



[REDACTED]

15 February 2022

Dear [REDACTED],

Freedom of Information request: FOI2022/00009

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 16 January in which you requested the following:

Your request:

I would like to make a request under the Freedom of Information Act to be provided with the following information by Innovate UK:

For each of the years 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 the following data:

- i. For each of the above years the number of complaints made by grant holders concerning the bullying, harassing and other types of dysfunctional behaviours & attitudes of Monitoring Officers directed towards grant holders.*
- ii. The number of monitoring officers who did not have levels of work-life balances*
- iii. For each of the above years the percentage of these complaints that were responded to within the 10-day time frame published at URL Complaints procedure - Innovate UK - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)*
- iv. For each of the above years the number of these complaints that were resolved to the grant holder's satisfaction.*
- v. For each of the above years the number of Monitoring Officers recruited and the number of Monitoring Officers who resigned.*
- vi. The suitability of applicants who had successfully been employed as Monitoring Officers, in terms of the percentage of Monitoring Officers recruited that had:*
 - Insufficient or no technical knowledge of the project and tasks being undertaken*
 - Insufficient or no expertise of the project and tasks being undertaken*
 - Insufficient or no past experience of the project management of R&D projects*
 - Insufficient or no past experience of financial management of R&D projects including those financial management methods used by IUK*
 - Insufficient or no practical skills in computing requirements used in R&D projects to monitor these projects*

Our response:

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

The requested information on Monitoring Officer complaints is not held prior to 2020. To explain further, Monitoring Officers have a contractual relationship with Innovate UK (IUK) and are not considered to be members of staff or to be working directly for IUK. As such, complaints about Monitoring Officers are dealt with outside of the IUK complaints procedure and are instead investigated by the monitoring team. These complaints are addressed on an ad-hoc basis and resolved by a team manager via email or telephone. There were no logs or folders to store this information prior to 2020, however an internal change was implemented resulting in the number of these complaints now being recorded.

We have explored the possibility of providing this information for cases prior to 2020 through an email search, using the terms “monitoring officer” and “complaint”, combined with at least one participant using an Innovate UK identifying email domain, however, we estimate that the cost of complying with this part of your request in this manner 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.

Our search, as described above, resulted in a return of over 7,500 emails between 1 January 2014 and 31 December 2019, which would each need to be individually reviewed to extract the relevant information. At an estimate of 1 minute per email, this would constitute over 125 hours of staff resources.

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

In response to points i and iv, during 2020, there were a total of 4 complaints made relating to Monitoring Officers, of which 2 were behavioural concerns. All 4 of these complaints were resolved by either mediation or replacement Monitoring Officers on an agreed basis.

Information on *‘the number of monitoring officers who did not have levels of work-life balance’* (point ii) is not held. What constitutes a work-life balance varies from individual to individual and can therefore be considered a matter of opinion. It is left to each Monitoring Officer, when agreeing to carry out their contract, to decide what work-life balance is appropriate to them and their own personal situation. As an example, Monitoring Officers are able to determine suitable dates and times for their own meetings in order to help them accommodate a balance that works for their individual situation.

In regard to point iii, as Monitoring Officer complaints are not handled within the IUK complaints procedure, the published 10-day time frame does not apply.

To address point v, as mentioned above, Monitoring Officers are not employees of Innovate UK, they are contracted to individual projects.

The following lists the number of Monitoring Officers contracted in each year from 2014 to 2020, along with the total number of live projects in that year. Monitoring Officers may be contracted to one or more projects in a respective year.

Year (Project Start)	Number of Monitoring Officers	Number of Projects
2014	230	2490
2015	258	3149
2016	238	1343
2017	296	1959
2018	308	1631
2019	280	1647
2020	234	4291

As Monitoring Officers are not employees of IUK, they do not resign. As per the above, they work on a project-by-project basis.

In relation to your question on *‘suitability of applicants who had successfully been employed as Monitoring Officers’* (point vi), we estimate that the cost of complying with this part of your request would also exceed the appropriate statutory limit as specified within Section 12 of the FOIA.

To gather this information as you have requested, we have determined that it would be necessary to examine each Monitoring Officer appointment against each specific project to determine if they had the knowledge, expertise, experience and skills. The Monitoring Officer Manager has estimated that it would take at least 30 minutes per Monitoring Officer appointment to extract this information, which across over 1800 Monitoring Officers, many of whom will have been assigned to multiple projects each year, would constitute well in excess of 900 hours of staff resources.

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

Monitoring Officers are required to demonstrate relevant expertise in their field before they are assigned projects and these checks are carried out by IUK. Checks are first conducted when Monitoring Officers apply to be able to bid on projects in a particular innovation area, to ensure they have the overall skills to be suitable in that area. Additional checks are then performed when they bid on individual projects to confirm they also have the expertise relevant to that specific project.

The individual areas of competency you have listed form part of an overview of the skills taken into consideration when Monitoring Officers are assigned to projects.

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 or 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,


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