

From: Freedom of Information

Sent: 08 September 2020 15:52

To:

Subject: Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/20/307)

Dear

Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/20/307)

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (FOI) request dated 10 August 2020, reference K/20/307.

Your request read:

“I am therefore making freedom of information (FOI) requests to all NERC DTPs for all documentation relating to PhD recruitment.

I particular, under the FOI legislation I request information on DTP with regards to:

1. DTP recruitment process and policies, forms, procedures and any scoring forms,
2. information about how projects are chosen to be advertised,
3. information about whether diversity of the supervisors advertising projects is considered,
4. how the panels/groups who are involved in this the admissions process are formed (including selection of projects for advertisement, shortlisting of candidates for interview, interviews, and final decisions), and demographic information for these panels/groups.
5. information about whether diversity is explicitly considered when assembling DTP boards.
6. and any mandatory training supervisors, board members and panel members undertake.
7. I also request any information with respect to POLAR quintiles if collected.”

The University of Leeds holds some of this information. The University of Leeds holds information from both the Panorama DTP and SENSE CDT, each of which have their own processes, governance and structures. As such, we have answered each of your questions in turn below, with separate answers for the Panorama DTP and SENSE CDT.

1. DTP recruitment process and policies, forms, procedures and any scoring forms

Panorama DTP

Please find attached the following documents:

- DTP interview process policy
- DTP interview panel information

Scoring forms for the next recruitment round and guidance on scoring ranges are under development following a DTP Steering Committee decision at the 2020 June

Steering Committee meeting. Previous scoring ranges are shown in information for interview panels (attached).

SENSE CDT

We use this [google form](#) for supervisors and the recruitment committee to rank paper applications. We have now completed recruitment of our first cohort and are reviewing the questions and marks before the next recruitment round.

We use a quantitative approach and this in theory reduces bias, as applicants are given scores based on clearly described criteria. We do still leave for comments at the end, which are read out and discussed at our meeting to decide who to invite for interviews

We anonymise applications (CV, cover letter, references) prior to the recruitment committee reading them.

At interviews last year we asked the questions in the attached document (“Sense Interview Questions”). Before interviews we had an information/calibration session via zoom for the interviewers, at which we showed them the criteria grid they would be using to give the students 0, 1, 2 or 3 points for each interview question. We found the grid to be useful in making unbiased opinions on the answers given by the candidates, and for ensuring consistency between the two interview rooms.

This year we have updated our references form to ask that the reference be gender neutral, without using names or gendered pronouns (as the pronouns were too difficult to anonymise).

2. Information about how projects are chosen to be advertised

Panorama DTP

All projects within the science remit of the DTP are advertised with a limit of one project per lead supervisor. Internal processes in contributing schools with feedback from school DTP representatives aim to increase the quality of the advertised projects.

SENSE CDT

We advertise slightly over twice as many projects as we have studentships for, to ensure that there is a better chance for the PIs that their projects will be filled. We have a selection committee comprising of academics from our four organisations (University of Leeds, University of Edinburgh, National Oceanography Centre and British Antarctic Survey), with representatives from different schools in Leeds and Edinburgh, to choose the best projects that align with SENSE remit. I have attached our ‘SENSE PhD project writing tips’, which has requirements for the proposal (including a diverse supervisory team, and to check the project for gendered language).

3. Information about whether diversity of the supervisors advertising projects is considered

Panorama DTP

Since all proposed projects are advertised diversity of supervisory teams is not considered in the selection for advertisement of the project. The supervisory teams represent the diversity of the staff in the contributing schools.

SENSE CDT

Last year if any all-male supervisory teams were submitted, the CDT directors (Anna Hogg and Ed Mitchard) pointed this out to the team and requested they add a female supervisor, with suggestions of relevant academics. There were no all-female supervisory teams submitted last year. This year we have specifically requested that the PIs consider diversity of the supervisory team.

- 4. How the panels/groups who are involved in this the admissions process are formed (including selection of projects for advertisement, shortlisting of candidates for interview, interviews, and final decisions), and demographic information for these panels/groups.**

Panorama DTP

There is no selection of projects by DTP (i.e. no panel) for this process. The shortlisting of candidates is devolved to contributing schools following their own internal processes. Minimum university academic standards for entry, typically a qualifying degree better than 2.2 or relevant industry experience, are applied by the DTP.

Interview panels are formed from volunteers. Wherever possible panels are staffed with a minimum of one female staff member, however we do not record any demographic data for panel members.

Offers are made based on numerical marks by at least three interview panels.

SENSE CDT

These panels are formed primarily of the [SENSE management committee](#), as well as selected other representatives of each SENSE organisation and industry professionals to form the full recruitment committee. We ensured our recruitment committee is diverse, such that no interview room will be all-male or all-female and additionally that there was a mix of seniority levels. Please find attached a slide from our steering committee, showing the gender of applicants, interviewees, accepted students, PIs and interview panel ("2020_steering_committee_EDI_slide").

- 5. Information about whether diversity is explicitly considered when assembling DTP boards**

Panorama DTP

Steering committee school representatives are selected by the contributing schools, taking into consideration their own diversity policies. The theme leads for the three overarching research themes for this DTP (i.e., Atmosphere and Climate; Earth Processes; Living World) are selected from volunteers for the post; currently the majority are female.

SENSE CDT

Our steering committee is formed of academics of the SENSE organisations, related industries and will include students once our first cohort of students have started. Our management committee is three quarters female, and our steering committee is approximately 50:50 male and female. Our steering committee includes Professor Niamh Shortt, the Dean of Diversity and Inclusion at Edinburgh, who is our 'EDI Champion' and we have a session in our annual steering committee meeting to discuss EDI best practises and improvements we can make.

6. Any mandatory training supervisors, board members and panel members undertake.

Panorama DTP

Interviewers must undertake unconscious bias training and are encouraged to attend interview training. Supervisors must fulfil requirements set by contributing schools and universities who appoint supervisors.

SENSE CDT

We intend this year to have a 'unconscious bias' training. We feel that university online training is not sufficient, and plan for this to be a series of informal chats with PhD students or academics who have experienced microaggressions and negative experiences, to share their stories and talk about it with the recruitment panel.

7. I also request any information with respect to POLAR quintiles if collected.

Neither the Panorama DTP nor the SENSE CDT collect this information

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.

Yours sincerely

Chloe Wilkins

Freedom of Information Officer

Secretariat

University of Leeds