

Request Reference: 3343

FOI Request dated 19/02/2025 –

Please provide the following data for the past two academic years (2022/23 and 2023/24) and current academic year (2024/25) to date for these funding programmes:

- 1. The total number of hardship fund applications received each year*
- 2. The total number of applications approved each year.*
- 3. The total amount of money distributed through the fund each year.*
- 4. The number of applications citing inability to afford hygiene products or laundry costs in their application.*

Response

Section 1 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) places two duties on public authorities. Unless exemptions apply, the first duty at Section 1(1)(a) is to confirm or deny whether the information specified in a request is held. The second duty at Section 1(1)(b) is to disclose information that has been confirmed as being held. Where exemptions are relied upon Section 17 of FOIA requires that we provide the applicant with a notice which: a) states that fact b) specifies the exemption(s) in question and c) states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies.

Question 4 would require a manual review of three years worth of hardship fund applications to determine, exceeding the FOI cost limit of 18 hours work to retrieve. Therefore, s12 of the Act applies.

Section 12 – Exemption where cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit.

Under section 12(1), a public authority is not compelled to fulfill a request for information if it anticipates that the cost associated with compliance would surpass the defined 'appropriate limit' (set at 18 hours).

The time estimations for our calculations include:

- Determining if the information is held;
- Locating the information or a document containing it;
- Retrieving the information or a document containing it; and
- Extracting the information from a document containing it.

However, the following activities are not factored into our calculations:

- The time spent identifying information subject to exemption.
- The time devoted to the redaction process.

This communication serves as a refusal notice in accordance with section 17(5) of the Act, which stipulates that a public authority, relying on the applicability of section 12, must notify the applicant of this fact within the stipulated timeframe for complying with section 1(1).

While the excess cost relieves the University of its obligations under the Freedom of Information Act, I have, as a goodwill gesture, provided information relevant to your request. This information was retrieved or available before it was determined that the cost limit would be exceeded. I hope this is beneficial, but it does not alter our legal right to rely on the fee regulations for the remainder of your request.

1. The total number of hardship fund applications received each year:

(combination of Hardship Support Fund, Discretionary Hardship Fund, and Summer Fund – these numbers include applications not finalised, for example, student may have disengaged, asked for their application to be cancelled, or there may be a duplicate as these figures come from the application platform source)

2022/23 – 400

2023/24 – 391

2024/25 YTD – 177*

(*summer fund has not yet opened for 24/25, so this includes applications to Hardship Support Fund and Discretionary Hardship Funds)

2. Total number of applications approved each year (inclusive of the hardship application routes as explained in previous question/response)

2022/23 – 237

2023/24 – 172

2024/25 – 79