



[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
22 September 2026

Dear [REDACTED]

Freedom of Information request: FOI2026/00590

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 14 July, we apologise for the delay in responding. In your request you asked for the following information:

Your request:

UKRI's 2022 pay offer introduced targeted pay increases for certain roles, effective from 1 July 2022. This split the workforce into STEM1 (S1), STEM2 (S2) and 'main' pay scales.

Requests:

- 1. Please supply the evidence of acute recruitment and retention (R&R) issues for S1 and S2 roles that was used to justify the targeted pay increases, including the period over which this evidence was obtained and the period it covers.*
- 2. Please disclose if similar R&R issues were investigated for staff on main pay scales, and confirm if it covers the same time periods as that for S1 and S2. If not, please confirm the periods it covers.*
- 3. Please supply the external salary benchmarking data that was used to inform the pay scales of S1, S2. Please disclose what markets or sectors these data are from, if not clear from the data. Please disclose when this benchmarking data was received by UKRI.*
- 4. Please disclose if similar external benchmarking data was obtained for main pay scale roles. If this was obtained, please supply the data.*

Our response:

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

Question 1: *"Please supply the evidence of acute recruitment and retention (R&R) issues for S1 and S2 roles that was used to justify the targeted pay increases, including the period over which this evidence was obtained and the period it covers."*

Recruitment and retention data was compiled for all UKRI roles covering the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2022. The evidence relied upon to support the targeted pay increases was recruitment performance data showing significant difficulties in recruiting to STEM roles across UKRI. Over the two-year period, UKRI was unable to recruit successfully to 32.2% of STEM vacancies. This increased to 45.6% of STEM vacancies during the most recent year of the analysis (1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022).

The recruitment evidence varied across the STEM Councils. An overall recruitment failure rate was also available for all recruitment activity, including both STEM and non-STEM roles. For example:

- MRC, which operated higher salary scales and offered capability-based pay progression, was unable to recruit to 3.5% of its vacancies
- NERC was unable to recruit to 24.5% of its vacancies.
- STFC was unable to recruit to 37.8% of its vacancies.

The evidence focused on the operational impact of recruitment difficulties, specifically UKRI's inability to fully staff programmes and projects, resulting in delays to delivery and inefficiencies in the deployment of resources and investment.

Question 2: *"Please disclose if similar R&R issues were investigated for staff on main pay scales, and confirm if it covers the same time periods as that for S1 and S2. If not, please confirm the periods it covers."*

Recruitment and retention data was compiled for all UKRI roles from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2022, including non-STEM roles (staff on main pay scales). The recruitment evidence therefore covered the same period as that used for STEM roles.

Recruitment failures for non-STEM roles were not considered critical and the data was not broken down further into role categories.

Question 3: *"Please supply the external salary benchmarking data that was used to inform the pay scales of S1, S2. Please disclose what markets or sectors these data are from, if not clear from the data. Please disclose when this benchmarking data was received by UKRI."*

External benchmarking data was gathered in May and June 2022 from Korn Ferry, across all markets and sectors, including the Public, Private and Third Sectors. This combined data was used to compare UKRI's basic pay (the average of UKRI salaries per band) and UKRI's total cash (the average of UKRI pay plus allowances) with the market lower quartile, median and upper quartile.

The benchmarking was separated by role family, such as Engineering - Electrical, to compare UKRI pay levels against the relevant market data and identify areas where UKRI's pay was not competitive.

Question 4: *"Please disclose if similar external benchmarking data was obtained for main pay scale roles. If this was obtained, please supply the data."*

External benchmarking data was obtained for non-STEM roles on the main pay scales. The benchmarking data was gathered from the Civil Service and was used to compare UKRI's median base pay for non-STEM roles with the median base pay for comparable Civil Service roles.

Please see the attachment *"FOI2026_00590 – Benchmarking Data"* for the information referenced above.

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](#)¹.

Yours sincerely,

Information Governance
Information Rights Team
UK Research and Innovation
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¹ <https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/contact-us/make-a-complaint/#skipnav-target>