



University of East Anglia

Information Compliance (ITCS)

The Library
University of East Anglia
Norwich Research Park
Norwich NR4 7TJ
United Kingdom

Email: foi@uea.ac.uk
Tel: +44 (0) 1603 593 523
Fax: +44 (0) 1603 591 010
Web: <http://www.uea.ac.uk>



06 August 2018

Dear ,

Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Information request (ref: FOI_18-170)

We have now considered your request of 25 July 2018 for the following information:

'I am requesting the following information under the FOI Act:

- Number of applications and admissions for nursing courses (including specific statistics for mental health nursing) for the academic years 2018/2019, 2017/2018 and 2016/2017 and 2015/2016.'

Our response is on page 3 of this letter along with a copy of your request.

On this occasion, it is not possible to provide all the requested information. The Act contains a number of exemptions that allow public authorities to withhold certain information from release. We have applied the following exemption to part of your request.

Exemption	Reason
s.43(2), Prejudice to commercial interests	Disclosure of information would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of a person as defined by the Act

Exemption explanation

We have applied this exemption to the data requested in connection with the academic year 2018/19. It is our belief that release of this information would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of the University.

To compete in the Higher Education market, with leading UK and international universities, the University must ensure that information that would be strategically useful to its competitors is not placed in the public domain. Release of such information would potentially compromise the University's ability to attract and recruit the desired number and quality of students for its various undergraduate nursing programmes.

The competitive nature of the HE sector was noted by the Information Commissioner

in a 2012 decision notice involving Cranfield University¹. In this particular case, there are a limited number of UK institutions who offer nursing programmes and there is naturally a significant amount of competition between institutions seeking to attract the best students.

We acknowledge that not all admissions information can be considered commercially sensitive. Historical data of prior intakes is well-known and widely shared within the HE community. However, information relating to the current recruitment and admissions cycle is very commercially sensitive. It gives competitors an insight into not only how we are progressing in our recruitment efforts which could allow them to adopt a different approach to the remainder of the recruitment cycle to UEA's disadvantage.

Additionally, release of the 2018/19 information, particularly that relating to offers made and accepted could potentially influence the behaviour of our current applicants, some of which have not yet made their decision regarding which institution to attend. Prospective applicants that see very few or many more applications than spaces may be influenced to go elsewhere, and in relation to offers and acceptances, again they might see a certain number of acceptances which could lead them to believe they won't get in and deter them from applying to UEA.

This information is not shared within the HE community nor does UEA nor any other institution publicise or release this information at this stage of the recruitment cycle.

We would consider it quite likely for such prejudice to our interests to occur, given the sensitivity of the requested information, the consistent treatment of it as commercially sensitive by not only UEA but other Higher Education institutions, and the degree to which the number and value of applicants and subsequent registrants is important to any university's success.

We are aware of interest from other institutions in our recruitment strategy and performance and we certainly would have an interest in having access to similar information from our competitors. We feel confident that our competitors would use such information to 'close the gap', target their activities to counter those that we undertake, and as a consequence, reduce our ability to compete within this market.

As any information disclosed under FOI is published on our website disclosure log, it is certainly possible that a competitor institution could view this information and make use of them to the potential detriment of UEA.

Public Interest

There is undoubtedly a strong public interest in ensuring that the public has sufficient information regarding how universities attract and recruit nursing students. However, we would counter that there is also a public interest in protecting the ability of institutions to compete on a level playing field and to ensure that there is fair competition between universities for prospective students.

By protecting the University's nursing admissions information for 2018/19 from public disclosure we are acting in line with established practices across the sector within the UK and internationally in maintaining this fair competition. Additionally, we would argue that this interest is adequately met by retrospective data regarding completed cycles available from UEA and from the Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA).

We do not believe there is a strong public interest in publishing information which is so specific and unique in nature that their disclosure would be likely to adversely

¹ https://ico.org.uk/media/action-weve-taken/decision-notices/2012/717656/fs_50392143.pdf

affect the University's ability to compete with other institutions offering the same degree.

On balance, we believe the public interest lies in withholding these specific documents.

We hope this response will meet your requirements, however if you are not satisfied you have the right of appeal. If you wish to appeal, please set out in writing your reasons for appealing and send to the above address. You must appeal 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's Office. Further information is available on their website:

https://ico.org.uk/Global/contact_us, or by telephone on 0303 123 1113.

Please note that any material over which UEA has copyright is released on the understanding that you will comply with all relevant copyright rules regarding reproduction and/or transmission of the information provided.

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

Yours sincerely

Dave Palmer
Information Compliance Manager
University of East Anglia

Response to Freedom of Information Act 2000 request (FOI_18-170)

I am requesting the following information under the FOI Act :

- Number of applications and admissions for nursing courses (including specific statistics for mental health nursing) for the academic years 2018/2019, 2017/2018 and 2016/2017 and 2015/2016.'

Our response is within the tables below:

<i>Applications</i>				
<i>Nursing Course</i>	<i>Academic Year</i>			
	<i>2015/16</i>	<i>2016/17</i>	<i>2017/18</i>	<i>2018/19</i>
Adult Nursing	1022	1089	711	[Exempted pursuant to s.43(2), FOIA]
Children's Nursing	228	244	205	
Learning Disabilities Nursing	70	94	37	
Mental Health Nursing	270	273	209	
Midwifery	399	326	312	
Operating Department Practice (DIPHE)	176	172	113	
Paramedic Science	279	325	321	

<i>Admissions</i>				
<i>Nursing Course</i>	<i>Academic Year</i>			
	<i>2015/16</i>	<i>2016/17</i>	<i>2017/18</i>	<i>2018/19</i>
Adult Nursing	304	273	186	[Exempted pursuant to s.43(2), FOIA]
Children's Nursing	25	25	28	
Learning Disabilities Nursing	16	18	15	
Mental Health Nursing	39	37	52	
Midwifery	30	30	39	
Operating Department Practice (DIPHE)	25	32	23	
Paramedic Science	45	36	33	