

Business Assurance
Information
Compliance

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L. Maskell

By email only to: request-497041-4f6e7a4f@whatdotheyknow.com

20 July 2018

Dear Mr Maskell,

Request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“the Act”)

Further to your recent request for information held by King’s College London, I am writing to confirm that some of the requested information is held by the university.

Your request

We received your information request on 12 July 2018 and have treated it as a request for information made under section 1(1) of the Act.

Please can you publish your selection and shortlisting criteria for the Clinical Doctorate in Psychology based at the IoPPN, providing details of the numbers of students at each stage of the shortlisting process, broken down by gender, age and ethnicity.

In regards to personal statements, please provide details of your marking structure and selection criteria for shortlisting. If this varies by year, then please provide the marking criteria for the 2018 entry intake.

In terms of successful students admitted onto the course, please provide details of how many students admitted onto the course worked at the IoPPN prior to their interview. Please break this down by the number of students per year in comparison to the number of places offered and provide this data for the past 5 years.

Our response

Please see attached excel document which outlines the gender, age and ethnicity of applicants at each stage of the shortlisting process as well as those who had worked in the faculty at the time of application or previously. Where the total number of applicant is 5 or under, the university has replaced the figure with ‘equal to or less than five’ (≤ 5). The university considers that it is reasonably likely that students could be identified from the low numbers. Such identification would constitute a breach of one of the principles set out in the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA). This approach is in accordance with the Information Commissioner’s Office Code of Practice on Anonymisation. This information is therefore exempt from disclosure under section 40(2) of the Act. This is an absolute exemption which means that the university does not need to consider the public interest in

disclosing the information, we only need to establish that the exemption has been engaged.

The methodology the university has adopted is a variation of the HESA standard rounding and suppression method. Numbers that are five or fewer are replaced with “≤5 (less than or equal to five)”; when needed to prevent potential identification all other numbers are rounded to the nearest multiple of five (halves are rounded upwards).

Full details of the HESA methodology can be found on their website:

<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/about/regulation/data-protection/rounding-and-suppression-anonymise-statistics>

The information relating to marking structure is being withheld in accordance with section 43(2) of the Act – Commercial Interests. Potential applicants who know the scoring criteria would have an unfair advantage over other applicants, particularly as they will be able to write their application in such a way as to gain the maximum score possible – even if they don't meet our usual high standards of academic achievement and clinical experience. In addition, the university considers that release of the information is likely to prejudice the commercial interests of the university, namely the ability of the university to attract the best students, staff and greatest level of funding.

It would not have a direct monetary effect on us at the outset, however students on our course are funded employees of the NHS. We pride ourselves on having the highest application per place ratio in the country for a programme of our type and a potential effect of releasing this into the public domain could be a significant drop in our application numbers should the scoring criteria be misinterpreted (it needs context). Such a loss of demand may in the future impact on the number of commissioned places we have. Our course is a very competitive one to get onto and we are aware that rumours have remained for years about every applicant needing a PhD, etc which is not true but hard to dispel. Releasing this to the public domain would therefore set us back on the hard work we have done, and I believe affect our reputation

This is a qualified exemption and requires the consideration of a public interest test; assessing whether the balance of the public interest favours disclosing the information or maintaining the exemption. In this case we have considered that the public interest favours non-disclosure. It is in the public interest for the university to be able to fairly attract best candidates and maintain its position as a world leading university.

This completes the university's response to your information request.

Your right to complain

If you are unhappy with the service, you have received in relation to your information request or feel that it has not been properly handled you have the right to complain or request a review of our decision by contacting the Assistant Director of Business Assurance (Information Compliance) within 60 days of the date of this letter.

Further information about our internal complaints procedure is available at the link below:

http://www.kcl.ac.uk/college/policyzone/assets/files/governance_and_legal/Freedom_of_Information_Policy_updated_Oct_%202011.pdf

If you are not content with the outcome of your complaint you may apply to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the internal complaints procedure provided by King's College London.

The Information Commissioner can be contacted at the following address:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely

Jade Roche
Information Compliance