



Ref. FOI/20201204/02

05 January 2021

<b>Reply to request for information under the Freedom of Information Act</b>	
Your ref	Email of 4 December 2020
Request	<p>I would like to request the following information about the medicine course A100</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- For 2021 entry,</li><li>- a spreadsheet shows for each applicant the proportion of GCSE score, the normalised GCSE, the standardised BMAT score, if there's a special circumstance and if shortlisted or not.</li><li>- The same information for 2020 and 2019 entry with added column for if the applicant got offer or not.</li><li>-The formula you use to calculate the normalised score.</li></ul>

Dear Mr Mehanny,

I write in reply to your email of 4 December 2020, requesting the above information.

**Item 1 – 3:**

Please find the requested information in the attached workbook. Data on numbers of applicants who were shortlisted or made an offer in the current admissions cycle is not yet available, as the admissions cycle is still in process. Whether an applicant had special circumstances is not held in the University's systems.

We have provided data on GCSEs and BMAT scores on separate tabs, which have been independently sorted, to reduce the risk of any individual being identified from the data.

In taking this measure, we are applying the exemption in section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Section 40(2) provides an exemption from disclosure for information that is the personal data of an individual other than the requester, where disclosure would breach any of the data protection principles in Article 5 of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). We consider that disclosure of the information requested in the exact form requested would breach the first data protection principle, which requires that personal data is processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner. Disclosure would be unfair to the individuals concerned, as it would be contrary to their reasonable and legitimate expectations. They would not reasonably expect that information relating to their application to Oxford would be made public under the FOIA without their consent. For the disclosure of personal data to be lawful, it must have a lawful basis under Article 6 of the GDPR. There are six possible lawful bases in Article 6; we do not consider that any of them would be satisfied in respect of the disclosure.

The exemption in section 40(2) is an absolute exemption and is not subject to the public interest test provided for in section 2(2)(b) of the FOIA. To the extent that the public interest is relevant in this case, the University considers it is satisfied by the information provided.

**Item 4:**

Oxford contextualises/normalises GCSE grades based on school performance at Key Stage 4, so that if an applicant has been relatively high performing, given the attainment of others from similarly performing schools, this would yield a positive cGCSE score. If an applicant has been underperforming, this would yield a negative cGCSE score. The calculation is not based on school type.

We consider any further detail regarding the calculation of GCSE contextualised/normalised scores to be exempt from disclosure under section 43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Section 43(2) provides that information is exempt where its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person. For the reasons given below, we consider that disclosure of the information requested would be likely to prejudice the University's commercial interests.

Oxford's system of contextualising GCSEs is part of our wider consideration of contextual data which should give Oxford a competitive edge that will enable it to identify more effectively high-performing students from the target under-represented groups, who would be most likely to thrive on an Oxford degree course. Details of our use of cGCSEs and other contextual data would be of significant value and interest to Oxford's main competitors, who might introduce similar changes to their own admissions processes, offsetting any competitive advantage that Oxford might gain.

Section 43(2) is a qualified exemption that requires the University to weigh up the public interest in disclosing the information requested, which is presumed under FOIA, against the public interest in withholding it. The University recognises that there is a public interest in the disclosure of the information requested. Generally, there is an interest in openness and transparency in the conduct of the University's affairs. More specifically, there is an interest in information relating to the efforts of the University to diversify and broaden its undergraduate student body. However, we consider that this interest can be met without impairing the University's ability to compete with other institutions, and to do so on a level playing field. The University already publishes a considerable amount of information on its efforts to widen participation, including its APP<sup>1</sup>. This information includes statistics on progress in meeting access targets, as well as details of the University's outreach activities across the collegiate University, including projects undertaken by individual departments and in collaboration with colleges. In our view, this information is more than sufficient to meet the public interest in disclosure. In addition, it would be contrary to fair competition if one institution were required to disclose commercially sensitive information separately from other institutions. We therefore consider that the balance of public interests lies in favour of maintaining the exemption.

**INTERNAL REVIEW**

You may request an internal review of this response by e-mailing [foi@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:foi@admin.ox.ac.uk). A request for internal review should be submitted no later than 40 working days from the date of this letter.

**THE INFORMATION COMMISSIONER**

If, after the internal review, you are still dissatisfied, you have the right under FOIA to apply to the Information Commissioner for a decision as to whether your request has been dealt with in accordance with the FOIA. You can do this online using the [Information Commissioner's complaints portal](#).

Yours sincerely

**Information Compliance Team**

<sup>1</sup> <https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/app>