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## **POLICY ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION BY STAFF AND STUDENTS**

**This policy does not cover access to information by members of the public under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

### **Introduction**

1. Most of the College's work involves information. Much of this is academic information relating to the College's teaching, learning and research programmes. This information may be held by the College, its staff or students or accessed from external sources. The College also holds much administrative information relating to the operations of the College, its staff and students, its policies and strategies.
2. A policy on access to information by staff and students is needed because of
  - legislation relating to information,
  - the prevalence of information available in electronic form,
  - licensing arrangements,
  - tuition fees paid by students,
  - the financial memorandum with the funding council,

and appropriate procedures having to be in place when dealing with information that might be sensitive.

3. The main legislation applicable includes:

Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988  
Data Protection Act 1998

Other legislation is also applicable in the case of access to information considered to be private.

4. The aim of this policy is to set out the general principles regarding access to information for members of staff and students. Particular attention is given to considerations of access to information relating to teaching and learning, research and knowledge transfer and also information that is personal or may be regarded as private. This policy does not cover access to information [for members of the public] under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

### **Responsibilities**

5. The Information Services Board, which reports to the Academic Board and the Finance and Planning Committee, is responsible for overseeing the information needs of the College and for developing strategies, policies and plans for information. Heads of Departments and Directors of Institutes are responsible for ensuring that staff and students of the College have appropriate access to the information they need to carry out their work.

### **General policy and principles**

6. The general principle is that as much information as possible held by or accessible to the College should be available to all staff and students subject to compliance with the law, College regulations and any licensing terms.

7. In particular it is policy that as much information as possible should be made available in electronic form as this assists in making information accessible and helps towards making information available remotely and at any time. Where authentication is required to access information the aim is to achieve a single sign-on to access a range of centrally-hosted resources, subject to security considerations. Some staff, however, do not use a computer in the ordinary course of their work. Departments where this situation exists should make arrangements to ensure that such staff are not disadvantaged.
8. The principles to be observed in providing access to information by staff and students are as follows:
  - Information should be as easily accessible as possible, subject to considerations of data protection, security, licensing and intellectual property;
  - Information should be made available in the most appropriate format;
  - Reasonable steps must be taken to meet the accessibility needs of disabled persons.

### **Information to support teaching and learning**

9. The principles described in sections 6 to 8 apply to information that supports teaching and learning. Information held or accessible in electronic form should be available to students both on and off campus, unless there are clear legal or licensing reasons to the contrary. The College centrally will provide a means of accessing information which may be available only to students who are registered on the relevant programme, course, subject or option. Authentication may be required.

### **Information relating to research**

10. The principles described in sections 6 to 8 apply to information relating to research. It is College policy that as much research as possible should be conducted in an open and transparent manner. The results of research should normally be published in the open literature or other media subject to consideration of knowledge transfer opportunities (see next section). Information provided centrally by the College for the general support of research should be available to all researchers. Authentication may be required. Whenever possible this information should be in electronic form and accessible off campus. Access to the results of research will normally be via peer-reviewed media, subject to any requirements of funding bodies or contractors. Information accrued during the course of research should be accessible on request, subject to ethical considerations and any requirements laid down by funding bodies or contractors.

### **Information relating to knowledge transfer**

11. The principles described in sections 6 to 8 apply to information that might have potential for knowledge transfer. The College recognises that knowledge transfer is an important activity where special considerations apply in terms of intellectual property access to information. Departments, Schools and Institutes must consider the opportunities and discuss them as appropriate with Innovation and Enterprise. Where opportunities are confirmed to exist the relevant information arising from the research project (or other activity) should not be put into the public domain until appropriate steps to protect intellectual property rights have been completed.

### **Privacy and information**

12. It is College policy that no one shall access the private information held by an individual except with due authority and in accordance with College guidelines (see attached). Authority to access private information must acknowledge and respect the right to privacy under the Human Rights Act 1998. This means that any copy of private information obtained in pursuit of the College's duty to uphold the law and carry out its business function must only be used for that purpose and should be destroyed once that purpose has been met unless the police, security services or courts require otherwise.

### **Personal information**

13. The College holds personal data about staff and students as is necessary to carry out its work and to satisfy the monitoring requirements of relevant authorities. Such information comes under the aegis of

the Data Protection Act 1998 and use of and access to such information is covered by the College's Data Protection Policy.

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