From: Freedom of Information  
Sent: 01 July 2020 16:09  
To:  
Subject: Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/20/175)

Dear

Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/20/175)

Thank you for your clarified Freedom of Information (FOI) request dated 12 May 2020, reference K/20/175. Please accept our apologies for the delay inresponding to your request.

Your clarification email read:

“I am looking for information about matters where the complaint is about sexism/ racism (i.e. discriminatory comments)”

As such, we understand your request to be:

“In each year 2015/16; 2016/17; 2017/18 and 2018/19, how many undergraduate students enrolled at your university made an official complaint which was about sexism/ racism (i.e. discriminatory comments)? How many of these complaints were followed by an investigation into the alleged incident? How many people investigated were subsequently suspended or expelled from your university?”

The University of Leeds holds 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 separately categorise complaints about sexism. As such, to establish the number of cases relevant to your request, we would need to manually review all student complaint cases received within each of the four academic years you are interested in. We note that even cases which are separately categorised as being about something else (for instance, cases which are already categorised as being about racism) may also include elements of sexism and would therefore fall within the scope of your request. It is therefore not possible to immediately eliminate any complaints from the pool of potentially relevant cases. This manual review would allow us to identify all cases which were about sexism. From there, additional reviews would be required to identify the remaining information you have requested.
There were a total of 110 complaints (of all types/subjects) in 2018/19 alone, which we would need to review. Assuming a conservative estimate of five minutes per case on average to review and establish relevance, we calculate that this would take a minimum of 550 minutes, or just over nine hours to complete. Five minutes is an average and while it is likely that some cases will be immediately recognisable as either relevant or irrelevant, others are more complicated and likely to take longer. A similar amount of time would be required for the remaining years, although we note that the number of complaints each year does vary. As such, we estimate that your request will take a minimum of 20 hours to complete and is in fact likely to take longer than this. This is in excess of the 18-hour appropriate limit, and as such section 12 is engaged.

As part of our section 16 duty to advise and assist applicants, we have considered how your request could be refined in order to reduce the required amount of time. We do categorise complaints about racism, and as such it is likely that it would take us less time to locate, retrieve and extract information if your request were limited to these complaints only. Any request which includes sexism complaints will require a manual review as outlined above. As such, if this part of the request is essential to you, we recommend that you drastically reduce the timeframe covered by your request.

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.
Yours sincerely

Chloe Wilkins

Freedom of Information Officer
Secretariat
University of Leeds