



[REDACTED]

8 January 2024

Dear [REDACTED],

Freedom of Information request: FOI2023/01004

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 15 December in which you requested the following:

Your request:

I am writing to request the following information under the FOI Act.

Subsequent to an FOI request on how many doctoral studentships were funded by UKRI over the past five years, which you kindly answered [FOI2023/00731], I would like to request some information on the number of applications made for these funded studentships.

Following my story on these figures, some people have asked whether or not the steep drop in domestic students who were funded may actually reflect a drop in applications (ie, a fall in demand).

Would you be able to provide the number of applicants for UKRI funded studentships in each of the past five years - 2018-19 to 2022-23.

In addition, for each year would you be able to provide disaggregated data for applications for each research council, and provide data for domestic, EU and international students, as per the previous request where the data was very easy to follow

Our response

I can confirm that UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) holds some information relevant to your request.

Potential students do not apply directly to UKRI for a studentship. UKRI awards training grants to research organisations (ROs), which are then responsible for recruiting and managing their students. They may do so in a variety of ways and may not require a candidate to apply for a specific funder-supported opportunity up front. This makes the collection of applicant data from ROs and its analysis complex.

UKRI does hold some data on recruitment where individual research councils have requested this from grant holders, for example through a survey, which in many cases is conducted annually. UKRI has only recently held an expectation of all training grant holders to provide applicant information. Given the different recruitment practices, we are working with ROs to understand how we can best support them to provide UKRI with applicant information that would enable analyses outside of individual training programmes. The current inconsistencies in the way that this data is collected and provided to UKRI across the sector mean that it cannot currently be collated and analysed at UKRI level.

As a result, we estimate that the cost of complying with your request and providing information on the number of applicants for UKRI funded studentships in each of the past five years (2018/19 to 2022/23), as well as disaggregated data for applications for each research council, and data for domestic, EU and international students 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.

Each council would have to manually extract and collate the relevant information and due to the volume of applications involved this would exceed the appropriate limit, and we anticipate this request could take in excess of 29 hours to complete.

We have tried to identify a way in which you could refine your request to bring it under the appropriate cost limit which would enable us to comply with this request, however due to the volume of work required this has not been possible. Consequently, UKRI is not obliged under Section 12 of the FOIA to process your request further.

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 within the next 40 working days:

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 policy: <https://www.ukri.org/about-us/policies-and-standards/complaints-policy/>

Yours sincerely,


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