



[REDACTED]

28 August 2026

Dear [REDACTED]

Freedom of Information request: FOI2026/00734

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 14 August in which you requested the following:

Your request:

I would like to make a Freedom of Information request about the AHRC grant AH/S001654/1 of £202,250 to Birkbeck, University of London, 2019 to 2021.

In the budget submitted with the funding application, how much money was allowed for transcription services?

Our response

I can confirm that UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) does hold information relevant to your request. However, we believe the information you have requested falls under the scope of Section 43(2) of the FOIA. This exemption is used where disclosure would likely result in a person's (an individual, a company the public authority itself or any other legal entities) commercial interests being prejudiced.

This is a qualified exemption, and a test was carried out to determine whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs public interest in disclosure.

Public interest in favour of disclosure

- There is a public interest in transparency and openness regarding the expenditure of public funds.
- Disclosure would promote accountability for decisions relating to publicly funded research.
- The public has a legitimate interest in understanding how project budgets were developed and assessed as part of the funding process.
- Disclosure would support the general FOIA principle of making information held by public authorities available where possible.

Public interest in favour of withholding the information

- The information requested forms part of a detailed grant application and reveals specific costings and pricing assumptions relating to specialist transcription services.
- Disclosure would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of both the applicant organisation and relevant service providers by revealing pricing information that could be used by competitors in future bids, negotiations or funding applications.
- The applicant provided this information to UKRI with a reasonable expectation that detailed budget information would remain confidential. Applicants are aware that only limited information about successful awards is routinely published.
- The Arts and Humanities Research Council's (AHRC) funding competitions are highly competitive, and successful applications reflect considerable expertise in developing and justifying project costs. Disclosure

could provide competitors with insight into costing strategies and budget structures that retain ongoing commercial value.

- Similar research and digitisation projects continue to be funded. As a result, the information remains commercially relevant despite the age of the award and could influence future pricing, procurement exercises and funding applications.
- Disclosure could undermine confidence in UKRI's ability to protect commercially sensitive information, potentially affecting the willingness of applicants and suppliers to provide detailed and accurate information required for robust funding assessments.
- We follow the government guidance on [Managing Public Money](#).¹ Standards expected of all public services include integrity, reliability, spending money in the public interest and achieving value for money. Our current thorough process ensures that only the best projects receive public monies. Releasing this information could jeopardise the fair and transparent competition process and undermine our function to fund the best projects. In turn, undermining this process would go against our responsibilities to manage our use of public funds.

While there is a clear public interest in transparency concerning the use of public funds, this is outweighed by the stronger public interest in protecting the commercial interests of the organisations involved and safeguarding UKRI's ability to secure accurate pricing and value for money in future funding and procurement activities. The public interest therefore favours maintaining the exemption under section 43(2) FOIA.

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

¹ [Managing Public Money - April 2026.pdf](#)

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