

[REDACTED]

24 July 2014

Dear [REDACTED]

Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Information request (ref: FOI_14-142)

We have now considered your request of 09 July 2014 for information relating to infectious diseases and University laboratory work. Our response is on page 3 of this letter, together with a copy of your original request.

On this occasion, we have determined that the cost of finding and assembling some of the requested information – specifically your final question regarding Guillain-Barre syndrome – 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, relates to a request in its entirety. 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.

I am sorry we are unable to provide a full answer to your request on this occasion. However, we would be happy to consider a new or revised enquiry as a new request under the terms of the Act. For example, we believe we would be able to provide a response to the remainder of your original request – that is, excluding the final query about the incidence of Guillain-Barre syndrome – within the appropriate limit.

You have the right of appeal against this decision. If you wish to appeal, please set out in writing your reasons for appealing and send to the above address.

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 at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
Telephone: 0303 123 1113
Website: <http://www.ico.org.uk/>

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

Yours sincerely

Ellen Paterson
Information Policy and Compliance Manager
University of East Anglia

Response to Freedom of Information Act 2000 request (FOI_14-142)

Your request:

I am interested in any student and staff interactions with infectious diseases and primarily with strains of campylobacter in the course of studies / research.

Firstly could you confirm for me if you have a school, faculty department or other section of the university which runs practical lab work with infectious bacteria, viruses or other pathogens?

If so, within this department (etc.), over the course of the last academic year (2013-14) and by accessing your health and safety records and staff absence records, could you provide me with a list of each individual occurrence of a student or member of staff coming into contact with an infectious bacteria, virus, parasite (any pathogen in the course of studies and research). Please specify the date of the occurrence if possible, health and safety entries if known contact was recorded, recorded absence and reason for absence or if reason for illness is otherwise known to be due to contact during lab work. Please specify if known the resulting illness, course of treatment, long-term effects if any.

Can you confirm for me whether any department in the university is involved in research concerning any strain of Campylobacter?

If so please specify the nature of current research.

As may well occur in the list above i hope to receive similar details (date, H&S description entry, illness, treatment, recovery - if known) on the occurrence(s) of any student or member of staff involved in campylobacter research taking leave due to either food poisoning, campylobacteriosis or gastroenteritis over the past two academic years. If you are unable to feasibly determine which students and staff are involved in such research please perform this search for the whole of the relevant school or department.

I would also like to know for the past five academic years or as far back as your records are available, any known occurrence(s) of any students or members of staff having developed Guillain-Barre syndrome.

Our response:

[Information withheld pursuant to s.12(1), Freedom of Information Act]

Section 12(1) is engaged by your final question, as we have no means of readily extracting recorded information on any students and staff who may have contracted Guillain-Barre syndrome over the past five academic years or earlier.

With regard to staff records, we can confirm our Human Resources and Payroll system contains no specific reference to this illness. However, as more detailed sickness records will be held within personnel files (e.g. notes from GPs) we cannot confirm that there have been no occurrences of this illness without manually searching all staff files.

Similarly, within the student records system we do not record illness at this level of detail, but would anticipate that if a student had contracted this syndrome and reported it to the University this information would be recorded within their student file. We currently have over 17,000 students and staff. A manual search of each staff and student file would clearly exceed 18 hours to complete, even if we were to limit our searches to one academic year and only current students and staff.