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Our ref: FOI-19-428

20 January 2020

Mr Max Copeman
Email: request-630985-08911377@whatdotheyknow.com

Dear Mr Copeman

Further to your access to information request received on 30 December 2019 please find below the University's response in relation to your request for information about students requesting concessions from the University due to mental health reasons.

The information requested is as follows:

I am looking for information regarding mental health issues among students, specifically:

- a) **Since the beginning of the 2009-10 academic year, how many of the students (both undergraduate and postgraduate) who formally requested concessions from the university (i.e. submitted an Extenuating Circumstances form), cited mental health issues as their reason for the request?**

Students at the University can request concessions for mental health issues in two ways - the first is by registering with Disability Services and, on receipt of an individual student support agreement, receive reasonable adjustments for their disability. Students are required to provide evidence of their mental health diagnosis.

In line with its record management protocol the University's Disability Service only holds data on students with a disability or long-term condition that register with the service for support and reasonable adjustments for the current and previous academic year.

Support and adjustments include but are not limited to; flexibility with deadlines, exam supports, extended library loans, consideration for spelling and grammar, etc. The table below outlines the number of students registered with the University's Disability Service in 2018-19 and 2019-20 academic years that have disclosed a mental health condition as their primary disability or long-term condition. Disability Services does not record whether or not the students took up the support or reasonable adjustments that they were offered for assessments.

Academic Year	Total number of students registered with Disability Services due to a Mental Health Condition
2018-19	643
2019-20 (to date)	552

The second way that students can ask for concessions is through the mitigating circumstances procedure in advance of an examination or deadline, or exceptional circumstances procedure (i.e. extenuating circumstances) following the assessment.

As part of the mitigating circumstances procedure, students are permitted to submit evidence of their circumstances in advance of a deadline to either request that they have an extension to a deadline or are absent from an examination. Following an assessment, a student may also submit evidence of exceptional circumstances (i.e. unexpected or unplanned events) before the return of results. This allows consideration of the impact of the unexpected circumstances should the student not perform as well as expected.

There is no central mechanism or format for the University's 15 Schools to record mitigating or exceptional circumstances. Records are held in different formats and categories in each School. There are also a multiplicity of modes of assessment organised both locally by Schools and centrally by the University. It would take more than the 2.5 days permitted to collate and analyse the data - particularly in cases where students submit requests for consideration of a range of issues, one of which may include mental ill health.

Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit, which for the University, is set at £450. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 2.5 working days in determining whether the University holds the information, locating, retrieving and extracting the information.

Please note that to collate and extract relevant information from Schools is estimated would take in excess of the 2.5 working days permitted, particularly as there are cases where students submit requests involving a range of issues, one of which may include mental ill health. Therefore, relevant cases recorded under the mitigating circumstances procedure is not provided.

b) How many of these mental health-related appeals have been deemed legitimate enough by the university/department for the concessions to be granted?

This information is exempt under Section 12 as above.

c) Which mental health issues in particular have been those most cited (e.g. anxiety, depression etc.) in the forms.

Due to the means of data storage and limitations on reporting the University is unable to report globally on the types of mental health conditions most cited within the cost limit, therefore this information is exempt under Section 12 as above.

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of part of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within two months of the date of receipt of the response to your original request and should be addressed to the Information Compliance Manager c/o info.compliance@qub.ac.uk. Please remember to quote the reference number FOI-20-428 in any future communications.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely

Shauneen Killyleagh
Information Compliance Unit