Dear

Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/20/137)

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (FOI) request dated 10 March 2020, reference K/20/137.

Your request read:

“Please provide information on any graduation fees you charge students (please split these into fees for tickets for graduands; their families, graduating itself, and robing costs as required).

Please provide the name of any external company that provides academic robes for graduating students at your university and the cost of such robing. Please also provide the percentage of commission that the university receives on purchases of such academic robes.”

The University of Leeds holds this information.

Graduation tickets for students and their families are free. There is no fee to graduate. The cost to hire graduation robes varies according to award; details are available on the graduation pages of our website.

Graduation robes are supplied by Ede and Ravenscroft. However, we are withholding financial information related to robing under section 43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act.

Section 43(2) sets out that information is can be withheld if disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person or organisation, unless there is an overwhelming public interest in disclosure.

Ede and Ravenscroft have confirmed that this information – which is not routinely shared with other universities or companies – is commercially sensitive. To reveal details of their costs and pricing structure would potentially allow competitor organisations to undercut them, which represents a clear commercial disadvantage. In turn, releasing this information would therefore jeopardise the trust between Ede and Ravenscroft and the University, severely undermining our ability to work with them, as a key supplier, in future. This clearly demonstrates the prejudice which would be likely to occur should this information be released.

Section 43(2) is a qualified exemption. This means that the University of Leeds is required to consider whether the public interest in the information outweighs the public interest in maintaining the exemption. While there is a clear public interest in demonstrating that the University conducts its financial affairs with integrity and probity, we consider this interest to be met via the information we publish on our website, such as our Information for Suppliers and our Annual Report and Accounts. We also consider there to be a strong public interest in maintaining our working relationship with Ede and Ravenscroft. As such, we conclude that the public interest in this case is in favour of maintaining the exemption.
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