

**From:** Freedom of Information

**Sent:** 24 November 2020 14:06

**To:**

**Subject:** Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/20/458)

Dear

**Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/20/458)**

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (FOI) request dated 6 November 2020, reference K/20/458.

Your request read:

“Please may I request the following information for the 19/20 admissions cycles of applicants to the A101 Gateway to Medicine course:

- 1) Number of candidates who are in the highest 20% in the normal distribution curve set for the BMAT score?
- 2) Number of applicant who held offer and who are in the highest 20% in the normal distribution curve set for the BMAT score?
- 3) The As-level grades for all applicants who got offers.
- 4) The interview scores for all applicants who got offers.
- 5) lowest BMAT score of successful applicant”

The University of Leeds some information relevant to your request.

The A101 Gateway to Medicine course was introduced for the 2019/20 application cycle (i.e. for a September 2020 start). As was expected, this resulted in a relatively small number of applications; 146 in total. Of these, 56 applicants were interviewed, with 37 offers made.

The BMAT raw scores are typically used in the following manner: All scores from applicants are put into a normal distribution curve. Those candidates who are in the highest 20% receive a score 5/5 and those who are in the lowest 20% receive a score of 1/5 and everything in between is scored according to where they are placed in this distribution.

However, due to the very small pool of applications for this programme (this being its inaugural year) the BMAT scores were not used within the shortlisting process. Shortlisting was determined by whether applicants met the academic requirements and were from a widening participation background. The offers were made based solely on performance at interview. The BMAT scores for a successful or unsuccessful candidate are therefore irrelevant within this year's process. As such, we do not hold any information in relation to questions one, two or five of your request.

We do hold some information regarding part three of your request. However, we are withholding this information under section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act. Only a very small number of candidates currently declare AS-level grades on their

UCAS application. Students will, of course, know their own grades and some may have chosen to share these with a limited number of their close friends/classmates. Therefore, if we were to release the information we hold, it would be possible for students to establish the grades of their peers, who would not otherwise choose to share that information with them. This would be unfair and as such would breach the data protection rights of the individuals.

We hold information in relation to part four of your request. However, we are withholding the information under section 36(2)(c) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 36(2)(c) sets out that information is exempt from disclosure if, in the opinion of the organisation's Qualified Person, its release would or would be likely to otherwise prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs. We have outlined the reason for engaging the exemption below, including an explanation of the public interest factors for and against disclosure.

As part of our admissions process for medicine studies, we conduct "Multiple Mini Interviews" (MMIs) with candidates. Candidates are scored on their answers, and these scores are used to inform decisions regarding which candidates should be offered a place to study medicine at the University of Leeds. There is no set 'passing threshold'; i.e. no score that candidates must achieve to 'pass' the MMI stage of the admissions process. Instead, candidates are evaluated against one another. An extremely strong cohort of applicants, all scoring very highly, will result in a correspondingly high 'lowest' score. As such the lowest score achieved by someone who was offered a place varies with each admissions cycle and cannot be compared year-on-year.

We therefore consider that to release this information would unduly prejudice the MMI process. It is essential that applicants do not aim for a specific score; to do so would massively undermine our ability to judge candidates and make offers accordingly. All candidates are given focussed feedback to enable them to work on future applications. This information is carefully constructed to make sure that candidates do not focus on individual stations or scores as attributes are assessed across different stations and vary between cycles. To focus efforts in this way would in fact be likely to lessen their chances of success at MMI and would therefore not be in their interests.

Furthermore, candidates who attempt to 'learn the test' may well have short term success (i.e. a score sufficient to secure an offer) but lack the inherent values and attributes to study medicine. It is therefore important to ensure that candidates are offering an honest account of themselves at interview; it would be imprudent to release information which could increase the likelihood of candidates being coached to pass the selection process, only to struggle while on the course.

As outlined above, to release this information would prejudice the admissions process. It would also be likely to unduly damage the prospects of prospective applicants to the medicine course; disadvantaging genuinely strong candidates who may lose out on places in favour of candidates whose artificially strong interviews belie poor overall suitability. Accordingly, we are satisfied that disclosure would be likely to result in prejudice to the effective conduct of our ordinary business. It is

therefore the opinion of Professor Simone Buitendijk, the Qualified Person for the University of Leeds, that the exemption is engaged.

As the exemption is engaged, it is also necessary to consider whether the public interest is in favour of withholding or releasing the information.

There is an extremely strong public interest in maintaining the integrity of the admissions process, and in turn protecting the value of the medicine degree offered by the University of Leeds. Allowing the admissions process to be undermined as outlined above would limit our ability to train and develop future generations of health care practitioners and leaders. This would de-value the course, which is recognised as being of extremely high quality and is therefore necessarily selective. This would not be in the interests of applicants and students, who would suffer as a result of the de-valued course. Nor would this be in our interests, as any de-valuing of the course would be likely to result in fewer applications, a reduction in student income and therefore a reduced ability to provide excellent teaching. It is therefore clear that the release of this information would not be in the public interest.

It is therefore the opinion of Professor Simone Buitendijk that the public interest is overwhelmingly in favour of withholding the 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](http://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