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██████████  
  
04 February 2014

Dear ██████████

**Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Information request (ref: FOI\_14-015)**

We have now considered your request of 16 January 2014 for information relating to viva voce examinations. Our response can be found, together with your original request, on page 2 of this letter. We hope this will meet your requirements.

However, in line with your rights under section 1(1)(a) of the Act to be informed whether information is held, we confirm the University does not hold some of the data requested in question 6. We have indicated in our response where data are not held.

Please note that any material released over which UEA has copyright is released subject to the understanding that you will comply with all relevant copyright rules regarding reproduction and/or transmission of the information released.

You have the right of appeal against this decision. If you wish to appeal, please set out in writing your grounds of appeal and send to me at 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\_14-015)**

*In this FOI I am referring to undergraduate viva voce examinations which occur after the final written exams and are part of the consideration of a student's final degree award rather than where vivas are used as an integral form of assessment and apply to all students taking the module*

*1. Does the university use viva voce examinations in some circumstances to help decide the degree classification of undergraduate students?*

Yes. There are two Schools of Study that currently use viva voce examinations in the circumstances set out above. These are the School of Chemistry and the School of Pharmacy.

*2. If so, please outline the circumstances where an undergraduate student would face a viva voce examination?*

Both the Schools of Chemistry and Pharmacy use the same criteria:

Viva voce examinations are generally offered to candidates:

- 1) Whose marks are within a borderline region for classification
- 2) Who have extenuating circumstances on record
- 3) And before considering an award of a starred first.

Candidates will not be told their final aggregate mark before the viva. Candidates whose performances might have been adversely affected by extenuating circumstances may be offered a viva at the discretion of the Examination Board. Any such circumstances must be supported by documentary evidence from an unbiased source, e.g. a medical certificate, letter from a doctor, hospital appointment card, letter from a solicitor, letter from the police, etc. It is the responsibility of the affected candidate to inform the Examination Boards via the Learning and Teaching Service of any such circumstances.

The regulations state that 'in resolving the class (of degree) of students, the Board of Examiners may seek to assist its deliberations by inviting a student to a viva voce examination. Students may decline to attend. No student undertaking a viva voce examination shall be awarded a class of degree lower than that which would have been awarded had there been no such examination. At least one external examiner and one internal examiner shall be present at every viva voce examination'.

*3. Who carries out the viva voce examination?*

The viva voce examination is carried out by one external examiner with one internal examiner.

*4. Please give the number of undergraduate viva voce examinations held in the most recent year for which you have figures (2012/13 if possible).*

The University holds recorded information to show that 17 undergraduate viva voce examinations were held in the academic year 2012/13.

*5. What proportion of final year undergraduates had a viva that year?*

0.62%

This figure is based on the total undergraduate degree awards at the University (2,739) and the total recorded number of undergraduate vivas (17).

6. Please provide the number (and proportion) of final year undergraduate who had a viva voce examinations each year from 2002/2003 (if figures do not go back that far, please provide whatever data you do have).

Academic Year:	Number of UG awards at University of East Anglia:	Number of viva voce examinations:	Proportion:
2002-3	<b>[Information not held - s.1(1)(a), Freedom of Information Act]</b>		
2003-4	<b>[Information not held - s.1(1)(a), Freedom of Information Act]</b>		
2004-5	<b>[Information not held - s.1(1)(a), Freedom of Information Act]</b>		
2005-6	2,120	School of Chemistry / School of Pharmacy: 4 <b>No data held for other Schools</b>	<b>[Information not held - s.1(1)(a), Freedom of Information Act]</b>
2006-7	2,263	School of Chemistry / School of Pharmacy: 13 <b>No data held for other Schools</b>	<b>[Information not held - s.1(1)(a), Freedom of Information Act]</b>
2007-8	2,182	School of Chemistry / School of Pharmacy: 19 <b>No data held for other Schools</b>	<b>[Information not held - s.1(1)(a), Freedom of Information Act]</b>
2008-9	2,265	School of Chemistry / School of Pharmacy: 10 <b>No data held for other Schools</b>	<b>[Information not held - s.1(1)(a), Freedom of Information Act]</b>
2009-10	2,558	School of Chemistry / School of Pharmacy / School of Biological Sciences: 45 <b>No data held for other Schools</b>	<b>[Information not held - s.1(1)(a), Freedom of Information Act]</b>
2010-11	2,695	School of Biological Sciences / School of Chemistry / School of Environmental Sciences / School of Natural Sciences / School of Pharmacy: 68	2.52%
2011-12	2,655	School of Chemistry / School of Pharmacy: 20	0.75%
2012-13	2,739	School of Chemistry / School of Pharmacy: 17	0.62%

7. If the proportion of undergraduate vivas has gone down over the period, please provide information to explain the decrease.

Most Schools have now stopped using undergraduate vivas and instead apply set criteria to determine undergraduate degree classifications.

*8. If viva voce examinations are no longer used by the university for undergraduate degree classification, please give details of when they ceased to apply and why they are no longer used.*

Viva voce examinations may still be used under the “Common Course Structure” regulations<sup>1</sup> for students starting prior to the 2013/14 academic year, but only two Schools of Study have continued their use.

From 2013/14 the University has adopted new “Bachelors and Integrated Masters Regulations”<sup>2</sup> which are in place for students commencing their undergraduate study in 2013/14 onwards. The new regulations include published, set criteria for degree classification and viva voce examinations are no longer permitted.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.uea.ac.uk/calendar/section3/regs\(awards\)/common-course-structure](http://www.uea.ac.uk/calendar/section3/regs(awards)/common-course-structure)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.uea.ac.uk/calendar/section3/regs\(awards\)/Regulations+for+Bachelors+and+Integrated+Masters+Awards+2013](http://www.uea.ac.uk/calendar/section3/regs(awards)/Regulations+for+Bachelors+and+Integrated+Masters+Awards+2013)