PART 1

1 SOURCES OF INFORMATION AT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

1.1 ROUTINELY AVAILABLE INFORMATION

The FOI Act is designed to allow access to information held by the University that is not routinely available through other sources. UCD already makes a substantial quantity of information available about its programmes, functions and services. Consequently, such information can be obtained without recourse to the FOI Act. Before making a request under FOI, the requester is advised to consult the publications and websites listed below.

The University’s website address is http://www.ucd.ie.

The University buildings are spread over five campuses: the main campus at Belfield, Dublin 4; Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2; The Michael Smurfit Graduate School of Business, Carysfort Avenue, Blackrock, Co. Dublin; the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4; Lyons Estate, Newcastle, Co. Dublin. Short forms of these addresses are given throughout the guide.

1.2 INFORMATION HELD IN UNIVERSITY RECORDS

During the course of performing its functions, the University creates and receives documents. Collectively, these documents form the University's official record holdings and the information they contain serves as evidence of functions executed and associated activities performed. Given the importance of the University’s functions, it is acknowledged at the highest level within the University that official records must be maintained so as to enable the University to account for decisions made and actions taken.

The records created and received by the University in the course of official business can take the form of incoming letters and copies of replies issued, memoranda, briefs, notices and circulars, minutes, reports, etc, but can also be bound volumes, such as minute books and registers. In addition, records can be in forms other than in text, for example, in graphic or image form, such as maps, architectural plans and drawings, blueprints, charts, diagrams, graphs and photographs, etc.; or they can be in audio-visual form and in electronic form, such as database systems. Records can also be on a variety of physical media in addition to paper: parchment, film, electro-magnetic tape, etc.

The University will attempt, where possible, to make information available, should requesters prefer, outside the formal procedures of the FOI Act, subject to the general scope of exemptions in the Act. Persons wishing to clarify a point of information, to enquire about a course or service, or to follow up on a University procedure in which they have been personally involved, should contact the office or Department concerned.
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<th>Category of information</th>
<th>Content description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Information for prospective students</td>
<td>Application and admission procedures, programmes, prospectus and information about fees and grants.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ucd.ie/newstudent">www.ucd.ie/newstudent</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Undergraduate prospectus</td>
<td>Describes all courses by Faculty, degree and subject area, including contact information.</td>
<td>Admissions Office, Michael Tierney Building, Belfield. <a href="http://www.ucd.ie/ucdpub.htm">www.ucd.ie/ucdpub.htm</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Undergraduate and postgraduate handbooks</td>
<td>Describes all degree, postgraduate degree, diploma and certificate programmes, entry requirements and examination and scholarship regulations.</td>
<td>Admissions Office, Michael Tierney Building, Belfield. <a href="http://www.ucd.ie/ucdpub.htm">www.ucd.ie/ucdpub.htm</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Postgraduate programmes</td>
<td>Describes all postgraduate programmes, academic requirements for entry, application procedures and research interests in each Department.</td>
<td>Postgraduate Studies Office, Library Building, Belfield. <a href="http://www.ucd.ie/~pgstudy/">www.ucd.ie/~pgstudy/</a></td>
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<td>Student information handbook</td>
<td>Describes all student facilities, services, welfare, procedures and regulations.</td>
<td>Publications Office, Michael Tierney Building, Belfield. <a href="http://www.ucd.ie/ucdpub.htm">www.ucd.ie/ucdpub.htm</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff information handbook</td>
<td>Describes the role of the Personnel Department and all information pertinent to staff of the University, including entitlements, facilities and services.</td>
<td>Personnel Department, Michael Tierney Building, Belfield. <a href="http://www.ucd.ie/~personl/">www.ucd.ie/~personl/</a></td>
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2 HOW TO OBTAIN INFORMATION UNDER THE FOI ACT

2.1 RIGHT TO INFORMATION

Under the Act an individual has a right
- to access information held by the University
- to have such information relating to him/her amended where it is incomplete, incorrect or misleading
- to obtain reasons for decisions made by the University that have affected him/her

These rights bring the following sources of information within the scope of the Act

- apart from information already published or otherwise available, an individual may apply for access to University records retrospectively to the commencement date of the Act, 21 April 1998
- an individual may apply for access to records that contain personal information about him/her irrespective of when created
- an individual may apply for access to his/her own personnel records created since 21 April 1995, as well as records created prior to that date where they are being used or proposed to be used in a way which adversely affects or may affect the person involved
- an individual may obtain reasons for decisions made by the University from 1 October 2001, that have affected him/her

The University is obliged to respond to the request under FOI within twenty working days.

