

03 September 2010

Reference: Fol-111

Dear Mr Taylor,

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 – REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

I am writing in response to the request you made to BBSRC under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Statement of Information Requested

You requested the following information:

For all those who have started a BBSRC funded postgraduate studentship in each of the last ten years could you please release the absolute number, and percentage, who have eventually graduated with a PhD.

Duty to Confirm or Deny

I confirm that BBSRC does not hold the information relevant to your request.

Background

The Biotechnology and Biological Research Council (BBSRC) is one of seven Research Councils that work together as Research Councils UK. It is funded from the Government's Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. BBSRC's current budget is £450M and it supports around 1,600 scientists and 2,000 research students in universities and institutes in the UK. Information about BBSRC's mission can be found on our website:

<http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/organisation/mission.aspx>.

Information about BBSRC studentships can be found at

<http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/funding/studentships/studentships-index.aspx>.

Information Requested

BBSRC does not hold information on the number of its postgraduate students who eventually graduate with a PhD. BBSRC publishes information on the proportion of students who submit their thesis for examination within four years of starting, and this is available in BBSRC Annual Report and Accounts available on BBSRC website at <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/publications/accounts/accounts-index.aspx>. This information is available in the Annual Report and Accounts for financial year 2002/03 onwards.

In common with the other Research Councils, BBSRC does not collect information on PhD students' graduation, but rather on thesis submission. Research Councils

expect departments to achieve a four-year submission rate of at least 70%, and submission rate is taken to be a useful and proportionate indicator of the effectiveness of a department's support and monitoring procedures for its students. BBSRC uses submission rate, for example, in its studentship competitions in order to help ensure that it is investing in departments with a strong track record in supporting its students. Graduation date is felt to be less useful as the time between submission, examination and degree award is often outside of the control of the department or the student. However, universities are required to provide qualification data to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) which has recently used these to publish a report on PhD completion rates by institution (please see the following link http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2010/10_21/).

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me quoting the reference number above.

Yours sincerely,

Ksymena Okonska
Freedom of Information Officer
BBSRC

Complaints Process

If you are dissatisfied with how we have handled your request, you may register a formal complaint with the BBSRC Complaints Officer at complaints.officer@bbsrc.ac.uk, who will conduct an internal review.

If you are not happy with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner, Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF, Tel: 01625 545 745, www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk.