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06 July 2015

Dear [REDACTED]

Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Information request (ref: FOI_15-103)

We have now considered your request of 08 June 2015 for information relating to the University's IT service desk, network and desktop support. For reference, we have copied the text of your original request on page 3 of this letter.

Our response relating to desktop and service desk support is provided in the Excel spreadsheet sent with your original request - see accompanying file 'FOI_15-103 Appendix A'. Information relating to network support is provided in a document available on our website: <https://portal.uea.ac.uk/documents/6207125/6884211/itcs-it-contracts-14-15.pdf/>

On this occasion it is not possible to provide all 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 on average annual spend for desktop support (question 4). Further information is in the accompanying file.

Secondly, we are unable to provide the answer to this same question in regard to network support. The Act contains a number of exemptions that allow public authorities to withhold certain information from release. We have applied the following exemption to this part of your request.

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

Disclosure of the average annual spend would reveal the approximate value of each contract. Because of this, it is our belief that release of the annual average spend for network support related contracts would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of the University.

The purchase of IT hardware and software, and the associated support and maintenance of those products, is undoubtedly a commercial activity, conducted in a competitive environment. The University must obtain the best deal for its IT-related products and services, and there are many companies seeking to provide those products and services who are required to compete against one another to win the University's business.

In this environment, disclosure of the annual average spend for each network support contract would, in combination with the information provided in the aforementioned document, enable organisations to estimate the providers' pricing structure and how much the University currently spends on the product itself and also its maintenance. The maintenance aspect of the contract is particularly sensitive as it represents a less easily quantified figure that would undoubtedly be helpful to competitor companies looking to bid for specific contracts. If competitor companies knew this information it would be likely to affect the University's ability to achieve the best price, as the tendering process would inevitably become less competitive. In contrast, we are able to provide the service desk software costs as the creator of the software also maintains it, and there is no risk to the University's commercial interests by making this cost publicly available.

A 'public interest test' must be applied to the exemption for prejudice to commercial interests. We acknowledge there is a legitimate public interest in knowing the amount and way in which public funds are spent, both to further the transparency and accountability of public spending.

However there is also a clear public interest in ensuring there is fair competition for public sector contracts. Any distortion of what is currently a blind tendering process has the potential effect of raising costs to the public sector which would not be in the public interest. In addition, we do not feel that disclosure would increase access to information about the tendering process nor encourage more potential suppliers to enter the market. Revealing the pricing structure for certain contracts will not increase understanding of the tendering process, nor will it lead to improved bids being submitted in the future. On balance, we believe the public interest lies in maintaining in the current blind tendering process for these IT contracts.

We hope our response will meet your requirements, however 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, 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

Ellen Paterson
Information Policy and Compliance Manager
University of East Anglia

Response to Freedom of Information Act 2000 request (FOI_15-103)

I wish to submit a freedom of information request relating to the following contractual information the organisation may hold with regards to the organisation's primary contracts relating to support services around help/service desk, desktop support and network support:

1. Help / service desk support:

The single point of contact between a service provider and users within an organisation. A typical service desk manages incidents and service requests, and also handles communication with the users.

See accompanying spreadsheet FOI_15-103 Appendix A.

2. Desktop support:

The technical services offered by a support organisation to a user(s) experiencing problems with their computers. Support may be on either hardware or software running on the affected computing device. Support may include but is not limited to installations, moves, adds, changes and disposition, and local remote services.

See accompanying spreadsheet FOI_15-103 Appendix A.

3. Network support:

The technical services offered by a support organisation to a user(s) experiencing problems with their network. Support may be on either hardware or software running on the affected computing device. Support may include but is not limited to installations, moves, adds, changes and disposition, and local remote services.

For each of the contract type above can you please provide me with the following information set out below:

- 1. Contract Type: Please choose from above the type of contract this is related to.*
- 2. What is the Support for Hardware, Software or other please state?*
- 3. Who is this supplier: If there is more than one supplier please input their contract information in another contract profile.*
- 4. What is the annual average spend this can be over 3 or 5 years?*
- 5. What is the duration of the contract please also include any extension periods?*
- 6. When does the contract expire?*
- 7. When will this contract be reviewed by the organisation?*
- 8. Please can you provide me with specific contact details of the person responsible for reviewing/owner of each contract. I'd like their full name, job title, contact number and direct email address.*

If there is more than one contract within the response please can you separate the information into a separate contract profile.

See: <https://portal.uea.ac.uk/documents/6207125/6884211/itcs-it-contracts-14-15.pdf/>