Dear

Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/21/077)

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (FOI) request dated 8 February 2021, reference K/21/077.

Your request read:

"1. Any application you made in 2019 or 2020 to be a “Stonewall Diversity Champion” or to be included on Stonewall’s “Workplace Equality Index,” including any attachments or appendices to those applications. Please redact personal details if necessary.

2. Any feedback you received in 2019 or 2020 from Stonewall in relation to either application or programme.

3. Any other communication you have received from Stonewall in 2019 or 2020 unless privileged or otherwise exempt from disclosure (but if you claim privilege or exemption in relation to any material, please say in broad terms what the material is and the basis on which you claim to be entitled to withhold it).

4. Full details of any equality impact assessment you carried out connected with any of these applications (including any equality impact assessment carried out prior to an earlier application of the same kind, if no further assessment was done).

5. Details of the total amount of money you paid to Stonewall (i) in 2019; (ii) in 2020, whether or not as payment for goods or services.

6. Whether you intend to continue your membership of any Stonewall scheme in the future, and if so which.

The University of Leeds holds this information. For your convenience we have responded to each of your questions in turn below.

1. Any application you made in 2019 or 2020 to be a “Stonewall Diversity Champion” or to be included on Stonewall’s “Workplace Equality Index,” including any attachments or appendices to those applications. Please redact personal details if necessary.

Please find a copy of our 2020 application attached to this email as a PDF. Please note that we have redacted personal information under section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 40(2) sets out that information is exempt from disclosure
if it is the personal data of someone other than the person making the request, and disclosure would; contravene the data protection principles; contravene an objection to processing; or if the data is exempt from the right of subject access.

2. Any feedback you received in 2019 or 2020 from Stonewall in relation to either application or programme.

We are withholding this information under section 43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 43(2) sets out that information can be withheld if disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person or organisation, unless there is an overwhelming public interest in disclosure.

We consider that to release the feedback we have received would provide other universities, with whom we compete for students, staff, researchers and funding, with an advantage over the University of Leeds. Feedback is provided confidentiality to individual organisations based on their specific applications. To reveal areas where we may have over- or under-performed would provide competitor institutions with additional information which can be used to improve their own submissions in future. This would provide them with an unfair advantage which would be likely to lead to an improved ‘score’ from Stonewall, which in turn could be used to attract new students, members of staff, researchers and funding streams. We are therefore satisfied that section 43(2) is engaged.

Section 43 is a qualified exemption, which means that we are required to consider whether the public interest is in favour of releasing the information, despite the prejudice which would or would be likely to occur as a result of disclosure.

We accept that there is a genuine public interest in understanding where the University of Leeds can improve working practices for LGBT+ members of the university community, and recognise that the release of the feedback from Stonewall would facilitate this. However, we also consider there to be a very strong public interest in preserving the integrity of the feedback process. It is essential that institutions develop their working practices based on feedback they themselves have received, rather than by using feedback which is specific to other universities. To allow other universities access to our feedback would be likely to encourage them to make changes which may not actually benefit their own community members, giving a false sense of improvement and success, and reducing inclination to make genuine steps towards improved equality, representation and inclusion. This would not be in the public interest, and would be a great disservice to members of our LGBT+ communities.

We therefore conclude that the public interest is in favour of withholding the feedback information.

3. Any other communication you have received from Stonewall in 2019 or 2020 unless privileged or otherwise exempt from disclosure (but if you claim privilege or exemption in relation to any material, please say in broad terms what the material is and the basis on which you claim to be entitled to withhold it).
Other than the feedback information, which we are withholding under section 43(2) as set out above, we have not been able to identify any other communication from Stonewall which is relevant to your request.

4. Full details of any equality impact assessment you carried out connected with any of these applications (including any equality impact assessment carried out prior to an earlier application of the same kind, if no further assessment was done).

No equality impact assessments have been carried out specifically in relation to the submission. However, earlier (unrelated) assessments are likely to have influenced the approaches which are reflected in the submission.

5. Details of the total amount of money you paid to Stonewall (i) in 2019; (ii) in 2020, whether or not as payment for goods or services.

We paid £5000 in 2019 for Stonewall Diversity Championship membership.

6. Whether you intend to continue your membership of any Stonewall scheme in the future, and if so which.

We are planning to join Stonewall Diversity Champions in 2021.

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