Dear

Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/20/531)

Thank you for your clarified Freedom of Information (FOI) request dated 18 January 2021, reference K/20/531.

The subject line of your original email read:

“Freedom of Information request - Medicine 2020 a100”

The body of your original email read:

“A) the number of interviews given for 2020
B) the lowest BMAT score that was given an interview
C) the number of offers given
D) the cut off interview score for an offer to be received
E) the average date offers were given to students from the past two years”

Your clarification email read:

“This is regarding the 2019/2020 year”

The University of Leeds holds some of this information. For your convenience we have responded to each of your questions in turn below. Based on your clarification, we understand your questions to refer to applications received within the 2019/20 admissions cycle (which will typically be for 2020 entry).

1. The number of interviews given for 2020

In 2019, we interviewed 1056 applicants to the A100 medicine and surgery course.

2. The lowest BMAT score that was given an interview

A combination score using academic achievement and BMAT is used to determine a rank for shortlisting to interview. We therefore do not hold information regarding BMAT scores in the format you have requested. The BMAT raw scores are typically used in the following manner: All scores from applicants are put into a normal distribution curve. Those candidates who are in the highest 20% receive a score of five out of five, and those who are in the lowest 20% receive a score of one out of five. Everything in between is scored according to where they are placed in this
distribution. As such, we do not retain raw scores and cannot, therefore, answer this question.

3. **The number of offers given**

A total of 394 offers were made.

4. **The cut off interview score for an offer to be received**

We hold information in relation to part four of your request. However, we are withholding the information under section 36(2)(c) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 36(2)(c) sets out that information is exempt from disclosure if, in the opinion of the organisation’s Qualified Person, its release would or would be likely to otherwise prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs. We have outlined the reason for engaging the exemption below, including an explanation of the public interest factors for and against disclosure.

As part of our admissions process for medicine studies, we conduct “Multiple Mini Interviews” (MMIs) with candidates. Candidates are scored on their answers, and these scores are used to inform decisions regarding which candidates should be offered a place to study medicine at the University of Leeds. There is no set ‘passing threshold’; i.e. no score that candidates must achieve to ‘pass’ the MMI stage of the admissions process. Instead, candidates are evaluated against one another. An extremely strong cohort of applicants, all scoring very highly, will result in a correspondingly high ‘lowest’ score. As such the lowest score achieved by someone who was offered a place varies with each admissions cycle and cannot be compared year-on-year.

We therefore consider that to release this information would unduly prejudice the MMI process. It is essential that applicants do not aim for a specific score; to do so would massively undermine our ability to judge candidates and make offers accordingly. All candidates are given focussed feedback to enable them to work on future applications. This information is carefully constructed to make sure that candidates do not focus on individual stations or scores as attributes are assessed across different stations and vary between cycles. To focus efforts in this way would in fact be likely to lessen their chances of success at MMI and would therefore not be in their interests.

Furthermore, candidates who attempt to ‘learn the test’ may well have short term success (i.e. a score sufficient to secure an offer) but lack the inherent values and attributes to study medicine. It is therefore important to ensure that candidates are offering an honest account of themselves at interview; it would be imprudent to release information which could increase the likelihood of candidates being coached to pass the selection process, only to struggle while on the course.

As outlined above, to release this information would prejudice the admissions process. It would also be likely to unduly damage the prospects of prospective applicants to the medicine course; disadvantaging genuinely strong candidates who may lose out on places in favour of candidates whose artificially strong interviews belie poor overall suitability. Accordingly, we are satisfied that disclosure would be
likely to result in prejudice to the effective conduct of our ordinary business. It is therefore the opinion of Professor Simone Buitendijk, the Qualified Person for the University of Leeds, that the exemption is engaged.

As the exemption is engaged, it is also necessary to consider whether the public interest is in favour of withholding or releasing the information.

There is an extremely strong public interest in maintaining the integrity of the admissions process, and in turn protecting the value of the medicine degree offered by the University of Leeds. Allowing the admissions process to be undermined as outlined above would limit our ability to train and develop future generations of health care practitioners and leaders. This would de-value the course, which is recognised as being of extremely high quality and is therefore necessarily selective. This would not be in the interests of applicants and students, who would suffer as a result of the de-valued course. Nor would this be in our interests, as any de-valuing of the course would be likely to result in fewer applications, a reduction in student income and therefore a reduced ability to provide excellent teaching. It is therefore clear that the release of this information would not be in the public interest.

It is therefore the opinion of Professor Simone Buitendijk that the public interest is overwhelmingly in favour of withholding the information.

5. The average date offers were given to students from the past two years

Applicants will hear the outcome of their application by the end of March of the intended year of study. We do not retain a record of when individual applicants were contacted and therefore cannot provide an average, however, most offers are issued in the final week of February or first week of March.

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