



FOIA/24/048

foi <foi@ulster.ac.uk>

15 April 2024 at 09:14

To: [REDACTED] >

Dear [REDACTED]

Further to your request, in which you have requested the following information:

- From 2015 to 2023, the numbers of University of Ulster degrees (including all Bachelor and Master) conferred every year at the Ulster College at Shaanxi University of Science & Technology. Please provide this information in aggregated numbers by different programmes.
- Lists of education programmes, research projects, and research grants that are currently operational at Ulster College, either participated by Ulster College students and staff or sponsored by the Ulster College and the University of Ulster.
- University of Ulster policies and governance structure which oversee the operations, including student experience and research, at the Ulster College. Please provide relevant policy documents and/or relevant administrative staff role specifications where applicable.
- From 2015 to 2023, donations, grants, and research fundings received by the University of Ulster and its affiliated entities from the Shaanxi University of Science & Technology and/or any affiliated individuals, companies, or relevant Chinese official agencies.

Our obligations

The University is handling your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. When handling requests for information, the University's obligations include:

1. Confirming or denying whether it holds information of the description specified in the request; and
2. Communicating the information requested to the applicant. You should note that this is effectively a decision that the information can be released into the public domain and not simply to the specific applicant.

Under the Act, the University is required to release any information that it holds to you unless an exemption applies.

Our Response

Further to your request, the University's response is as follows:

From 2015 to 2023, the numbers of University of Ulster degrees (including all Bachelor and Master) conferred every year at the Ulster College at Shaanxi University of Science & Technology. Please provide this information in aggregated numbers by different programmes.

- We have only had one output to date, namely the 2022/23 Academic Year. The number of awards conferred at the Ulster College at Shaanxi University, split by programme that year were:

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- BEng Hons Computing : 52

- BSc Hons Mechanical Engineering: 55

· BSc Hons Design Engineering: 56

Lists of education programmes, research projects, and research grants that are currently operational at Ulster College, either participated by Ulster College students and staff or sponsored by the Ulster College and the University of Ulster.

We currently operate three undergraduate programmes:

BEng Hons Computing

BSc Hons Mechanical Engineering

BSc Hons Design Engineering

There are currently no research projects or research grants operational at the Ulster College

University of Ulster policies and governance structure which oversee the operations, including student experience and research, at the Ulster College. Please provide relevant policy documents and/or relevant administrative staff role specifications where applicable.

The University has in place a Memorandum of Understanding and Articulation Agreement that implements the governance structures with the Ulster College. This information is withheld under Section 43 – Commercial Interests on the FOIA on the basis that disclosure would be prejudicial to commercial interests. Section 43(2) of the FOIA states:

(2) Information is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the public authority holding it).

The University considers that releasing this information into the public domain could potentially undermine its position in the sector. Other universities could use this information to their advantage in what is an extremely competitive environment. The release of this information could also prejudice the University's position when negotiating contracts with international partners.

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Public Interest Test

Section 43 is a qualified exemption and accordingly the University has undertaken a public interest test. This is a consideration of whether it would be in the public interest for us to provide you with the information, despite the exemption being applicable.

Arguments for disclosure

- Openness and Transparency

Arguments against disclosure

- The University operates in a highly competitive Higher Education market and would prevent the University from competing fairly in the market place.
- Disclosure would create an imbalance and commercial advantage to competitors.
- The University is in competition with other Universities to recruit students and sharing this information would have a detrimental impact on the University's financial position.
- Sharing this information into the public domain would be prejudicial to our reputation with other international institutions.

Balancing test

The University acknowledges that there is a public interest in openness and accountability in the activity of public bodies and also in allowing individuals to understand decisions made by public bodies.

On this occasion the University considers that the public interest is better served in maintaining our competitive advantage and strong negotiating position. On balance, we therefore consider the public interest in disclosure to be outweighed by the public interest in maintaining the exemption.

If you are not satisfied with how the University has dealt with your request, you may raise the matter under the University's internal review process for FOI requests. Please submit written details of your appeal to Clare Jamison, University of Ulster, Coleraine BT52 1SA, email at universitysecretary@ulster.ac.uk.

The University will normally undertake to issue a decision on an appeal within 20 working days of receipt.

If you do not wish to submit an appeal to the University in relation to your request or if you are unhappy with the outcome of an appeal, you may apply to the Office of the Information Commissioner. Full particulars of the FOI Act including the

Information Commissioner's address may be found at
www.ico.org.uk.

Kind Regards,

FOI Team

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