



Department
for Education

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David Gale

www.gov.uk/dfe

Email enquiry form:
www.education.gov.uk/contactus/dfe

06 August 2020

Ref: 2020-004295

Dear Mr Gale,

Thank you for your reply to our clarification of your internal review request, dated 30 July 2020, which we received on 3 August 2020.

To summarise, your original request (ref 2020-0036966), which we received on 23 June 2020 was:

Freedom of Information Request: Records (2017-2020) related to dyslexia assessment methodologies used by UK universities

Please provide sight of records related to dyslexia assessment methodologies used by UK universities and psychologists acting on their behalf, to include internal documents and communications, as well as records of any related communications with any third parties to include the SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC) and the British Psychological Society.

We replied on 17 July 2020 confirming that the Department for Education (DfE) does not hold the information requested and further added that DfE does not provide guidance to universities on the methodologies they use to identify and assess dyslexia students, as higher education providers are independent, autonomous bodies.

Dyslexic students applying for support under the Disabled Students' Allowance are required to provide evidence of their condition through a diagnostic assessment carried out by a suitably qualified assessor or educational psychologist.

The SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC) is responsible for providing guidance on training and implementation of standards for diagnostic assessments, and for overseeing and approving processes of awarding qualifications to assessors. DfE has no formal relationship with SASC.

We received your reply on 21 July 2020 (ref 2020-0039780), where you wrote:

"I am writing to request an internal review of Department for Education's handling of my FOI request 'Records (2017-2020) related to dyslexia assessment methodologies used by UK universities'.

The DfE has stated that it does not possess the requested information. This appears to contradict previous written statements from the DfE that a Ministerial policy decision was behind the failure to scrutinise and amend dyslexia assessment methodologies, as well as the complete absence of any governance framework for disability discrimination complaints made by university students. If this FOI response is a correction of previous email responses, please state as much, bearing in mind that such a correction would indicate that there is no government scrutiny and governance over SASC whatever.

The DfE's statement, that it does not hold any records of related communications with SASC is, frankly, unbelievable."

In response, we requested that you clarify what "written statements from the DfE" you were referring to in our letter dated 30 July 2020. In your response which we received on 3 August 2020 you wrote:

"Since the DfE has persistently refused to make the requested reasonable adjustment for my disability, namely by communicating via email, I will provide you with just one of the DfE's myriad of internal reference numbers for previous correspondence - Ref: 2020-0001743. The provision of this reference number will provide you with my email address. You now have the task of examining your records to familiarise yourselves with a full record of correspondence to include the reference to a policy decision taken by the Minister."

We have therefore looked at our correspondence history, including Ref: 2020-0001743, and despite extensive searching of our records, we have found no such written statements which match your description, ie: written statements that state *"a Ministerial policy decision was behind the failure to scrutinise and amend dyslexia assessment methodologies"*.

Therefore to ensure we comply with your request in attempting to locate this information, and to progress our Internal Review process to establish if the Department does hold the information you specify, we need to narrow your request further to specifically identify what written statements you refer to: e.g,

1. What are the title(s) of the written statements you refer to
2. Their publication date(s)
3. Any reference numbers we can refer to.
4. The Ministers who made these statements

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact us and quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are unhappy with the way your request has been handled, you should make a complaint to the Department by writing to us within two calendar months of the date of this letter. Your complaint will be considered by an independent review panel, who were not involved in the original consideration of your request. If you are not content with the outcome of your complaint, you may then contact the Information Commissioner's Office.

We look forward to your reply. Please see the below email address to which you can directly reply.

Yours sincerely,

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