Applications for information under the FOI Act should be addressed to Rena Lohan, Freedom of Information Officer, Freedom of Information Unit, First Floor, Library Building, University College Dublin, Belfield, Dublin 4.
Tel: +353-1-716 7175
Fax: +353-1-716 7174
E-mail: foi@ucd.ie
Website: www.ucd.ie/~foi

2.2 HOW TO MAKE AN APPLICATION

Applications should be in writing and should indicate that the information is sought under the Freedom of Information Act. An application form is available from the FOI Unit and on the FOI website, which can be downloaded, completed and sent to the Unit. Requests by e-mail are accepted for non-personal information only.

If information is desired in a particular form, such as photocopy, on computer disk, etc., this must be specified in the application.

As much detail as possible must be given to enable the staff of the University to identify the records required and, where possible, covering dates of the records sought. Where the requester has difficulty in preparing an application
or in identifying the precise records required, the FOI Unit is available to provide assistance.

A requester may be required to provide proof of identity, especially when seeking personal information and therefore may be asked to produce a birth certificate, driver’s licence, passport or some other form of identification.

Contact details should be included to enable contact if it is necessary to clarify details of the request.

2.3 ASSISTANCE TO PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY

The University’s FOI Unit is available to provide assistance to persons who are unable to comply with the requirement to submit a written request for access to information.

2.4 THE FOI DECISION-MAKING PROCESS AT UCD

Decisions on applications for access are made by nominated officers, known internally as FOI decision-makers.

The FOI Unit acknowledges receipt of FOI applications, not later than two weeks following receipt. They are then forwarded to the FOI decision-maker in the relevant Department or office. The decision-maker examines the records and makes a decision to grant or to withhold access. The decision must normally be conveyed to the requester within four weeks.

2.5 RIGHTS OF REVIEW OF DECISIONS TO WITHHOLD ACCESS

The Act sets out instances where information can be exempt from disclosure to protect sensitive information. Where these provisions are invoked, the decision can be appealed to a higher authority within the University. Should the requester be unhappy with the outcome of the review, he/she can appeal the decision to the Information Commissioner. The internal review will normally take place before an appeal to the Information Commissioner. Details of the appeal mechanisms are set out below.

2.6 INTERNAL REVIEW

Internal review of the initial decision can be sought at a more senior level within the University

- if the requester is dissatisfied with the initial response received, such as refusal to provide information, the form of access, charges incurred, etc., or
- if the requester has not received a reply within four weeks of the initial application as this is deemed to be a refusal of the request and allows the requester to proceed to internal review
Such a request for internal review must be submitted within four weeks of the initial decision. The University must complete the review within three weeks.

Requests for internal review should be submitted in writing to:

Rena Lohan, Freedom of Information Officer, Freedom of Information Unit, First Floor, Library Building, University College Dublin, Belfield, Dublin 4.
Tel: +353-1-716 7175
Fax: +353-1-716 7174
E mail: foi@ucd.ie

2.7 APPEAL TO THE INFORMATION COMMISSIONER

Following completion of internal review, a requester can seek independent review of the decision from the Information Commissioner if he/she is still dissatisfied with the outcome. Such a review must normally take place within six months.

Appeals should be in writing and be made directly to the Information Commissioner at the following address:
Office of the Information Commissioner, 18 Lower Leeson Street, Dublin 2.
Tel: 353-1-678 5222
Fax: 353-1–661 0570
E mail: foi@ombudsman.irlgov.ie
Website: http: www.irlgov.ie/oic/

2.8 FEES

Fees may be charged as follows:

- in respect of personal records, fees to cover the cost of copying the records requested will not apply, except where a large number of records are involved

- in respect of other (non-personal) information, fees may be charged in respect of the time spent in efficiently locating and copying records. No charges may apply in respect of the time spent by the University in considering requests.

The FOI Act provides for fees as follows:

- €21.00 (£16.50) per hour as a search and retrieval fee
- €0.04 (3p) per sheet for a photocopy
- €0.51 (40p) for a three and a half inch computer diskette containing copy documents
- €10.18 (£8.00) for a CD-ROM containing copy documents
- €6.36 (£5.00) for a radiograph (X-ray) containing copy documents
A deposit may be payable where the total fee is likely to exceed €50.91 (£40). In these circumstances, every effort will be made to assist the requester to amend the request to reduce or eliminate the amount of the fees payable.

Charges may be waived in the following circumstances:

- where the cost of collecting and accounting for the fee would exceed the amount of the fee
- where the information would be of particular assistance to the understanding of an issue of national importance, or,
- in the case of personal information, where such charges would not be reasonable having regard to the means of the requester

3 CONFIDENTIALITY

The University undertakes to use its best endeavours to hold confidential any information provided to it in confidence, subject to its obligations under law, including the Freedom of Information Act, 1997. Any person wishing that any of the information supplied to the University should not be disclosed because of its sensitivity, should, when providing the information, identify the same and specify the reasons for its sensitivity. The University will consult about this sensitive information before making a decision on any Freedom of Information request received.