



By e-mail: request-958210-25065e3c@whatdotheyknow.com

Freedom of Information Office
4 West
University of Bath
Claverton Down
Bath
BA2 7AY

6th April 2023

Dear Ms Marks

Request for Information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 2000 – 2023/064

Your request was received on 9th March 2023 and has been handled under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, 2000.

Section 1(1)(a)(b) usually entitles you to be told whether the requested information is held and have that information provided to you unless it is judged to be exempt from disclosure. Details of the request text are reproduced below, together with the formal response provided by the University of Bath.

Request:

1. Could you confirm whether your university has an academic freedom code of conduct, guideline or another formal agreement? If so, please provide access to this document.
2. Could you please confirm whether the university management conducts risk assessments for academic freedom prior to entering into institutional relationships with higher education institutions in authoritarian states? If so, please provide access to this document.
3. Could you please outline the process for beginning new, or re-evaluating current, institutional partnerships with or receiving funding from higher education institutions or state-linked organisations (particularly those in authoritarian countries such as China)?

Point 1:

Statement on academic freedom:

<https://www.bath.ac.uk/corporate-information/academic-freedom/#:~:text=To%20select%20one's%20area%20of,publish%20subject%20to%20academic%20judgement.&text=%20maintain%20high%20standards%20of,be%20responsive%20to%20reasoned%20discussion.&text=Not%20to%20take%20part%20in,morally%20repugnant%20to%20the%20individual.>

This is reinforced in the University strategy under the 'values' section: "aspiring to the highest standards of scientific, ethical, and professional integrity, whilst supporting the freedom to challenge received wisdom".

The University of Bath also has a Freedom of Expression Regulation (Regulation 18) which covers staff and students and visitors:

[regulations-for-students-2022-23-18-freedom-of-expression.pdf \(bath.ac.uk\)](#)

Points 2 & 3:

The University has a code of practice setting out how new collaborative provision arrangements are approved as well as the process for renewal of arrangements.

A key element in the strategic approval of new arrangements is consideration of a range of information, set out in a template, which includes a risk assessment of the proposed partner institution and programme. The risk assessment of the partner includes a specific question on the educational culture and level of academic freedom. The relevant template is QA20 Form 1 a (preliminary enquiry).

Please refer to QA20 which references identifying risks and expecting openness and transparency from partners in the link below:

[UNIVERSITY OF \(bath.ac.uk\)](#)

<https://www.bath.ac.uk/publications/ga20-collaborative-provision/> gives a lot of guidance on this, including preliminary enquiry form.

For a new partnership or a renewal where a memorandum of understanding is proposed the following country information is requested;

- Market Information *utilising British Council resources*
- Academic Freedom Considerations *utilising Freedom House and Freedom Index resources*
- Government Guidance *utilising FCDO resources*
- Any other risks

At the institutional level, strategic approval of a proposed new partner is considered by Academic Programmes Committee, which is chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education). Final strategic approval of a proposed new partner is by Senate.

I note that the University of Bath is recently in receipt of four request submitted by your organisation. Please note that it is possible that further requests received on the same or a substantively similar subject within a reasonable timeframe will be aggregated upon receipt which means that a single cost limit will be applied to all.

Complaint Rights:

If you are dissatisfied with any aspect of how your request was handled you may ask the University to conduct an internal review. A request for an internal review must be submitted within 40 working days of receipt by you of this response. Requests received outside this period will only be considered at the University's discretion and where there is a valid reason to do so.

Applications for internal review should be emailed to: The Freedom of Information Team, freedom-of-information@bath.ac.uk or addressed in writing to University of Bath, Claverton Down, Bath, BA2 7AY.

If you remain dissatisfied you may appeal to the Information Commissioner's Office at Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF. Further details of this process are available via the following link: <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/official-information-concerns-report/official-information-concern/> Please note that the Information Commissioner will only consider appeals once the internal review process has been completed.

Yours sincerely



Rebecca Warhurst
Freedom of Information Officer