

From: Freedom of Information

Sent: 14 June 2021 14:53

To:

Subject: Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/20/474)

Dear

Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/20/474)

Thank you for your clarified Freedom of Information (FOI) request dated 18 January 2021, reference K/20/474. Please accept our apologies for the delay in responding to your request.

Your original request read:

“Please could you endeavour to search through your student complaint's team's central database in order to answer the following questions within 20 working days:

What were the total number of form complaints received?

What was the amount which concerned service issues(which could include teaching)?

What was the total amount of compensation requested?

What was the total amount of compensation paid?

Please could this information be in relation to only your university's students (both undergraduates and postgraduates) and each of the four above questions be answered for each of the academic terms between 2015 and 2020 (i.e.)

15/16 16/17 17/18 18/19 19/20

I understand that I sent a similar request on the 20th of October. But this request has been re-worded and re-framed in a way that should allow your FOI officers to successfully retrieve the information from your databases, and within an appropriate time and at an appropriate cost.”

You sent a further email that day to provide the following clarifications:

“In my previous email, sent today, I said "form" complaints but I meant "formal" complaints. I said academic "terms" but I meant academic "years".”

Your formal clarification read:

“In response to your e-mail asking for clarification about my compensation request (K/20/474): For "compensation" please could you include: payments over and above any loss, for example those ordered as a result of a legal claim or paid in recognition of loss, suffering or injury, as well as: reductions in fees, fees being waived, goodwill gestures or other financial payments. But could you please tell me after working out the total compensation for stated period, how much of the total sum was for "goodwill gestures".”

The University of Leeds holds some of this information.

1. What were the total number of [formal] complaints received?

	Formal complaints managed by Student Cases Team
2015/16	44
2016/17	40
2017/18	63
2018/19	87
2019/20	230

We note the significant increase in complaints between the 2018/19 and 2019/20 academic years. Many of these complaints relate to industrial action and/or the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

2. What was the amount which concerned service issues(which could include teaching)?

Complaints made by students are categorised by subject. The categories we report on are as follows:

- Academic provision
- Quality of supervision and teaching
- Failure to meet obligations
- Deficiencies in standards of service
- Discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation

We therefore consider that complaints which concern “service issues (which could include teaching)” are most likely to fall within the first four categories. Please find this information set out in the table below.

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Deficiencies in Standard of Service	17.5	10	28	33.5	38
Failure to meet Obligations	5	7	18	18	118.5
Quality of Supervision and Teaching	6.5	4	4	10.5	6.5
Academic Provision	11.5	16	11	11.5	62.5
TOTAL	40.5	37	61	73.5	225.5

Please note that partial complaints denote complaints which are split across multiple categories. For example, a complaint which is about a failure to meet obligations which also relates to the quality of supervision and teaching would be recorded as 0.5 complaints in the ‘failure to meet obligations’ category and 0.5 complaints in the ‘quality of supervision and teaching’ category.

3. What was the total amount of compensation* requested?

4. What was the total amount of compensation* paid?

***as defined in your clarification email of 18 January 2021.**

We address these questions together. Please note that we have interpreted this part of your request to be specific to complaints regarding “service issues (which could include teaching)” as set out above.

We do not typically record the amount of compensation which was requested. We therefore hold no information regarding part three of your request in the majority of cases. The exception to this is in relation to complaints made in the 2019/20 academic year which were specifically about either industrial action or the coronavirus pandemic. Information regarding these complaints was recorded in a different format, due to the volume received. We can therefore advise that in the 2019/20 academic year, 115 complaints were received which related to either industrial action or the coronavirus pandemic. All complaints either directly or indirectly asked for a compensation, a refund (full or partial) or other financial redress.

Of these, 19 complaints included a request for a specific amount of compensation or other financial redress. The total amount of money requested, where included in the complaint, was £44,427. A total of £1966.90 was granted to industrial action/coronavirus complainants. Of this, £1000 was paid as goodwill gestures. Goodwill gestures are typically made in cases where fault cannot be established or the complaint has not been upheld, but where there has been inconvenience, distress etc. caused.

Across all years (excluding industrial action/coronavirus complaints), the total value of ‘compensation’ (as defined in your clarification email) awarded was £104,138.88. Of this, £31,789.88 was paid as gestures of goodwill.

Please note that this figure is based on records we hold of monies which were either paid or refunded to a student, or where a credit was (or has been) applied to their account. In some more recent cases, payment may not yet have been applied. Where no money has ‘changed hands’ (so to speak), for instance in cases where a charge has simply not been levied, no record of the monetary value is created. For instance, if a student was ordered to pay a late fee, but ultimately the fee was waived, the student has neither paid any money to the University, nor had any money credited to them. While the waiver is recorded as part of their complaint record, the value of the charge is not. No recorded information about the value of the ‘compensation’ in cases of this nature is, therefore, held.

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