



University of East Anglia

Information Compliance (ITCS)

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21 August 2018

Dear

Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Information request (ref: FOI_18-171)

We have now considered your request of 25 July 2018 for information relating to applications and admissions to our Nursing programme from 2008/09 to date.

Our response is on pages 4-5 of this letter, together with a copy of your request.

On this occasion it is not possible to provide all the requested information. In line with your rights under section 1(1)(a) of the Act to be informed whether information is held, we confirm that the University does not hold information relevant to question 4 of your request. Further information is on page 5 of this letter.

In addition, 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 on the basis that 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 number and quality of students it needs for its various undergraduate nursing programmes.

The requested information directly affects our ability to recruit new students, and as such is an important and unique component of the University's key commercial activity; namely, the effective engagement and recruitment of new students.

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

within 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 relating to 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, but also allows them to get a sense of how we are recruiting. This 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 consider it quite likely that such prejudice to our interests would 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 now critical 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 at this point in time 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).

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

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

On balance, we believe the public interest lies in withholding this specific information.

We hope this information 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_18-171)

I'm contacting a number of universities, to request the following information:

- *The number of places available on the main nursing course in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018.*
- *The number of applicants to the main nursing course in each of those years.*
- *The number of places filled on the course in each of those years. For the 2018/19 academic year, the number of places that are expected to be filled.*

Our response to the above 3 questions is presented in the table below. We consider our Adult Nursing, Child Nursing, Learning Disabilities Nursing and Mental Health Nursing programmes together to be our 'main nursing course'.

Please note that this data is made up of both Degree and Diploma courses for the years 2008/09 to 2010/11. Diploma courses ceased in 2011/12 as all Nursing programmes became Degree only. We have included both our September and January intake of students.

Additionally, we have only counted Home/EU students as there was no provision for such students in the places available in the years 2008/09 to 2016/17.

Academic Year	Nursing Course			
	Adult Nursing	Child Nursing	Learning Disabilities Nursing	Mental Health Nursing
<i>Places Available²</i>				
2008/09	168	14	10	30
2009/10	168	14	10	30
2010/11	164	14	25	29
2011/12	161	19	20	27
2012/13	190	19	20	27
2013/14	224	19	21	28
2014/15	299	26	21	37
2015/16	307	25	21	37
2016/17	280	25	18	38
2017/18	292	30	18	40
2018/19	<i>[Information exempted pursuant to s.43(2), FOIA]</i>			

² Please note that data from 2008/09 to 2016/17 is based upon the number of Health Education England (HEE) commissioned funded places. This funding ceased in 2017/18 so figure for 2017/18 onwards are based upon internal UEA approved targets.

Academic Year	Nursing course			
	Adult Nursing	Child Nursing	Learning Disabilities Nursing	Mental Health Nursing
<i>Applicants</i>				
2008/09	133	417	13	116
2009/10	197	445	26	152
2010/11	306	710	72	198
2011/12	310	410	111	229
2012/13	300	303	74	212
2013/14	217	221	70	189
2014/15	249	257	80	201
2015/16	221	227	67	258
2016/17	232	241	91	261
2017/18	202	205	35	200
2018/19	[Information exempted pursuant to s.43(2), FOIA]			
<i>Places filled</i>				
2008/09	178	14	6	38
2009/10	161	14	10	30
2010/11	167	14	26	27
2011/12	155	19	21	28
2012/13	178	19	19	27
2013/14	215	19	22	27
2014/15	295	26	14	36
2015/16	301	24	16	38
2016/17	270	25	18	37
2017/18	184	28	14	50
2018/19	[Information exempted pursuant to s.43(2), FOIA]			

The average UCAS point requirement for offers made for the main nursing course in each of those years.

[Information not held - s.1(1)(a), Freedom of Information Act]

UEA does not use UCAS point requirements in determining whether to make an offer so this information is not held by UEA.