From: Freedom of Information  
Sent: 08 July 2021 16:41 
To:  
Subject: Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/21/172)  

Dear  

Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/21/172)  

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (FOI) request dated 1 April 2021, reference K/21/172. Please accept our sincere apologies for the delay in responding to your request.

Your request read:

“For the admissions for the course A100 in 2020 please could you supply the academic criteria used for individuals GCSE and A levels (predicted or achieved) to determine invitation for interview. Please could you also provide the criteria in which candidates personal statements are assessed against in the admissions process.

For each candidate interviewed for 2020 A100 entry, could you please provide an anonymised table with the following information: Their academic score (using both GCSE, A Level and alternative qualifications as scored by yourself), their BMAT score out of 5, their interview score and whether or not they were successful in achieving an offer or not.”

The University of Leeds holds some of this information. We have set out below an explanation of the information we hold, broken down by category, followed by an explanation of what information we can and cannot provide.

The information we hold  

GCSE results  
Firstly, it may be helpful if we explain that not all applicants take GCSE courses before applying to/attending university. Regardless, we do not retain information regarding the GCSE grades of applicants. Applicants who do not hold relevant or sufficiently strong GCSE grades will not progress through the applications process; there is no business need for us to retain the GCSE grades after this initial filtering of applications has taken place.

Predicted and achieved A-Level (or equivalent) results  
As outlined above, not all applicants take A-Level courses, or any equivalent. Predicted grades are used as a starting point when considering applications. Applicants with predicted grades which do not meet the entry requirements of the course (either directly or via a widening participation programme) will not progress through the application process. As such, we do not retain a record of each applicant’s predicted grades, and therefore do not hold information relevant to predicted grades.
We only hold information regarding the achieved grades of applicants who were offered and accepted a place on the course. The achieved grades of unsuccessful applicants, including those who were unsuccessful at interview is not retained. Achieved grades information is therefore only held for successful applicants.

BMAT results
We do not retain raw BMAT scores. BMAT scores are used to inform our academic scoring system, which is used for shortlisting.

MMI scores by section
See Below

Invitation to Interview Process & Criteria
Invitation to interview is determined by a ranking, taking place after calculating the candidate’s academic score (i.e. GCSE and A-level or equivalent) when added to a score calculated from BMAT and is out of a total maximum score of 37. Within this score, 24 points are available for GCSEs (or equivalent) and 8 for predicted/achieved grades at A-level (or equivalent). The maximum score for BMAT is 5 points.

In order to achieve the full 27 points for GCSEs, candidates had to secure 8 GCSEs with A\* or 8/9 in each subject. 3 points were awarded for A\* (or 8/9), 2 points for A (or 7), and 1 point for B (or 5/6).

8 points were available for A-level grades already gained or predicted, with 8 points being awarded to candidates predicted AAA or above.

The BMAT raw scores are used in the following manner: All scores from applicants to MBChB Leeds are put into a normal distribution curve. Those candidates who are in the highest 20% receive a score of 5/5. Candidates who are in the lowest 20% receive a score of 1/5. Candidates in between are then scored according to where they are placed in this distribution.

Please note personal statements were not used in the shortlisting process.

Disclosure of information
The only information we hold which is relevant to your request is:
- Achieved A-level grades (or equivalent) of successful applicants
- MMI scores

We consider that to provide the A-level grades information you have requested, in the format you have set out (i.e. broken down to individual candidate level), engages Section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. This section exempts information which, if disclosed, would infringe on someone’s rights under the Data Protection Act.

Providing a response in this format would reveal detailed information regarding the academic achievements of applicants to the A100 course. Your request seeks
detailed information regarding the academic history and achievement of each applicant. This would result in information, which individuals reasonably expect to be handled sensitively and confidentially by the University of Leeds, being publicly available, and in a manner which makes it likely that it can be linked back to a specific individual, whether directly or indirectly. This would be grossly unfair, far expecting individuals’ expectations and would therefore contravene the Data Protection Act, thus engaging Section 40(2) of the FOI Act. As such, the University is not disclosing the information we hold in the format you have requested.

In regard to interview scores, we are withholding MMI scores 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.

We consider that to release this information would unduly prejudice the applications process. It is essential that applicants do not aim for a specific interview score in an attempt to unduly influence the process. To release information which would be likely to encourage this behaviour would jeopardise our ability to objectively judge candidates and make offers accordingly. Applications must be made based on the candidates’ individual merits, and the process is designed to test not only the applicants’ academic achievements, but also a range of wider skills which are required for a career in medicine. To pre-empt this process would therefore undermine the process as a whole.

All candidates who are unsuccessful at interview stage 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’ or ‘game the system’ 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 applications 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.

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