



University of East Anglia

Information Compliance (ITCS)

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14 August 2019

Dear

**Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Information request (ref: FOI\_19-222)**

We have now considered your request of 17 July 2019 for information relating to admissions to the Medicine degree programme at UEA.

On this occasion, it is not possible to provide any of the requested information.

Firstly, 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 questions 1 and 3 of your request. No students have, as of the date of the receipt of the request, been admitted into the Medicine programme in 2019 so we therefore do not hold the requested information.

Secondly, the Act contains a number of exemptions that allow public authorities to withhold certain information from release. We have applied the following exemption to question 2 of your request.

Exemption	Reason
s.36(2)(c), Prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs	Release of some of the requested information would be likely to prejudice the University’s ability to carry out its role

*Exemption explanation*

Section 36(2)(c) is applied on the basis that, in the reasonable opinion of the Vice-Chancellor (the University’s ‘qualified person’ under the Act), disclosure of the interview form would be likely to prejudice the conduct of public affairs.

We believe that to release this document would inhibit the University in carrying out one of its core public functions; to admit students to a degree programme, in this case for the purposes of obtaining the MB BS qualification.

Release of the form would make publicly available information that would enable any current or future applicant who has access to this form to gain an unfair advantage. Access to the form would provide the reader with prior knowledge of the questions to be faced at the interview stage, and the criteria against which applicants will be assessed. This would be likely to compromise the fairness of our admission processes in a very competitive selection procedure. To compromise the fairness

and quality of our admissions processes would, in our view, prejudice the conduct of public affairs.

The University must be able to assure itself - and thus give confidence to candidates, the medical profession and future patients - that those who are accepted onto the MB BS programme are the best of our applicants, and that they have been subject to a rigorous and fair admissions process.

Release of the information would very likely destroy that careful balance. If successful in gaining a place, a good candidate on the MB BS will be adaptable to a range of circumstances; an individual will not thrive as a doctor if they simply 'learn to the test'. It is these same qualities that our carefully judged interview process seeks to assess. In the opinion of the University's qualified person, this process will be safeguarded by the exemption from release of this information.

We believe that the current arrangements whereby we inform all candidates of what to expect at assessment and interview, but do not permit them to see in advance the precise questions that will be used, is a balanced approach. This approach addresses both the need for transparency and the University's obligation to ensure that the General Medical Council and the general public can have confidence in the calibre of the candidates we attract. This is of critical importance because they are the future generations of medical professionals.

The application of this exemption requires an examination of the public interest in disclosure, as opposed to that in non-disclosure.

The factors in favour of disclosure would include:

- Addressing the public interest by increasing transparency, and therefore understanding, of the standards and methodology used to admit students to the MB BS programme at UEA.
- Increasing public confidence in the integrity of the admissions process

Factors in favour of withholding the information are largely laid out in the explanation for the use of the exemption above but would include:

- Ensuring that the admissions process is fair to all applicants
- Protecting the ability of UEA to admit students to the MB BS programme according to an empirically sound and fair process
- Preventing a distortion of the admissions process that would have the potential effect of reducing the quality of students and subsequently medical professionals within the UK
- There are existing avenues and/or means of scrutiny by which the public interest in MB BS admissions can be met, as noted above.

After consideration of the above factors, we believe, on balance, that the public interest lies in maintaining the exemption.

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 40 working days of the date of this letter. In line with section 5.3 of the Freedom of Information Code of Practice, we are not obliged to accept internal reviews after this date.

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](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  
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University of East Anglia

