

From: Freedom of Information

Sent: 18 December 2020 15:57

To:

Subject: Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/20/484)

Dear

Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/20/484)

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (FOI) request dated 23 November 2020, reference K/20/484

Your request read:

“(i) Do you have records on the ethnicity of your university workforce? (a) If so, please state how many FTE professors you have at the university and (b) how many of them are recorded as being black?

(ii) In relation to the 2020 intake of students at your university please state (a) how many students started an undergraduate course at the university in the Autumn of this year, (b) how many of these students were recorded as having been a student that qualified for free school meals, and (c) of those that were on free school meals how many of them were male AND recorded as being of white British ethnicity.”

The University of Leeds holds some of this information.

In relation to part one of your request, we can advise that a total of 574.65 FTE professors are employed by the University of Leeds. Fewer than five individuals have reported their ethnicity as black. Please note that we are withholding the exact figure under section 40(2) of the FOI Act.

Section 40(2) sets out that information is exempt from disclosure if it is the personal data of someone other than the person making the request, and disclosure would; contravene the data protection principles; contravene an objection to processing; or if the data is exempt from the right of subject access. We consider that the release of this information would be likely to lead to the identification of individuals and would therefore reveal sensitive information regarding their ethnicity. This would be unfair and would therefore breach their data protection rights.

We would also highlight that there is no obligation for staff to disclose their ethnicity to the University and as such the information we hold does not provide a full picture of the ethnic diversity of our workforce.

In relation to part two of your request, we can confirm that we do not hold Free School Meals (FSM) information on a per-student breakdown. The FSM information we hold is limited to the proportion of students who received FSM at the school attended by a candidate and does not set out whether the individual candidate was entitled to or claimed FSM. As such, we are unable to answer parts b and c of your second question.

We do hold information in respect of question two a. However, we are withholding this information under section 22 of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 22 sets out that information is exempt from disclosure if it is intended for future publication, either by the public authority themselves, or by another organisation.

The Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA) is the Designated Data Body (DDB) for higher education in England as defined by the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA). This means that HESA is responsible for the publication of a range of information and statistics about university students, including the number of students who register each year. This information is published in January each year. Information in relation to the 2019/20 academic year will be published in January 2021. While this does not preclude individual providers from publishing information, to do so would result in unnecessary repeated effort on the part of the teams and staff members who compile our submissions to HESA. We also consider that an early release would undermine HESA in their DDB role.

Section 22 is a qualified exemption, which means that we are required to consider whether the public interest in the information outweighs the public interest in withholding it as this time. We have set out our considerations below.

We appreciate that there is an interest in student numbers, particularly given the ongoing covid-19 pandemic. However, we also consider that this information may be valuable to other provider organisations; allowing them to compare their own admissions statistics to ours, and in turn make some basic assumptions regarding our student-based income. This in turn may affect our own commercial sustainability in the higher education marketplace, since such information may be useful to competitor institutions and could inform their own policies regarding how to deal with changing student numbers. If potential students were attracted to other institutions as a result, then the university would suffer financially. This would not be in the public interest. We are therefore satisfied that the public interest is in favour of withholding the information under section 22.

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