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UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Legal Services

Director
Mrs N Cárdenas Blanco
Solicitor

Gloria Zimba
What do they know

(By Email)

11 January 2022

Dear Ms Zimba

Re: request for information under The Freedom of Information Act.

Please accept our apologies for the delay in responding to your request for information dated 16 December 2021. If you have any queries with regard to this letter, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Please note our statement in respect of Copyright, which is also attached.

If you are dissatisfied with the manner in which your request has been dealt with, you may ask for an internal review. The University's Complaints and Appeals procedure is available at

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/governance/policies-regs/information/index.aspx>

Yours sincerely

Freedom of Information Team
University of Birmingham

Encs

Your request for information reads:

1. *Do you have a formal IT security strategy? (Please provide a link to the strategy)*
A) Yes
B) No
2. *Does this strategy specifically address the monitoring of network attached device configurations to identify any malicious or non-malicious change to the device configuration?*
A) Yes
B) No
C) Don't know
3. *If yes to Question 2, how do you manage this identification process – is it:*
A) *Totally automated – all configuration changes are identified and flagged without manual intervention.*
B) *Semi-automated – it's a mixture of manual processes and tools that help track and identify configuration changes.*
C) *Mainly manual – most elements of the identification of configuration changes are manual.*
4. *Have you ever encountered a situation where user services have been disrupted due to an accidental/non malicious change that had been made to a device configuration?*
A) Yes
B) No
C) Don't know
5. *If a piece of malware was maliciously uploaded to a device on your network, how quickly do you think it would be identified and isolated?*
A) *Immediately*
B) *Within days*
C) *Within weeks*
D) *Not sure*
6. *How many devices do you have attached to your network that require monitoring?*
A) *Physical Servers: record number*
B) *PC's & Notebooks: record number*
7. *Have you ever discovered devices attached to the network that you weren't previously aware of?*
A) Yes
B) No

If yes, how do you manage this identification process – is it:

- A) Totally automated – all device configuration changes are identified and flagged without manual intervention.*
- B) Semi-automated – it's a mixture of manual processes and tools that help track and identify unplanned device configuration changes.*
- C) Mainly manual – most elements of the identification of unexpected device configuration changes are manual.*

8. How many physical devices (IP's) do you have attached to your network that require monitoring for configuration vulnerabilities?

Record Number:

9. Have you suffered any external security attacks that have used malware on a network attached device to help breach your security measures?

- A) Never*
- B) Not in the last 1-12 months*
- C) Not in the last 12-36 months*

10. Have you ever experienced service disruption to users due to an accidental, non-malicious change being made to device configurations?

- A) Never*
- B) Not in the last 1-12 months*
- C) Not in the last 12-36 months*

11. When a scheduled audit takes place for the likes of PSN or Cyber Essentials, how likely are you to get significant numbers of audit fails relating to the status of the IT infrastructure?

- A) Never*
- B) Occasionally*
- C) Frequently*
- D) Always*

The University of Birmingham responds:

The University of Birmingham is required to respond to a request made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("the Act") if it holds the information being requested, unless it is appropriate to apply one of the limited exemptions set out in the Act.

The Refusal Notice below explains why no information relevant to this request is being released.

Refusal Notice 1

Reasons for non-disclosure

Section 43(2) – Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Commercial Interests

The information you have requested is commercially sensitive and that to provide it would be likely to prejudice the University's commercial interests.

The University is a large, research-led higher education institution which carries out a wide range of activities. As such, it holds an extremely significant quantity of information assets of differing categories including:

- personal information and special category information about students, staff, applicants and others;
- highly commercially sensitive academic expertise and resources;
- highly commercially sensitive research expertise, resources and data;
- data relating to University business planning and marketing strategies;
- commercially sensitive information held by the University relating to the University's collaborative partners, contractors, customers or other third parties associated with the University.

The University's information assets are a key, vital tool in developing strategies to attract high calibre undergraduate and postgraduate students, appoint high calibre staff, both academic and managerial, attract research and research funding and enter into collaborations with private sector, public sector and higher education partners. More particularly, the commercial activity of the University is conducted in a highly competitive market in competition with other institutions of higher education.

The University considers that release of this information would place the University's highly commercially valuable information assets at risk of hacking or other unauthorised access. The potential harm to the University which would be caused by its information being hacked, intercepted or otherwise wrongfully or unlawfully interfered with is potentially catastrophic affecting its ability to operate in the increasingly competitive higher education market and to attract research funding. Therefore, the University asserts that to release this information would be prejudicial to its commercial interests. Taking these factors into account, the University does not consider it to be in the public interest to disclose this information.

Therefore, under S43(2) of the Act the University is not providing the information you have requested.

More information about the exemption in this section of the Act is available on the Information Commissioner's Office's website <https://ico.org.uk/>.

The University of Birmingham

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