From: Freedom of Information  
Sent: 20 January 2021 15:41  
To:  
Subject: Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/21/004)

Dear

**Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/21/004)**

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (FOI) request dated 5 January 2021, reference K/21/004.

Your request read:

“Please respond to these questions in relation to the (i) 2018/19 academic year and (ii) the 2019/20 academic year.

1) How many students were permanently excluded from the University for cheating in examinations and/or assessments? For each of these cases please state if the student was an undergraduate or a postgraduate and a single sentence description of what form the cheating took.

2) How many students were found guilty of cheating during formal University examinations/assessments (please note that any cases referred to in question 1 should still be included in this answer)? Please give a brief description of the type of cheating that was involved in these cases.

3) How many students were found guilty of paying a third party to provide him/her with an essay that was used as part of an official assessment? For each case please state the amount the student paid if recorded and the name of the company/website that was paid for the essay.”

The University of Leeds holds some information relevant to your request. However, we consider that to respond to question two of your request 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.

The information you have requested at question two is not held centrally. It may be helpful if we first explain how the University of Leeds reviews and manages allegations of academic malpractice.

All allegations are initially actioned by the relevant School (i.e. allegations against an English Language and Literature student would be actioned by the School of English). Depending on the nature of the alleged offence, it may be appropriate for
the matter to remain at the individual School level. Serious, repeated or otherwise grievous offences, however, may necessitate referral to the University level. A non-exhaustive list of [list of examples] of malpractice in University assessments, including whether they may be suitable for management at the School level can be found on our website.

The majority of cases are suitable for management at the School level, without referral to the University level. As such, records in relation to academic malpractice are held primarily at the School level. Although individual Schools do provide the University Secretariat with the total number of reported cases per academic year, there is no requirement to provide details of cases unless the matter requires referral to the University level. As such, the only means of collating the information for question two would be to liaise with each School individually.

We estimate that it would take each individual School a minimum of five minutes to locate the information you have requested per reported case. In some cases, it may be possible to locate the information much more quickly (e.g. if a student admits an offence, resulting in a shorter process overall). However, it is also likely that some cases will be far more complicated (e.g. with mitigating factors, multiple agents or other complicating factors) and will therefore take more time to review.

In the 2018/19 academic year alone, there were 516 confirmed first offence academic malpractice cases reported. As such, we estimate that it would take a minimum of 43 hours for individual Schools to locate, retrieve and extract the information you have requested for the 2018/19 academic year only (516 cases, each taking an average of five minutes to review). Further time would then be required for the Secretariat to review files for cases managed at the University level (in cases where the requested information could not be found at the School level). It is likely that the Secretariat would require significantly more than five minutes per case, as the cases which reach University level are, by their nature more complicated. There were 44 cases at the University level in 2018/19. If each case took ten minutes to review, a further seven hours would be required.

As such, the total time required to comply with your request as it currently stands would greatly exceed the appropriate limit of 18 hours as set out in section 12(1) of the FOI Act, even if your request were limited to a single academic year.

In line with our section 16 duty to advise and assist, we can advise that we may be able to provide information for question two at the level you have requested for a single school over a single academic year. There are 33 individual Schools within the University. You can find information on them, including their Faculty, on our website. Alternatively, we could provide you with the information collated for our Student Cases Team Annual Report, which will include the number of cases of cheating during assessments as reported by Schools. However, as outlined above it is unlikely that this information would include descriptions of the ‘type’ of cheating which occurred.

If the options above regarding question two are not suitable, we may be able to provide information in relation to questions one and three instead, as this information is more likely to be held at the University level.
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