



3 September 2026

Dear [REDACTED]

Freedom of Information request: FOI2026/00667

Thank you for your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request received on 3 August 2026 in which you requested the following:

Your request:

Please provide the following information for Innovate UK for the period 1 January 2022 to 31 July 2026:

- 1. The total number of concerns, complaints, or formal complaints received from applicants (individuals or organisations who applied for Innovate UK funding or competitions) that explicitly mention artificial intelligence, automated decision making, algorithmic assessment, machine learning, large language models, or AI in each calendar year.*
- 2. Yearly counts by allegation category (if recorded), for example: use of AI in assessment; automated rejection/shortlisting; bias or discrimination by AI; lack of transparency about AI use; misuse of applicant data for AI training; incorrect AI outputs affecting decisions; other AI related concerns. Please provide the categories you use and counts for each.*
- 3. A yearly breakdown by outcome (for example: upheld, partially upheld, not upheld, resolved informally, ongoing).*
- 4. A yearly breakdown by funding programme or competition (if available).*
- 5. The number of complaints escalated to a formal review or appeal each year.*
- 6. Copies of any policies or guidance used to record, classify, and handle applicant complaints during the period.*
- 7. The format and location of the complaint records (e.g., case management system name) and whether anonymised case-level data can be provided (date received; programme; outcome; anonymised summary).*

Our response:

I can confirm that UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) does hold information relevant to your request. Please see the information below.

With regard to questions 1-5, following a review of Innovate UK (IUK) grant applicant complaint records between 1 January 2022 and 31 July 2026, using the terms artificial intelligence, automated decision making, algorithmic assessment, machine learning, large language model and AI, we can confirm that one relevant complaint was raised in 2024. No relevant complaints were raised in 2022, 2023, 2025 or 2026.

The complaint identified in 2024 was partially upheld in relation to the handling of the complainant's concerns. The allegation that AI had been used in the assessment process was investigated and was not substantiated, with the assessor confirming that AI had not been used. This complaint was categorised as 'use of AI in assessment'.

This complaint related to the [IUK Smart Grants: April 2024](#)¹ competition and was escalated to formal review or appeal.

¹ <https://apply-for-innovation-funding.service.gov.uk/competition/1907/overview/d1149c8e-51ce-4b4e-b0b7-d780d32aa634>

In response to question 6, copies of policies and guidance used to record, classify and handle applicant complaints during this period, a number of documents have been identified as being in scope of your request and are included with this response:

- *“Complaints and Queries Management Matrix”*
- *“Complaints Communications Guidance v.3”*
- *“Complaints Handling Procedure V2_Redacted”* – Section 40 applies
- *“Creating SMART Complaint Actions”*
- *“General Written Complaint Response Guidance”*
- *“Investigation Meeting Notes template v.2”*
- *“Investigation Planning Form”*
- *“Investigator’s Guidance v3.1”*
- *“Invitation to Complaints Investigation meeting template v.3_Redacted”* – Section 41 applies
- *“Key Terms List v5”*
- *“Management of Vexatious complainant_Redacted”* – Section 40 applies
- *“Root Causes List v4”*
- *“Supporting Distressed and Vulnerable contacts final April 2021_Redacted”* – Section 40 applies
- *“Tier 1 Formal response template v2.3_Redacted”* – Section 40 applies

Please note, within the *“Key Terms List v5”* and *“Root Causes List v4”* documents, examples included are not a prescriptive list and usage of these documents is based on the nuance of individual complaints. Similarly, the application of the guidance outlined in *“Investigator’s Guidance v3.1”* will vary based on the nature of the complaint and investigation need.

The guidance documents *“Complaints Handling Procedure V2”* and *“Management of Vexatious complainant”* are both due for review.

Where indicated above, we are exempting the names of individuals under section 40(2) of the FOIA. Disclosing this information would contravene the first Data Protection Principle as defined under Section 86 of the Data Protection Act 2018 and Article 5 of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

Section 40(2) is an absolute exemption and does not require a public interest test.

We have also determined that the direct helpline telephone number and organisational code for UKRI’s Employee Assistance Programme fall under Section 41 of the FOIA, information provided in confidence. As this information is specific to UKRI and its staff, if the information were released, we believe it would result in an actionable breach of confidentiality.

Section 41 is an absolute exemption and does not require a public interest test.

Regarding question 7, when IUK Customer Support Services (CSS) receives a complaint or concern, it is recorded within Salesforce and reported through IUK’s customer support and complaint monitoring records. The information recorded includes complaint category/type, programme or competition and complaint volumes. Stage 1 is a local resolution step handled by IUK CSS.

If a complaint or concern is escalated to the “formal complaint” stage, it is handled by the UKRI Complaints team and is recorded in eCase, UKRI’s case management software platform. Anonymised case-level data, including date received, outcome and an anonymised general summary, is held, but the programme or competition is not. Any disclosure of case-level information would need to be considered on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with applicable FOIA and data protection legislation.

Further information is published on our website about [UKRI’s complaints process](#)².

Your rights

If you have any queries regarding our response, please do let us know. If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review, explaining which elements of this decision you disagree with and why. Internal review requests should be submitted within 40 working days of the date of our response and should be addressed to:

Head of Information Governance

Email: foi@ukri.org

Please quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are still not content with the outcome of the internal review, you may apply to refer the matter to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review procedure provided by UKRI. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: www.ico.org.uk.

If you wish to raise a complaint regarding the service you have received or the conduct of any UKRI staff in relation to your request, please see [UKRI's complaints procedure](#)².

Yours sincerely,


Information Governance
Information Rights Team
UK Research and Innovation
foi@ukri.org | dataprotection@ukri.org

² <https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/contact-us/make-a-complaint/#skipnav-target>