



University of East Anglia

Information Services Directorate

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[REDACTED]

12 November 2015

Dear [REDACTED]

**Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Information request (ref: FOI\_15-213)**

We have now considered your request of 27 October 2015 for the following information:

*“...all information you have around students who choose to not continue with their course. Including any of the following data points which you have available: when during their course they left, the reason for leaving, how many students left each year and what course they left and any other relevant data you may have. I would like this data range to cover the previous 10 years, for both undergraduates and post graduates.”*

We regret that on this occasion it is not possible to provide the requested information. In line with section 17 of the Act, this letter acts as a Refusal Notice. The Act contains a number of exemptions that allow public authorities to withhold certain information from release. We have applied the following exemption to your request.

Exemption	Reason
s.21(1), Information reasonably accessible to applicant by other means	Data regarding student dropout characteristics can be obtained from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)
s.22(1), Future publication	Some information is held with a view to publication in future

*Section 21(1) exemption*

With regard to all of the requested information, we have established that much of this information is reasonably accessible by other means and so has been exempted under section 21(1) of the Act. The section 21 exemption confirms there is no right of access under the Act to information that is held by a public authority, if that information is reasonably available to the applicant by another route (whether through commercial publication or publicly-funded provision).

In this case, data on students discontinuing their studies up to, and including 2013/14, can be constructed from data tables published by [Higher Education](#)

[Statistics Agency \(HESA\) on their website](#).<sup>1</sup> The 2014/15 data will be available from January 2016. Additional information is available upon demand from HESA from their [Bespoke Data Service](#).<sup>2</sup> This has been confirmed with HESA themselves.

It should be noted that the use of HESA to obtain this information carries the benefit of providing access to standardised data from all higher education institutions within the UK.

#### *Section 22(1) exemption*

It has been a long-standing and consistent practice for the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) to gather and publish information regarding the characteristics of students within the higher education system. They have a well-established and robust collection, analysis and publication regime in place.

As noted above, statistics regarding the preceding academic year are published in January of each year, with statistics relating to 2014/15 to be published in January 2016. Likewise, statistics relating to 2015/16 will be published in January 2017.

We believe that to adhere to the accepted publication schedule is sensible, in line with accepted practices, and fair to all concerned. HESA standardises information from across the higher education sector and provides a readily accessible basis for comparison of institutions. We feel it is reasonable and appropriate in all the circumstances to withhold the requested information at this time and direct you to HESA.

When considering the application of this exemption we are required to assess the public interest in withholding or disclosing the requested information. There is no doubt a public interest in knowing information relating to the discontinuance of students within higher education. The very fact that HESA collects and publishes this information is evidence of that fact.

However, we would argue that this interest is more than satisfied by the publication of this information each January for the preceding year. We do not believe that the public interest is served by releasing figures that have not been examined and verified by HESA and which could be in error and/or misleading. A small delay will result in accurate figures being made available for 2014/15 accompanied by any necessary contextual information.

Therefore, on this occasion, we consider the public interest in withholding the requested information outweighs the public interest in providing the requested data at this time.

You have the right of appeal against this response. 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](https://ico.org.uk/Global/contact_us), or by telephone on 0303 123 1113.

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

Yours sincerely

David Palmer

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/pis/noncon>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/bds>

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