



**COLEG GWENT
FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION**

*ACCESS TO INFORMATION RELATED TO CORPORATION BUSINESS
(Revised June 2016)*

Policy Statement

The Coleg Gwent Corporation is committed to a policy of openness and transparency in the conduct of its business.

As required by the Statutory Instrument of Government, and also in accordance with its own Code of Conduct, the Corporation will ensure that wherever possible, records of its business, including minutes, agendas and papers related to Corporation and/or Committee meetings, will be accessible to staff, students and members of the public. This also fulfils the requirement of the Freedom of Information Act to take a proactive approach to the publication of material.

Access to Information / Classification of Business procedure

- Seven days before each scheduled meeting, the agenda, minutes and related meeting papers will be made available to Corporation Members and relevant senior staff via the Corporation page on the College Moodle site. Access to this page is restricted and controlled by the Governance Officer.
- Any decision to classify an item as 'Confidential' at the agenda planning stage must be jointly agreed, prior to issue of the agenda and meeting papers, by the Corporation/Committee Chair, the Principal or Lead Officer for the Committee, and the Governance Officer. Any decision to classify a document at this stage must meet the criteria listed within this Policy and must be formally endorsed (or may be rescinded) at the meeting itself under Classification of Business.
- Occasionally, it may be necessary to add individual document security (password control) to certain items of business within an agenda. This is to ensure that access to a specific item is limited to eligible individuals only. An example of information that would be controlled in this way is any report on salary or contractual information relating to a named member of staff or Senior Postholder(s)
- The agenda of every meeting includes a standing item 'Classification of Business', under which the decision should be made as to which, if any, agenda items or papers should be formally classified as 'Confidential'. The decision may also be made to endorse or rescind an earlier classification decision made prior to the meeting. Any decision to classify a document must be justified under the criteria listed within this Policy and will be formally recorded in the minutes of the meeting. Where possible, a classification decision should include relevant time scales.
- At the earliest opportunity after the meeting (normally the next working day), the agenda will be made available on the Governance pages of the College website. Minutes of meetings will also be made available on the website once they have been approved (normally at the next scheduled meeting).
- All unclassified papers will be available to view on request via the Governance Officer and full details of how to request copies of papers will be provided on the website.

Criteria for classification

- Access to information related to Corporation or Committee business should only be restricted where absolutely necessary and the related decision must be fully justifiable against one or more of the following criteria:
 - Reference to, or personal information related to, named individuals.
 - Disciplinary matters.
 - Information related to the College's negotiating position with regard to commercial or industrial relations matters.
 - Financial and/or commercially sensitive information, where disclosure would be likely to be harmful to the College and/or its reputation.
 - Advice from, or instructions to, the College's confidential advisors (e.g. solicitors).
 - Information provided by a third party who has not authorised its disclosure.
 - Information planned for publication, prior to its date of publication or in when in draft form.
 - Any other matter which the Corporation or Committee is satisfied should be dealt with on a confidential basis.

De-classification and Release of Corporation/Committee Information

- Review of Corporation and Committee information previously classified as confidential will be undertaken annually (normally in the Autumn term) by the Governance Officer and the relevant member(s) of the Corporate Management Team (CMT), taking account of any time scales suggested at the time of classification.
- Where release is still judged not to be in the best interests of the College or Corporation, a new time limit may be recorded or the document may simply be carried forward to the next annual review.
- In the interests of maximum transparency, a decision to de-classify a document may be made subject to the concealment or removal of **minimal** information, only where such information is the sole basis for classification of the document. In these specific cases, the relevant text may be removed, and the document de-classified, **only** where:
 - (1) The remaining text in no way aids identification of the information concealed or removed

and

 - (2) The concealment/removal of the information does not detract from, or otherwise affect, the sense or meaning of the document

In all such cases, the de-classified document must clearly show that it has been the subject of redaction.

- Where it is considered that a document is unlikely to ever be de-classified, it may be marked 'No Further Reference', and will no longer be subject to annual review.
- Any proposal to release a previously classified document, to redact a document to enable de-classification or to remove a document from the annual review cycle must be included in an appropriately detailed report, for approval by the Corporation or relevant Committee.
- Information de-classified under this Policy will be made publicly available as soon as practicable, following the related decision.