



COLEG GWENT FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

ACCESS TO INFORMATION RELATING TO CORPORATION BUSINESS POLICY

Approved 24 July 2024

Introduction

The Coleg Gwent Further Education Corporation is committed to a policy of openness and transparency in the conduct of its business. As set out in clauses 16(1&2) of the Corporation's Instrument of Government. The Corporation will aim to ensure that records of its business, including agendas, minutes and reports are available for inspection at the college during normal working hours. Agendas of Board meetings will be available to view on the college website after the meeting has taken place. There are occasions where documents will be classified as Confidential and withheld from public scrutiny. The process for classifying such documents is set out below.

Procedure for the classification of Corporation business

- Wherever practicable, the agenda, minutes and related meeting papers will be made available to Corporation Members and relevant senior staff seven days prior to each scheduled meeting. Access to the papers at this stage 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 relevant CLT member, and the Governance Officer. Any decision to classify a document at this stage must be made with reference to the criteria listed within this policy and must be formally endorsed (or may be rescinded) at the meeting itself under the Classification of Business agenda item.
- 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 post holder(s).
- The agenda of every meeting will include a standing item for 'Classification of Business'. Under this, the decision will 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 using the criteria listed within this policy. All decisions relating to the classification of items/papers 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, the agenda will be made available on the Governance pages of the College website. Non-confidential minutes will be available on request from the Governance Officer following their approval at the next relevant meeting.
- Details of how to request copies of papers will be provided on the College 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, including current or proposed students, employees or Corporation members.
- Disciplinary Appeal 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 prejudicial to the College's interests.
- Sensitive information that could be reputationally damaging to the College.
- 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 reasonably satisfied should be dealt with on a confidential basis.
- Information subject to exemption under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or the Environmental Information Regulation. Further guidance can be found in the Coleg Gwent Freedom of Information & Environmental Information Regulation Policy

Review process for classified documents

- Review of Corporation and Committee information previously classified as confidential will be undertaken annually by the Governance Officer in consultation with the relevant member(s) of the Corporate Leadership Team, taking account of the reason for classification and any time scales suggested at the time of classification.
- Where release is still judged to not be in the best interests of the College or Corporation, a decision may be made to set a new time limit or to carry the review forward to the next annual review.
- In the interests of transparency, a recommendation to de-classify a document may be made subject to the redaction 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 redacted, and the document de-classified, **only** where:

(1) The remaining visible text in no way aids identification of the redacted information

and

(2) The redaction 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 the Board considers 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 recommendation 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 Board or relevant committee.
- Information de-classified under this policy will be made available under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 as soon as practicable, following the related decision.