



# PUBLIC INFORMATION POLICY

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Mission Statement

Spurgeon's College is a theological seminary and graduate school preparing Christians for the Church's mission and ministry in the contemporary world. As an evangelical seminary, in membership with the Baptist Union of Great Britain, Spurgeon's College is committed to studying and understanding the gospel of Jesus Christ as witnessed to by the Scriptures, and the challenges of the world in which this gospel is to be proclaimed. In doing this it combines classical and contemporary emphases in theology and ministry in serving the church.

We prepare people to serve as leaders, in this country and overseas, in Baptist churches, in wider Christian mission and in churches of other denominations.

### 1.2 Aims

With such a mission, the College's aims are:

- To train people who share in the oversight of local churches to become effective pastors, teachers and evangelists;
- To provide opportunities for the in-service training of Christian leaders, enabling them to reflect theologically on their ministry and develop further skills;
- To provide training and resources for a wide range of Christian ministries;
- To foster and advance research in areas of academic and professional study relevant to the needs of the Christian church.
- To provide excellent and continually improving levels of education, formation and learning resources for all students across the board.

### 1.3 Context of policy

Spurgeon's College is committed to enhancing the transparency of its activities and promoting good governance in line with Charities Commission policy and Principle 6 of the 2010 document "Good Governance: a Code for the Voluntary and Community Sector". The College, as a higher education provider, is also bound by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and has an expectation placed upon it to:

*'...produce information for their intended audiences*

*about the learning opportunities they offer that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.*<sup>1</sup>

In addition to this, the College owes a debt to its staff, students and supporters and it is important that their voices are heard and are able to help shape the policies, communications and operations of the College as it equips people.

With this in mind, this policy aims to articulate the various forms of College information available in the public domain and how each is authored, developed and approved.

In today's challenging economic and educational climate, it is vital to the success of the College that our students are given the opportunity to voice their opinions on areas that matter to them and the College.

#### **1.4 Student Representation**

The students are represented on the following College bodies:

- College Council: three students
- Academic Board: three undergraduates plus one representative each of the students on taught master's courses, the students on in-service master's courses, the DMin students and the other research students (MPhil and PhD)
- Quality Assurance Committee: two
- Learning Resources Committee: three
- Research Degrees Committee: two research students
- Diversity and Equal Opportunities Monitoring Group: two

## **2. Sources of Information and authorisation protocol**

### **2.1 External information**

**2.1.1 Annual Report.** This report will provide information on the College's governance and activities over the financial year. It articulates our objects, vision, aims and objectives and details how the College is performing against these. The future of the College will also be discussed through the Strategic Plan and the issues and challenges involved in implementation. The Annual Report will satisfy the statutory requirements of the Charities Commission and Companies House.

The Annual Report is drafted by the Business Manager, Treasurer and Academic Dean and is approved by the Governors, subject to external audit.

**2.1.2 Website.** The College website is the main hub of information for donors, alumni and prospective and current students. The public facing website<sup>2</sup> serves a number of purposes and will provide information on:

- The College's history, vision and aims
- The various courses and modes of study available to students
- The study resources available to students

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<sup>1</sup> UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.spurgeons.ac.uk/>

- The application process for students and access to relevant documents
- Academic validation of courses
- Fundraising activities and how donors can contribute
- The College staff, ethos and community
- News and events

The Business Manager carries overall responsibility for the website and approves changes to its content. Important news items are to be cleared by the Principal<sup>3</sup> or his deputy.

**2.1.3 Prospectus.** The College prospectus will provide basic information on the College's history, vision and aims and on the courses and modes of study open to students. It is intended as a printed document to direct enquiries to the website, where full and detailed information on courses is available.

Major changes to the prospectus will be done in consultation with a student representative and will be signed off by the Academic Dean (or Principal) and the Business Manager.

**2.1.4 The Record.** 'The Record' is the College's main printed publication and is intended to provide information on the College's activities and news to all external stakeholders. It is also a vehicle to offer staff and students an opportunity to provide thought-provoking articles. To this end, it must satisfy the needs of:

- Alumni
- Current students
- Prospective students
- Donors
- Interested parties from UK and International Christian organisations
- General public

The Business Manager has responsibility for production of 'The Record', through a selected print house and will sign off the digital proof after consultation with the Principal, Academic Dean and student representatives.

