Dear

Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/20/497; K/20/498 and K/21/025)

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (FOI) requests dated 30 November 2020 (reference numbers K/20/497 and K/20/498) and 14 January 2021 (reference K/21/025).

Your requests read:

K/20/497
“From May 25 up to date, OR if this is too large a timeframe, the week following May 25, the week following June 7, and from September 1st up date.

Specifically, when the relevant faculty may have met or discussed the relevant material

Could you provide me with email correspondence to and from the heads of department for philosophy

In relation to:

1) "Black Lives Matter" and the "curriculum" and "decolonising" as suggested search terms.

A question form of this may be: "What changes to the philosophy syllabus have been proposed in light of the Black Lives Matter movement?"

2) Emails including secondary search terms including: Locke, Nietzsche, Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hume, Heidegger and other specifically named figures

In relation to 1) search terms above
A question form of this may be: "What specific figures might be removed from the syllabus, or taught with greater context?"

K/20/498
“From May 25 up to date, OR if this is too large a timeframe, the week following May 25, the week following June 7, and from September 1st up date.

Specifically, when the relevant faculty may have met or discussed the relevant material
Could you provide me with email correspondence to and from the heads of department for English

In relation to:

1) "Blak Lives Matter" and the "curriculum" and "decolonising" and "anti-racist" as suggested search terms.

A question form of this may be: "What changes to the English syllabus have been proposed in light of the Black Lives Matter movement?"

2) Emails including secondary search terms including:

Kipling, Woolf, Dickens, Eliot, Conrad

In relation to 1) search terms above

A question form of this may be: "What specific figures might be removed from the syllabus, or taught with greater context?"

K/21/025

"From September 1 up to date for the music department

(Or from the first week of each month up to date from September 1 if this is too long a timeframe)

Can you please provide (redacted as needed) internal communications/memos/notices/emails/video conference calls, advice, webinars or transcripts of these, etc

- From potentially Staff networks, working groups, intranet notices, senior members staff and management, internal recommendations on behalf of senior staff or the organization as a whole, reports, letters, petitions and external communications to senior staff

(this is only suggested material)

- My main focus is email communication to and from the most senior staff: head of department, and the member of staff responsible for inclusion and equalities

- Regarding: Actions, interventions and projects intended to decolonise or address contested legacies and diversity - particularly with regard to composers who may be problematic on regard to colonialism, racism and slavery
This could be found using key terms:
"Decolonising" "Colonialism", "imperialism", "empire", "institutional racism", "white supremacy" "far right"

In particular I would like to know what particular figures or genres have been a focus for review of re-assessment

As a focussed question it could be framed as: "What work is being done, or has been proposed in the above material, to tackle historic legacies of slavery, racism, or other contested legacies in the music department?"

As your requests seek very similar information, but for three different Schools, we have aggregated your requests and this response addresses all three.

The University of Leeds holds information relevant to your requests. However, we are refusing your requests under section 14(1) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 14(1) sets out that public authorities such as the University of Leeds do not have to comply with FOI requests where the request, or its impact on a public authority, cannot be justified.

We have so far located 75 documents across the Schools of English and Philosophy. These documents range from email correspondence to meeting minutes and associated paperwork, and amount to approximately 426 pages. In order to comply with your request, extensive manual review of the documentation would be required in order to identify and redact confidential and sensitive information (e.g. the personal data of individuals). We estimate that it would take an average of five minutes to review each page of documentation. This takes into account the fact that some documents are very brief, requiring limited review, while others are very detailed, requiring specialist input from those close to the subject matter in order to take a view on what is and is not suitable for disclosure under the terms of the FOI Act. It would therefore take approximately 2130 minutes (over 35 hours) to review and redact the material identified as being within the scope of requests K/20/497 and K/20/498. This does not include the time spent locating and extracting the information, nor the time required to conduct the same searches and reviews for information held by the School of Music. Time spent redacting documents cannot be considered under the section 12(1) appropriate limit, and as such it is necessary to consider whether the time required constitutes an excessive burden on the University of Leeds as per section 14(1).

We understand that there is a strong and genuine public interest in how the University responds to social issues, such as the Black Lives Matter movement and wider concerns regarding the decolonisation of curricula, increasing representation and accurately reflecting our diverse community and history. We recognise that it is important that the public, and more particularly, members of our University community are able to scrutinise our responses and actions, and hold us to account where we do not meet expectations. However, these legitimate interests must be balanced against the significant amount of time which would be required to prepare the requested material for release, and also considered in the context of the steps already taken by the University.
We already directly communicate with members of the University community regarding important matters such as those highlighted by your request. We have also published a range of information setting out the recent and ongoing Equality and Inclusion work we undertake (via our Equality Policy Unit). Where students or members of the community have concerns about our actions (or inactions), we encourage direct conversations with Head of Schools, student representatives and via appropriate committees. The amount of material relevant to your request which we have located demonstrates that these subjects are being discussed across the University.

We also note the significant amount of time which would need to be spent on your request, in order to prepare the material for release. The burden on the University as a result of your requests is exacerbated by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, which places additional strain on resources and means it is essential that we prioritise the delivery of teaching.

Based on the requests you have made to the University to date, we also consider it to be very likely that you will continue to submit similar requests for other Schools within the University, therefore requiring additional effort.

On balance we therefore consider that, although there is a genuine public interest in the information you have requested, this interest is met via our direct communications with staff and students, the fact that students and staff members can directly raise concerns with the University, and via the information we have published online. The interests are also outweighed by the very significant burden which would be placed upon the University, not only as a result of the requests you have already submitted, but also due to the likelihood of further requests being submitted in future.

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