

From: Freedom of Information

Sent: 14 December 2020 19:31

To:

Subject: Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/20/446)

Dear,

Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/20/446)

Thank you for your clarified Freedom of Information (FOI) request dated 16 November 2020, reference K/20/446.

Your original request read:

- “Who is your customer services director? If you do not have a role with this title, what is the name and position of the person or team you would most closely ally to the definition of 'person responsible for satisfaction of students'.
- Who (name, job title) are students directed to take their complaints to?
- Please indicate the following for each of the last 3 academic years (2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20):
 - Total number of overall student complaints
 - Break down of the numbers upheld, dismissed, still under investigation
 - by UG/PG
 - by faculty (or equivalent)
 - by reason or category of reason if to break it down further would exceed the limit of hours for this request
 - Number of cancelled lectures
 - Number of cancelled tutorials
 - Number of unavailable hours for library and/or IT resources
 - Financial pay outs to students
 - Number/total paid out
 - & broken down by
 - Refund
 - Compensation
 - Other"

In your clarification email dated 16 November 2020, you confirmed that “number of unavailable hours for library and/or IT resources” should be understood to mean:

“unexpected/unplanned hours when the library and IT resources were unavailable to students - i.e. not planned maintenance/normal closures”

The University of Leeds may hold some 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.

We do not hold a central record of cancelled lectures or tutorials. Some records of cancellations may be held at a School level, but in practice this is more likely to be held at an individual staff level as there is no requirement for academic staff to report a cancelled lecture or tutorial centrally. As such, the only means of establishing what information is held would be to ask each member of academic staff to review the records they hold to establish whether any sessions they lead were cancelled within the timeframe of your request. In July 2019, a total of 4001 members of academic staff were employed by the University of Leeds. Based on the 18-hour appropriate limit, each member of staff would need to review all of the information they hold in less than 20 seconds, which is clearly not possible. This method would also fail to identify sessions run by staff who are no longer employed by the University of Leeds (which is particularly likely in the earliest part of the timeframe of your request). Further searches would therefore be required to try and identify any information which would fill those gaps. This could be by examining School-level records (on the understanding that this is very unlikely to provide a complete picture), or by combining information such as timetables and academic staff absence records (i.e. to produce a list of sessions which were scheduled for dates where a member of staff was off work).

We therefore consider that to respond to questions five and six of your request would exceed the section 12 appropriate limit alone. Furthermore, we consider that questions four and eight of your request (complaints made and financial redress) are likely to take a significant amount of time also. The majority of formal complaints made by students are handled by the Student Cases Team, however some complaints are handled locally at the School level. It would therefore be necessary to liaise with each School in turn, and the central Student Cases Team to collate this information. We estimate that it would take each team a minimum of one hour to locate this information. A further 34 hours would therefore be required.

Under our section 16 duty to advise and assist, we can confirm that your first, second and third questions can be responded to readily, with no concerns regarding the appropriate limit (although we cannot guarantee that the information will be released in full; any response would still be subject to ordinary considerations for exempt information). We may also be able to provide some information in relation to question seven (IT/library unavailable hours), and can advise that from 6pm on 20 March 2020, the University of Leeds campus was closed, and as such on-campus library and IT services (e.g. study spaces, computer clusters etc.) were closed during this time. On-campus library services began to re-open on a phased basis, starting with click-and-collect access to print stock, from 3 August 2020.

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