

[REDACTED]

16 September 2021

Dear [REDACTED],

**Freedom of Information request: FOI2020/00215**

I write in regard to the above Freedom of Information request received on the 19 July 2020, to which we responded on the 4 August 2020. Following a recent request for similar information we have re-evaluated our position and wish to issue a revised response.

In your request, you asked the following:

**Your request:**

*I submit a request under the Freedom of Information Act for:*

*All records in the possession, custody or control of the UK Medical Research Council (MRC) describing the isolation of a SARS-COV-2 virus, directly from a sample taken from a diseased patient, where the patient sample was not first combined with any other source of genetic material (i.e. monkey kidney cells aka vero cells; liver cancer cells). Please note that I am using "isolation" in the every-day sense of the word: the act of separating a thing(s) from everything else. I am not requesting records where "isolation of SARS-COV-2" refers instead to:*

- *the culturing of something, or*
- *the performance of an amplification test (i.e. a PCR test), or*
- *the sequencing of something.*

*Please also note that my request is not limited to records that were authored by the MRC or that pertain to work done by the MRC. My request includes any sort of record, for example (but not limited to) any published peer-reviewed study that the MRC has downloaded or printed.*

*In other words, my request is in relation to information pertaining to any record of correct isolation and/or purification of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, where the virus has been isolated from genetic and other bodily material, centrifuged and purified so only the viral particles remain.*

*If any records match the above description of requested records and are currently available to the public elsewhere, please provide enough information about each record so that I may identify and access each record with certainty (i.e. title, author(s), date, journal, where the public may access it).*

**Our revised response:**

We estimate that the cost of determining whether UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) holds information relevant to your request would exceed the appropriate statutory limit as specified within Section 12 of the FOIA which for UKRI is set at £450. This represents the estimated cost of 18 hours of staff resource on locating, retrieving and extracting the information.

We have identified that the most likely place that this information would be held is in funding applications submitted to the MRC. To gather this information, we have determined that it would be necessary to individually review all submitted grant applications related to Covid-19, in particular any "Case for Support" attachments and "Ethical Implications" documents, which are not searchable within our systems.

MRC have identified over 2300 grant applications in respect to Covid-19 and have estimated that it would take approximately 10 minutes per application to manually review the necessary sections for relevance. This would be a total of over 380 hours of staff resources.

Consequently, UKRI is not obliged under Section 12 of the FOIA to process your request further.

In addition, there may be peer reviewed publications which describe the isolation of the virus in the public domain, the information should therefore be sought from the publicly available information.

If you have any queries regarding our response or you are unhappy with the outcome of your request and wish to seek an internal review of the decision, please contact:

Head of Information Governance

Email: [foi@ukri.org](mailto:foi@ukri.org) or [infogovernance@ukri.org](mailto:infogovernance@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: <http://www.ico.gov.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 policy: <https://www.ukri.org/about-us/policies-and-standards/complaints-policy/>

Yours sincerely,

  
Information Governance  
Information Rights Team  
UK Research and Innovation  
[foi@ukri.org](mailto:foi@ukri.org) | [dataprotection@ukri.org](mailto:dataprotection@ukri.org)