**2.1.5 Off the Record.** 'Off the Record' is a supplementary printed publication with similar aims to 'The Record', just in a more condensed format. As with 'The Record', it must satisfy the needs of:

- Alumni
- Current students
- Prospective students
- Donors
- Interested parties from UK and International Christian organisations
- General public

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<sup>3</sup>An email trail is sufficient in this case.

The Business Manager has responsibility for production of 'Off the Record', through a selected print house and will sign off the digital proof after consultation with the Principal, Academic Dean and student representatives.

**2.1.6 Press releases.** All press releases or news items relating to the college or college staff will be approved by the Principal or his deputy prior to release. If the item is of strategic importance to the college, the Chair of Governors will also be required to sign off the release.

**2.1.7 Advertisements.** In line with the College's Promotion Strategy, there will be limited and strategic use of external advertising to promote the College to wider audiences. Generally, advertisements will be drafted through the Business Manager<sup>4</sup> with guidance from relevant staff and will be signed off prior to publication by the Principal or his deputy.

**2.1.8 Appeals.** From time to time, the College produces appeal communications to support the work of the College. As an example, the appeals may be to improve the buildings or infrastructure or to support students in paying their fees. The appeals are placed on the outward facing website and distributed by letter and email.

The Development Officer is responsible for drafting and production of the communications, with oversight coming from the Business Manager. Final approval will be given by the Chair of the Promotions and Income Generation Group.

**2.1.9 Social media.** Members of staff currently use *Facebook* and *Twitter* as tools to facilitate student and staff communication and to provide information on the College to other interested parties. Clearly, it would not reflect well on the College if adverse comments are visible to a wide audience, so there is a need to monitor contributions on our *Twitter* feeds, *Facebook* page and *Google alert*. The Online Administrator is responsible for monitoring official College social media content (excluding Spurgeon's Online blogs) and is authorised to ask contributors to remove inflammatory comments.

## **2.2 Internal Information**

Some of the documents and information produced by the College are not intended for the public at large, but are of prime importance to staff and students. Where relevant, students will be given the opportunity to comment and contribute towards the operations and policies of the college.

**2.2.1 Policies.** College policy is generated by staff on a proactive and reactive basis and will be reviewed, commented upon and authorised by the Governors. Policies that relate to students will also be commented upon by one or more of the student representatives.

**2.2.2 Student handbook.** This document is a vital instrument for every student. It contains information on:

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<sup>4</sup>They may be produced by a third party, such as 'Red and Green'.

- Key academic dates
- Equality and diversity policy
- Staff contact details and roles
- Domestic matters
- Pastoral care
- Student representation
- Fees policy
- Library
- Assignments
- Health and safety

The handbook is revised annually to reflect changes in governance and College policy and staff changes and will be approved by the Principal and a student representative.

**2.2.3 Spurgeon's Online.** Full-time, part-time and online students have access to Spurgeon's Online to facilitate the sharing of information between staff and students. The 'downloads' page contains:

- Lecture notes
- Background information
- Bibliographies
- Assignments

Within the 'academic administration' section, students and staff have access to:

- Forms
- Module descriptors
- Procedures
- Diary
- Timetable

Individual tutors are responsible for the production of relevant materials and for maintaining quality and adherence to the schemes of work. The Director of Spurgeon's Online will ensure that materials are consistent with College policy with final responsibility for cross-College consistency falling to the Academic Dean.

*Blogs.* The Director of Spurgeon's Online will also monitor the usage of blogs and is responsible for amending/deleting inappropriate content.

**2.2.4 eNoticeboard.** In the main hallway, students, staff and visitors can view notices and news on the LCD screen. Information and news items can be placed through the admin staff or the Business Manager or his deputy who will also approve the item.

### 3. References

(2012). *Part C - Information about Higher Education Provision: UK Quality Code for Higher Education*. Quality Assurance Agency.

(2010). *Good Governance: A Code for the Voluntary and Community Sector Summary*. 2nd edition. NCVO Publications.

(2004). *Fair Admissions to Higher Education: Recommendations for Good Practice*. Schwartz.

<b>Document control box</b>			
Title	Public Information Policy		
Date approved	July 2012	Implementation date	
Next review date			
Version	1	Supersedes version	n/a
Approving body	Governors		
Quality Code consulted	Part C		
Member of staff responsible	Business Manager		