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Dear Jamie Dixon

Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Information request (ref: FOI_20-020)

We have now considered your request of 23 January 2020 and clarification email of the same date for the following information:

'Apologies for the inconvenience, but would it be possible to disregard the 'operational costs' aspect of my previous request, and instead just receive the overall careers spend for the university?'

Clarified on 23 January 2020:

'I would like the total amount the University as a whole has spent on Careers related services for 2018-19 please'

Unfortunately, on this occasion it is not possible to provide the requested information. We have determined that the cost of finding and assembling some of the information will exceed the 'appropriate limit' as defined by section 12 of the Act and the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004/3244.

The appropriate limit of £450, which equates to 18 hours' work, can relate to one request in its entirety or a series of linked requests. If the University cannot locate, retrieve and extract some or all of the requested information within the 18 hours we are not obliged to provide any of the information.

To answer your request we would need to locate and identify any data held about careers support at the University, which could include any of the following:

- Employability meetings
- Student drop-in times
- Mentoring
- Interview
- Cost of events
- UEA careers fairs
- School careers fairs
- Staff costs
- Programme coordinators
- Careers-related publications and print material

- External visits
- Career adviser meetings and support
- Teaching placement support

We do not have a unique identifier for careers or careers-related activity so to identify whether an activity included any careers involvement we would have to search individual records in our finance systems.

This information is not held centrally in one location. The University has finance teams in each of our four faculties as well as a central team. This would give us five separate teams to review.

As a large organisation we have a significant number of financial transactions each month. As an example, we can tell you that our system holds 10,335 transaction records for October 2019, each of which may have more than one line of spend attached to it.

In the absence of a cost code with which to interrogate the system, and depending on the description of an entry and whether it was immediately obvious that it did or did not relate to careers, each entry would need to be reviewed to see if it related to careers in any way.

At a rate of 1 minute per entry to review each transaction it would take approximately 172 hours just for October 2019. It is impossible to say whether we could easily eliminate a percentage of entries as being obviously not relevant.

We have looked at how we could advise you on reducing your request to be able to address it within the permitted limit, and on this occasion we have been unable to find a small enough data set that would enable this. Even if we were able to eliminate up to 90% of all entries it would take just under 18 hours, for one month alone. We do not think it a realistic expectation that we could easily eliminate 90% of all entries, and carrying out that preparatory work would need to be included in the time assessment.

In addition to this, we would also need to review individual staff expenses claims to see if any associated expenses had been purchased by individuals and then claimed back. Staff expenses have been online for just over a year and number in their thousands, for example there are over 1900 lines related to travel. Again we would need to inspect each individual entry based upon its description. A rate of 1 minute per entry would take over 31 hours to review every expenses claim, for 2018-19 just under the travel heading.

Adding these two together, it would take approximately 49 hours at the very lowest estimate and assumes we could easily eliminate 90% of all the entries, based on a very conservative estimate of one minute per entry. We believe that the work would be more likely to take 90 seconds to 2 minutes to review each entry.

As you can see, even taking just one month's worth of data places us vastly over the time allowed, based on the most conservative estimate.

However, while we are not obliged to provide any further information, we can tell you that in the year 2018-19 our careers service, known as CareerCentral, spent £1,894,314.34 (this includes all costs e.g. staff, systems and non-payroll costs). We can also tell you that The Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences spent £87,436.78 in relation to employability/careers. This was for the development of an online platform and associated student licence costs. This figure is therefore the minimum recorded amount spent.

We should point out that any revised request you submit will be treated as a new FOI request, and the 20 working day time limit will begin again.

We are sorry we cannot provide all of the data you requested, but trust this letter explains our position. If you are unhappy with our response, you have the right of appeal against this decision. If you wish to appeal, please set out in writing your reasons for appealing and send to the above address. You must appeal within 40 working days of the date of this letter. In line with section 5.3 of the UK Government's Freedom of Information Act Code of Practice, we are not obliged to accept internal reviews after this date.

You also have a subsequent right of appeal to the Information Commissioner's Office. Further information is available on their website:

https://ico.org.uk/Global/contact_us, or by telephone on 0303 123 1113.

Please note that any material over which UEA has copyright is released on the understanding that you will comply with all relevant copyright rules regarding reproduction and/or transmission of the information provided.

Please quote our reference given at the head of this letter in all correspondence.

Yours sincerely

Emma Gedge
Information Compliance Specialist
University of East Anglia