Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/20/250)

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (FOI) request dated 3 July 2020, reference K/20/250.

Your request read:

“1. Please provide the number of individuals employed at your institution in receipt of total remuneration of more than £100,000 for the financial year 2019-20.

Total remuneration includes, but is not limited to, salary, performance related pay and other bonuses, pension-related payments, compensation for loss of office, other taxable benefits, non-taxable benefits, and all other payments. For clarification, this is not the same figure detailed in annual reports, which typically provides pay bands on the basis of salary only for staff other than the Vice-Chancellor.

2. Please provide a list of individuals at your institution in receipt of over £150,000 in total remuneration for the financial year 2019-20. For individuals in receipt of over £150,000, please include names, job titles and remuneration broken down into basic salary, performance related pay and other bonuses, pension-related payments, compensation for loss of office, other taxable benefits, non-taxable benefits, and all other payments. Total remuneration as described is in line with how Head of Provider remuneration is broken down by the Office for Students in their annual senior staff remuneration publication as available here.”

The University of Leeds holds this information. 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 engaging section 12(1) below.

We do not record remuneration information in the manner you have requested, as we have no business need to do so. As such, in order to retrieve this information, significant manual effort would be required. A report containing all salary and payment raw data would first need to be produced by the payroll department. This would include anyone who had been paid via payroll in the given year. We estimate
that this would generate over 15,000 lines of data. This report would include individuals other than employees (who therefore fall outside the scope of your request). Work would therefore be required to exclude these lines of irrelevant data. A second report from the pensions department would then be required, in order to establish the value of pensions payments which we have made. These two reports would then need to be merged together. There are many pay-types, pension payments, bonuses etc. which comprise total remuneration and without going through these steps and analysing the data, we cannot exclude those individuals whose total remuneration does not exceed £100,000.

From there, a manual review would be required in order to categorise each type of payment made according to the categories you have set out. Even assuming that only a small number of staff will fall within the scope of point 2 of your request (i.e. with remuneration exceeding £150,000), we still estimate that this will take far in excess of 18 hours. We have based this estimate on a previous FOI request received and responded to in 2019, which sought the same information, but for the previous three financial years. Over 100 hours was spent locating, retrieving and extracting the requested information on that occasion, and in hindsight a section 12(1) refusal would have been appropriate. Even accounting for the fact that your request seeks only one year of data, we do not consider that this will significantly reduce the amount of time required as the initial time required to produce the payroll and pension reports, to amalgamate them and exclude out-of-scope staff will still be required. However, even if we were to assume that providing one years’ worth of data would take roughly one third the time taken to provide three, this still equates to 33 hours, and therefore exceeds the appropriate limit.

Reliance upon section 12(1) places upon organisations an obligation to provide advice and guidance to applicants on how their request can be refined or otherwise amended in order to bring the total time required under the appropriate limit. We can advise that information which broadly mirrors that which you have requested will soon be compiled for our annual accounts. This will take place throughout August and September. As such, if you were to re-submit your request at the end of September 2020 (or later), it is likely that much of the information you have requested will be more readily available and it would therefore take far less time to complete your request. Please note that we cannot guarantee that the information would be disclosed to you in full; once the information had been collated, we would still need to complete a review of the information in order to consider whether any exemptions were engaged. However, we hope this 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
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