Dear

Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/21/034)

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (FOI) request dated 20 January 2021, reference K/21/034.

Your request read:

“I am seeking to obtain the following information for each of the last 5 academic years (2016/17 – 2020/present inclusive):

1. How many Leeds University students (both undergraduates and postgraduates) have committed suicide while a student at the university?

2. How many Leeds University students (both undergraduates and postgraduates) have received extenuating circumstances* from the university for mental health reasons?

3. How many Leeds University students (both undergraduates and postgraduates) have sought mental health support through the university for the following issues?
   a) Self-harm
   b) Eating disorders
   c) Depression and/or anxiety
   d) Substance abuse (drugs/alcohol)
   e) Other mental health issues

4. How many times has Leeds University been notified about students (both undergraduates and postgraduates) presenting to hospital due to any of the issues mentioned in question 3a–e?

For questions 1-4, please could you break down your responses for each year into male/female.

5. How many members of staff has Leeds University employed in student support service roles dealing with mental health issues (e.g., counselling, wellbeing)? If a breakdown is not available for staff dealing with mental health issues, please provide a total for the nearest possible category.

6. Please could you provide me with the budget for Leeds University’s mental health support services, and, where possible, a breakdown of how that budget is allocated (e.g., staff, marketing, equipment etc.)?
"I understand "extenuating circumstances" to mean exemptions, such as coursework deadline extensions and/or examination deferrals, granted by the university to students who are experiencing difficulties. For the purpose of my request, I would like to know how many students have been granted extenuating circumstances for mental health reasons. For example, a student might be unable to complete a piece of coursework on time because they are suffering from depression; the university therefore makes an allowance for the student and extends the deadline for the piece of coursework.

While I understand that data sets for the current academic year are not yet complete, I would greatly appreciate it if you could provide me with them anyway."

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 University does not hold a central repository of all extenuating/mitigating circumstances forms submitted. These are held at an individual school level. There are 33 individual schools at the University of Leeds. In order to identify cases relevant to your request, and to isolate the information you are seeking (e.g. the gender of the student), each individual form would need to be reviewed in turn. Mitigating circumstances forms can be completed by hand and such this review would need to be conducted manually. In order to complete this work within the appropriate limit of 18 hours, each school would need to review all mitigating circumstances requests received in the previous five academic years in less than 33 minutes (33 schools each taking 33 minutes gives a total of 1089 minutes/18.15 hours). The University of Leeds receives thousands of mitigating circumstances requests each year, and as such it is more likely that each school would require several hours per year. This review would therefore take far in excess of 18 hours (probably in the region of several hundred hours). Additional time would then be required to locate information for your remaining questions.

In the hope that it is helpful, we can provide the following advice and assistance on how you can refine your request:

- The most straightforward way to refine your request would be to remove question two.
  - If you specifically require information in relation to extenuating circumstances, we recommend that you limit your request to question two only, and in turn limit the scope of the question to a single School, and for a single academic year. Please bear in mind that student records are held for a minimum of one, and maximum of six years after
the student has left. As such, the older the information is which you request, the more likely it is that some information will have been destroyed in line with our Retention Policy. Older information is also less likely to be held in a readily-accessible format, and is therefore likely to require more time to review and extract.

You may also find the following information helpful, should you wish to resubmit your request:

- There is no requirement for the University to be made aware of the cause of death. Nor is there any inherent requirement for the University to be made aware of coroners’ decisions (where relevant). Although we are anecdotally aware of some student deaths over the previous five academic years where suicide has been presumed as the cause of death, we do not hold any formal records of confirmed cases of student suicides.
- Question three is, in its current format, unclear. If you would like to resubmit your request, please clarify what “sought mental health support” means. For instance, does this include students who have submitted extenuating circumstances requests (in which case the same considerations regarding time and cost as outlined above come into play); should it be limited to students who have formally engaged with mental health services (e.g. counselling), or; should it include less formal requests for support, such as a tutor providing a one-to-one session for a student who has asked for some support? Please note that it is unlikely that we will hold recorded information in relation to informal, unstructured requests for support.
- There is no requirement for students to notify the University if they are admitted to hospital, particularly where this occurs off campus, outside of term time and/or in a manner which is unrelated to their studies. Where hospital admission results in absence, there may be some record, but again this is dependent on the student notifying the University, and there is no requirement for students to do so in a manner which guarantees that we will be able to isolate incidents relevant to your request. It is very likely, therefore, that section 12(1) would be further engaged in relation to question four.
  - We do hold information in relation to the number of times an ambulance has been called to campus, and could provide this information if it is helpful to you. This information does not include the gender of the student.

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
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