not expect information that might damage the operations of the NDPB to be revealed.	Available on request: informationrights@serc.ac.uk

7.0 Policies and Procedures

Current written protocols, policies and procedures for delivering services and responsibilities.

Expected scope of information: We would expect information in this class to be current information only. If there is particular reason to provide information that is not still current, this should also be included.

Definition document	Explanation	Availability
Policies and procedures for the conduct of College business.	Codes of practice, memoranda of understanding, procedural rules, standing orders and similar information should be included. Procedures for handling requests for information should be included. In Wales this will include the Welsh Language Scheme in accordance with the Welsh Language Act 1993, and in Northern Ireland the equality scheme / statement produced in accordance with section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.	Policies and SOPs
Procedures and policies relating to student services	This will include relevant policies and procedures as they apply, for example, to student admission and registration, accommodation, management of the student records system, internal student complaints and appeals, student support services and code of student discipline.	Further Education Admissions SOP Higher Education Admissions SOP Student and Trainee Performance, Behaviour and Disciplinary Management SOP Learning Support SOP Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance Library Policy Safeguarding, Care and Welfare Policy Safeguarding, Care and Welfare SOP

Definition document	Explanation	Availability
		FE Circular 07/20 – Care to Learn (NI) Scheme FE 06/24 - Hardship Fund (Discretionary) - 2024/25 FE 05/24 - FE grants 2024/25
Policies and procedures for the provision of academic services	Some of these policies may already be covered in class 3 'What our priorities are and how we are doing' in the context of external review and academic quality and standards. Additional policies under this heading may include such matters as policies and procedures relating to changing course, regulations and policy on student assessment, appeal procedures and policy on breach of assessment regulations.	Curriculum Policy Assessment of BTEC Level 2 and 3 SOP Assessment Malpractice SOP Higher Education Programmes SOP
Policies and procedures for the recruitment and employment of staff	Codes of practice, memoranda of understanding and the like should be included. If vacancies are advertised as part of recruitment policies, details of current vacancies will be readily available. A number of policies, for example equality and diversity, health, and safety, will cover both the provision of services and the employment of staff.	Recruitment and Selection Policy Staff Appointments SOP Current job vacancies
Customer service	Standards for the provision of services to the NDPB's customers, including the complaint procedure. Complaints procedures will include those covering requests for information and operating the publication scheme.	Complaints and Compliments Policy
Records management and personal data policies	This will include information security policies, records retention, destruction and archive policies, and data protection (including data	Data Protection Policy Data Protection Handbook

Definition document	Explanation	Availability
		Access to Information (FOI and EIR) Policy Access to Information (FOI and EIR) SOP Information Governance Policy Retention and Disposal Schedule SOP
Equality and Diversity policies; Equality Scheme	This will also include policies, statements, procedures and guidelines	Equal Opportunities Scheme Policy Equality at SERC webpage
Health and Safety		Health and Safety Policy
Estate management	This will include disposals policy, estates strategy and plan, facilities management policies, grounds and building maintenance.	Asset Management SOP Driving College Minibuses, Vans and Pool Cars SOP Environmental Policy General Estates SOP Hire of College Facilities by Third Parties SOP Minor Works or Capital Works/Equipment SOP Third Party Arrangements SOP

Definition document	Explanation	Availability
Complaints policies and procedures	Complaints procedures will include those covering requests for information and operating the publication scheme.	Complaints and Compliments Policy
Fileplans (high level, for current records management systems)		Not held
Charging regimes and policies	Details of any statutory charging regimes should be provided. Charging policies should include charges made for information routinely published and clearly state what costs are to be recovered together with the basis on which they are made and how they are calculated.	See section 6 of this document

8.0 Lists and Registers

We would expect information in this class to be information contained in currently maintained lists and registers only.

Expected scope of information: We would expect information in this class to be current information only

Definition document	Explanation	Availability
Public registers and registers held as public records.	Where an NDPB is obliged to maintain a register and to make the information in it available for inspection by the public, it is accepted that in most circumstances the existing provisions covering access will suffice. We would expect however that NDPBs do publicise which public registers they hold and how the information in them is to be made public. Where registers contain personal information, NDPBs must ensure that this is protected by the data protection principles.	Not held
Asset registers and Information Asset Register	We would not expect NDPBs to publish all details from all asset registers. We would, however, expect the location of public land and building assets and key attribute information that is normally recorded on an asset register to be available along with some other information from capital asset registers. If an NDPB has prepared an information asset register for the Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2005, it should publish the contents.	Available on request: informationrights@serc.ac.uk
CCTV	Details of the locations of any overt CCTV surveillance cameras operated by or on behalf of the NDPB. The NDPB should decide on the level of detail which is appropriate. This could be by building or more general geographic locations, such as postcodes or partial postcodes, depending on the security issues raised.	CCTV SOP

Definition document	Explanation	Availability
Disclosure logs	Where an NDPB produces a disclosure log indicating the information that has been provided in response to FOI requests it should be readily available. Disclosure logs are themselves recommended as good practice.	Available on request: informationrights@serc.ac.uk
Register of gifts and hospitality provided to Board members and senior staff	Details of gifts given or received; hospitality and from which organisation; travel (including overseas, detailed unless properly regarded as non-routine).	Available on request: informationrights@serc.ac.uk
Any register of interests kept in the department. Other lists required by law		Conflict of Interest Policy available on request: informationrights@serc.ac.uk

9.0 The Services we offer

Generally, this is an extension of part of the first class of information. While the first class provides information on the roles and responsibilities of the NDPB, this class includes details of the services which are provided by the NDPB, internationally, nationally and locally as a result of them. It will be of public benefit to have ready access, for example, to everything from information about the services provided to the government to the information readily available at a public counter.

Expected scope of information: Information about the services we currently provide including leaflets, guidance and newsletters produced.

Definition document	Explanation	Availability
Regulatory responsibilities		AccessNI Competitions and Markets Authority Equality Commission for NI Health and Safety Executive of NI Information Commissioners Office Northern Ireland Audit Office Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman | NIPSO OFQUAL OFCOM QAA
Prospectus and course content		Prospectus Course finder
Welfare and counselling services		Pastoral Care Student Finance

Definition document	Explanation	Availability
		Learning Support Student Union
Careers advice		Careers Service
Chaplaincy services and multi-faith provision		Not held
Sports and recreational facilities		Not held
Facilities relating to music, art and other cultural activities		Space Bangor Campus
Services for public authorities		Not held
Services for industry		Business Engagement Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Student Companies
Services for other organisations		SERC Partnerships
Services for members of the public		SERC Restaurants SERC Salons SPACE, Bangor Campus SERC Room Hire SERC Community Engagement

Definition document	Explanation	Availability
Services for which the NDPB is entitled to recover a fee together with those fees		Not held.
Leaflets, booklets, and newsletters		Information for parents Student testimonials SERC Events SERC Open Days
Advice and guidance		Contact details for various College Department: Contact Page
Media releases		SERC News

10.0 Communication Plan

This Procedure will be uploaded to the College intranet.

11.0 Review

This procedure will be reviewed annually to reflect changes in circumstance.

Appendix 1: Document Change History

Version	Date	Change Detail
1.1	July 2024	Transferred to Accessibility Template
1.2	February 2025	No Changes Required
1.3	March 2025	Updated Hyperlink to Organisational Structure
1.4	May 2025	Links updated
1.5	May 2026	Links updated