

Information Assurance and Governance
Office of the Principal

2 October 2024

Dear Sam,

Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002
Our Ref: 285-24

I refer to your enquiry dated 4 September 2024 under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA) asking to be supplied with information as detailed in the response below.

1. The number of visits to China in the last 18 months by the Vice-Chancellor (or equivalent), any pro-VC (or equivalent), Dean International (or equivalent), or any other executive level staff (not academic or research staff).

There has been one trip made to China by a member of the Principal's Office senior management team over the last 18 months.

2. For each visit, state the role of the staff member(s) who went, and a list of meetings/itinerary.

The trip was undertaken by the Deputy Principal and Vice-Principal (International Strategy and External Relations) in March 2024.

We are unable to provide any further information on this visit beyond the details provided as there is a degree of confidentiality around the exploration of opportunities with other institutions. This information is being withheld under section 30(c), Prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs of the FOISA as disclosure would damage its ability to further discussions allied to this work.

In applying the section 30(c), FOISA exemption consideration must be given to where the public interest lies. In this instance, the public interest in transparency is being balanced against the public interest in the University being afforded a degree of private space to be able to carry out initial discussions to further its aims and objectives. Disclosure of information that reveals prospective plans in the early stages of consideration and which might not materialise, would have a detrimental effect on its ability to explore other avenues.

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It would not be in the public interest for information to be disclosed that has the adverse effect of undermining the University's attempts to secure links to further its own business interests. On balance, the University is of the view that the public interest lies in the information being withheld.

Your right to seek a review of how your information request was managed

If you are not satisfied with the University's response and/or our reasoning set-out above, you have the right to request a review of our decision. The timelines in which this right is available are set out in section 20(5)(a) and (b) FOISA. In broad terms the right to seek a review must be exercised within 40 working days of receiving this response.

Any request for review at this time should be sent by email to foi@st-andrews.ac.uk stating:

- a) your name and address;
- b) details of your original request; and
- c) the reasons why you are dissatisfied with our response.

If you remain dissatisfied with how your request for information has been dealt with following Review, you also have the right to apply to the Scottish Information Commissioner (SIC) for a decision. In the event of an appeal to the SIC, the Commissioner will generally only be able to investigate the matters raised in the request for review.

Details on how to make an appeal online to the SIC can be found on their website: <http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/YourRights/Unhappywiththeresponse/AppealingtoCommissioner.aspx>.

This concludes the University's response.

Yours sincerely

JUNE WEIR

Information Assurance and Governance Officer