



3 August 2022

Dear [REDACTED],

Freedom of Information request: FOI2022/00122

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 30 March and corresponding clarification emails, the last of which was received 8 June, in which you requested the following:

Your request:

Would you please be able to provide all written communication between yourselves and BEIS/the cabinet office regarding removing pay progression within bands and trying to re-introduce pay progression starting from 2015.

Agreed email searches to consist of:

Search 1:

Keywords: "pay progression" OR "pay growth within a band" AND participants: @beis.gov.uk

Date: 1 April 2021 - 21 April 2022

Locations: All mailboxes on the UKRI tenancy

Search 2:

Keywords: "pay progression" OR "pay growth within a band" AND participants: @beis.gov.uk

Date: 1 April 2018 - 21 April 2022

Locations: Reward Team (9 UKRI individuals email accounts)

Our response:

Thank you for confirming that you were happy for us to amend the originally suggested searches. We apologise for the delay in our response and thank you for your patience.

We can confirm UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) hold information relevant to your request. Before discussing how we have approached your request, we would like to begin by providing some background information on pay progression within UKRI. We hope that you will find this additional information useful.

Background Information

The topic of pay progression is discussed as part of a wider range of issues relating to UKRI, including spending reviews and pay remits. We can also confirm that the Research Councils were required by government to remove time served incremental pay progression in 2015. This mandate applied across the wider Civil Service and to other BEIS partner organisations. Since that time, the UKRI pay policy has not supported any in-band pay movement related to time served incremental progression.

Each year, the pay remit guidance reminds organisations that they must have removed time served incremental pay progression and that they will not receive approval to reinstate it. The latest pay remit guidance does support the opportunity for organisations to develop competency-based pay progression, and UKRI has been in frequent discussions with BEIS on how this might be achieved. Any competency-based pay progression approach does

require specific Cabinet Office and HM Treasury approval. It also needs to be paid for from within the UKRI pay remit envelope and, to date, the pay remit envelope has not been sufficient to enable this.

BEIS are subject to the same constraints as UKRI for their own staff, and UKRI and BEIS are in constant discussion about how we can develop and pay for a new approach to competency-based pay progression. These discussions are ongoing.

How we approached your request

Having conducted the email searches as agreed, once duplicates had been removed, search 1 produced 137 results and search 2 returned 282. We found that 83 emails were included in both searches, therefore a total of 336 emails were identified as potentially being in scope of your request.

Due to size of the search results and the number of documents attached to the emails, we looked at how best we could satisfy your request within the cost constraints of the legislation. To explain further Section 12(1) of the FOIA allows a public authority to refuse to comply with a request for information where the cost of compliance is estimated to exceed a set limit, known as the appropriate limit. To determine whether the appropriate limit has been reached, we have provided a cost estimates for complying with your request. Under our obligations to provide advice and assistance under Section 16 of the FOIA, we have also considered what information we can provide within the appropriate limit.

Information which can be provided within the appropriate limit

An initial pass over these emails, averaging at 2 minutes per email, was conducted to check the content and determine if it may be in scope. This identified that the majority of emails were returned by the search because to one of the search keywords being located in an attachment, rather than the body of the email itself.

Of the original 336 emails, it was determined that 7 contained information in the body of the email that could be considered in scope to your request, in that there was mention of pay progression within bands being removed, or re-introduced, for UKRI. To avoid you needing to make a new request, these emails have been attached for your reference.

Within the attached emails, we have redacted any information that is not within scope of your request, as defined by "written communication between UKRI and BEIS regarding removing pay progression within bands and trying to re-introduce pay progression". We are also exempting the names and contact details 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 UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

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

Information which cannot be provided within the appropriate limit

An additional 77 emails were identified as containing attachments that could potentially be within in scope of your request, where one of the search terms was located solely within an attachment. These emails contain a combined total of 294 attached documents that would need to be individually reviewed in order to locate relevant information and determine if it is in scope of your request.

These attachments also vary significantly in size, with some containing over 150 pages and most being significantly larger than the emails to which they are attached. We therefore estimate that the cost of complying any further with 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.

To explain further, having already reviewed the emails themselves, at an estimated time of over 11 hours (336 emails x 2 minutes per email), we can reasonably expect the review of 294 additional documents to take more than an additional 7 hours. To confirm our supposition that the attached documents are of significantly larger size than the emails that had already been reviewed, we took a random sample of 17 documents, and found them to contain a total of 673 pages, an average of 39 pages per document.

Consequently, UKRI is not obliged under Section 12 of the FOIA to provide this 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 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: 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 policy: <https://www.ukri.org/about-us/policies-and-standards/complaints-policy/>

Yours sincerely,


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UK Research and Innovation
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