

From: Freedom of Information

Sent: 17 September 2020 15:55

To:

Subject: Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/20/302)

Dear

Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/20/302)

Thank you for your clarified Freedom of Information (FOI) request dated 19 August 2020, reference K/20/302.

Your original request read:

“How many complaints about teaching or course delivery did you receive between March 23 and July 23 in 2019 and in 2020?”

Your clarification read:

“My request is about complaints from students, and it is about complaints made between 23 March and 23 July 2019, and 23 March and 23 July 2020.”

The University of Leeds may hold some of information relevant to your request. However, we consider that to respond to your request as it is currently framed would exceed the cost limit as set out in Section 12(1) of the FOI Act. Section 12(1) states that a public authority can refuse a request if complying with it would exceed the appropriate limit of £450. For the purposes of FOI, time spent on the permitted activities is calculated at the flat rate of £25 per person, per hour. The appropriate limit therefore represents the estimated cost of one person spending 18 hours to determine whether the information is held, and to locate, retrieve and extract the information.

We have outlined the reasons for invoking Section 12(1) below.

In the first instance, there is some difficulty associated with your request because you have asked for information between two specific dates. The information we hold is held by academic year (August – July), and as such some additional time will be required in order to extract only those cases which fall within the specific timeframe set out in your request.

Complaints made by students are categorised by subject. Complaints in relation to “teaching or course delivery” may fall under multiple categories. The categories we report on are as follows:

- Academic provision
- Quality of supervision and teaching
- Failure to meet obligations
- Deficiencies in standards of service
- Discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation

We consider that complaints regarding “teaching or course delivery” are most likely to fall into the “quality of supervision and teaching” category but may also fall into any (or all) of the other categories. This categorisation occurs as part of our work to produce Student Cases Team annual reports. As such, complaints are not so categorised until such time as the relevant report is produced. We do not yet hold collated information in relation to complaints made by students in the 2018/19 or 2019/20 academic years. As such extensive manual effort would be required in order to identify the complaints relevant to your request. We have received approximately 200 complaints during 2019/20. Even if we use a conservative estimate of ten minutes to review and categorise each complaint (taking into account that some cases will be straightforward and thus easily categorised, while others will be very complex with high volumes of associated material), this would take over 2000 minutes or 33 hours to complete.

It is therefore clear that to respond to your request in its current format would take in excess of the 18-hour appropriate limit set out at section 12(1) of the FOI Act.

In the hope that it is helpful, we can offer the following advice which may assist should you wish to resubmit your request in order to reduce the total amount of time required.

- We already hold collated information for the academic years 2017/18; 2016/17 and 2015/16. As such, a request for information from one of to these years is likely to take less time to pull together.
- If you were to revise your request to align with the categories we have set out above, this would be likely to reduce the total amount of time required.

We hope this information is helpful. If you have any questions about this email, however, please do not hesitate to contact us on foi@leeds.ac.uk

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, you can request an Internal Review. Requests for Internal Review should be made in writing using the following contact information:

Post: Mr D Wardle
Deputy Secretary
The University of Leeds
Leeds
LS2 9JT

Email: foi@leeds.ac.uk

Requests for Internal Review should be submitted within 40 working days of receiving the University’s response to your request. Further information about how the University manages Freedom of Information requests and about our complaints procedure is also available on our website (www.leeds.ac.uk).

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO

cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review/complaints procedure provided by the University. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Kind regards

Chloe Wilkins

Freedom of Information Officer

Secretariat

University of Leeds