



University of East Anglia

Information Services Directorate

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26 May 2016

Dear

Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Information request (ref: FOI_16-107)

We have now considered your request of 29 April 2016 for the following information:

- *The number of students who have paused or abandoned their studies due to illness in each of the past five complete academic years (i.e. to 2010-11 to 2014-15).*
- *Of this number, and again broken down by year, I would also like to know the number who paused or abandoned their studies due to mental illness such as depression or anxiety*

Unfortunately, on this occasion it is not possible to provide any of the requested information. We have determined that the cost of finding and assembling some of the requested information will exceed the 'appropriate limit' as defined by section 12 of the Act and the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004/3244.

The 'appropriate limit' of £450, which equates to 18 hours' work, can relate to one request in its entirety or to a series of linked requests. If the University cannot locate, retrieve and extract some or all of the requested information within the 18 hours we are not obliged to retrieve any of the requested information.

Specifically, with regard to question 2 of your request, and irrespective of any other element of your request, to provide a breakdown of the number of students who paused their studies (known as 'intercalation' within the higher education sector) due to 'mental illness such as depression or anxiety' would exceed the appropriate limit.

Whilst we record the reasons for student absences for intercalation in our central system, we only record a set number of standardised reasons for such a pause – one of which is medical, another being personal. We do not explicitly request or record information about mental illness as a reason for intercalation in any centralised or organised system.

The paperwork relating to any intercalation resides within individual student files and this would provide details of the reasons for the request. However, for the time period requested we have over 2000 files in which a 'mental intercalation' is cited and each of these would have to be examined manually to determine the nature of the medical reason for intercalation.

Given the number of files, were we take as little as 1 minute per file to locate and extract the relevant information, we would exceed the appropriate limit. This is also not taking into account the time required to locate and extract the other requested information. Thus, we feel confident that the effort to locate and extract the number of students who paused their studies due to mental illness alone would exceed the appropriate limit.

I should also note that we would also exceed the appropriate limit in order to provide a breakdown of the number of students who abandoned their studies due to 'mental illness such as depression or anxiety'. We do not request this information, nor record it separately where provided, and, any information that we do possess would be very incomplete. As with intercalation, we would have to search individual student files to locate and extract this information.

Should you wish to submit a new revised request it may be helpful to note that while we do hold data relevant to your first question, this information is also available for all higher education institutions within the UK from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). If you are interested in sector-wide information we would suggest [contacting them directly](#).¹

You have the right of appeal against this decision. If you wish to appeal, please set out in writing your grounds of appeal and send to me at the address noted in the heading to this letter.

You must appeal our decision within 60 calendar days of the date of this letter. Any appeal received after that date will not be considered nor acknowledged. This policy has been reviewed and approved by the Information Commissioner's Office.

You also have a subsequent right of appeal to the Information Commissioner whose [contact details](#)² can be found on their website.

Please quote our reference given at the head of this letter in all correspondence.

Yours sincerely

Dave Palmer
Information Policy and Compliance Manager
University of East Anglia

¹ <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/contact-hesa>

² https://ico.org.uk/Global/contact_us