

[REDACTED]

30 March 2020

[REDACTED]

Freedom of Information request: FOI2020/00025

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 25 January in which you requested the following:

Your request:

1. *Any documents pertaining to the BBSRC's decision about the DTP3 Application from the University of Cambridge. In particular, we request, if possible, the University of Cambridge's application material for the DTP3 and the BBSRC's decision to not award Cambridge funding for this third round.*
2. *Any documents pertaining the handling of the DTP2 by the University of Cambridge*
3. *The financial cost/value of an individual scholarship for the DTP3 awarded by the BBSRC. How much is an individual scholarship worth at one of the institutions which was successfully awarded the DTP3? Please break this down if possible- e.g. into stipend/tuition fee/length of the scholarship/opportunities for additional funding*

Our response

I can confirm UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) hold the information relevant to your request.

1. *Any documents pertaining to the BBSRC's decision about the DTP3 Application from the University of Cambridge. In particular, we request, if possible, the University of Cambridge's application material for the DTP3 and the BBSRC's decision to not award Cambridge funding for this third round.*

I can neither confirm nor deny whether UK Research and Innovate (UKRI) holds the information you have requested in question 1.

Section 41(1) provides that information is exempt from disclosure if such disclosure would constitute an actionable breach of confidence. Section 41(2) provides an exclusion from the duty placed on a public authority such as UKRI to confirm or deny the existence of the information if the act of confirming or denying would itself result in an actionable breach of confidence. We believe that is the case in regard to your request.

Section 41 is an absolute exemption and does not require the application of a Public Interest Test.

2. *Any documents pertaining the handling of the DTP2 by the University of Cambridge*

Disclosing the requested information in question 2 would prejudice the conduct of public affairs under section 36(2)(b) & (c) of the FOI Act. Section 36 is a qualified exemption which requires the application of a Public Interest Test and consideration by the public authority's 'Qualified Person'.

Reasonable Opinion of the Qualified Person

The appointed Qualified Person for UK Research and Innovation is Sir Mark Walport, our Chief Executive Officer. Sir Mark has considered whether the exemption should be applied to withhold these documents from release, and it is his opinion that the material contained therein should be exempt as prejudice would occur from disclosure.

Public Interest Test

When assessing whether or not it was in the public interest to disclose the information to you, we took into account the following factors:

PIT arguments in favour of releasing the information are:

- There is a general interest in the disclosure of information to ensure transparency and openness of a public authority.
- Release of the feedback could improve the public understanding of the levels of control and mitigation of risk exercised by UKRI.
- There is a requirement for UKRI to be accountable and transparent in its processes and decision making, and in the spending of public money.

PIT arguments against releasing the information are:

- UKRI should have a safe space to be able to rigorously scrutinise and explore all options to be able to make fully informed decisions about the institutions it funds.
- Releasing detailed feedback highlighting both positive and negative aspects of an application for funding is likely to adversely affect the future level of engagement by research organisations (RO) in the process. Building trust and close working relationships is crucial to the process. Releasing detailed feedback provided in confidence would be likely to adversely affect working relationships and result in a loss of trust. This in turn would impede UKRI in supporting research excellence and innovation.
- UKRI's ability to make decisions based on sound reasoning and open discussion would be significantly diminished. This in turn would impact the public authority's ability to effectively conduct its public affairs.
- UKRI also recognises the risk of the 'chilling effect'; where the disclosure of information would, or would be likely to, inhibit free and frank discussions that are necessary in order for UKRI to conduct its affairs and meet its business objectives effectively.

UK Research and Innovation considers that on this occasion the public interest is best served by maintaining the Section 36 exemption, and therefore the relevant information has been withheld.

3. *The financial cost/value of an individual scholarship for the DTP3 awarded by the BBSRC. How much is an individual scholarship worth at one of the institutions which was successfully awarded the DTP3? Please break this down if possible- e.g. into stipend/tuition fee/length of the scholarship/opportunities for additional funding*

UKRI publishes its stipend fee level annually, which can be found here: <https://www.ukri.org/skills/funding-for-research-training>.

These indicative costs, which increase by the GDP deflator every year, are used by BBSRC in its calculations of the cost of a doctoral studentship. This can be broken down as follows:

Stipend: £15,009

Fees: £4,327

Research Training Support Grant: £5,000

Conferences, Field Work: £230
Contribution to Professional Internship: £250
Total: £24, 816

This is for one year, commencing in October 2020. All UKR-BBSRC studentships are funded on a four-year model, and so the approximate value of each scholarship is ~100k.

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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Information Rights Team
UK Research and Innovation
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