

Freedom of Information Request to Teesside University

Our reference: FOI17234
Request received: 4 January 2018
Response sent: 1 February 2018

Dear Dr Bradley

Further to our acknowledgement, we are now in a position to provide you with a response to your request for information dated 4 January 2018.

We have dealt with your request in accordance with your 'right to know' under section 1(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (subsequently referred to as FOIA 2000) which entitles you to information 'held' by a public authority, unless an appropriate exemption applies.

Teesside University holds some information within the scope of your request.

Request:

Question 1. Did Teesside University issue a press statement or other form of public response to this ruling? If so, please may I have a copy as I cannot find one on your website?

On your undergraduate admissions webpage:

<https://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/fulltime/> Teesside University makes the claim 'Teesside University is ranked the top North-East university for graduates securing professional and managerial-level jobs (Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey 2015-16).

Clicking on the link given below this claim takes me to HESA's Destinations of Leavers page which provides a number of viewable tables, none of which seems to be relevant to your claim.

It is possible that your claim rests on one of the tables not viewable on the HESA website – perhaps their 'Table 1 - Destinations of UK and other EU domiciled leavers by HE provider, level of qualification obtained and activity.'

You will be aware that ASA/CAP guidance requires that 'advertisers must ensure they hold robust evidence to support a claim' and 'the advertiser should set out the relevant information in the ad or signpost to where the information used to make that comparison can be checked by the target audience.'

Question 2 Do you hold evidence to support the claim?

Question 3. What is that evidence?

Question 4 Please will you provide me with a copy of this evidence?

Question 5 Is the category 'North-East university' one that is used in the league table you rely on or does the claim 'top North-East university' result from your reworking of the data to exclude non- North-East universities? (You will be aware that ASA guidance says 'you should not present claims with a further layer of your own analysis or categorisation of results.')

Response:

1. Please see attached press statement issued by Teesside University;
2. Yes, the data was obtained from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). Please see question 4 below for details on how to access this data, which may require the payment of a fee to HESA via the bespoke data service. However, please note this message is no longer in use by the University.
3. The evidence, in the form of data obtained from HESA, shows that Teesside University is ranked first among North East universities for graduates securing professional and managerial jobs according to the DLHE 2015-16, with 56.9%. The metric for the other North East institutions (by the same measure) range from 42.8% to 55.2%.
4. The data range is as above in our response to question 3. Whilst Teesside University holds some information within the scope of your request, this is exempt from disclosure by virtue of s.21 of the Freedom of Information Act.

HESA collects data from all higher educational institutions in the UK, including Teesside University. This data is provided to UK governments and higher education funding bodies to support their work in regulating and funding higher education providers. In addition, information derived from the data is published as official statistics for use by a wide range of organisations and individuals for a variety of purposes, including HE providers, academic researchers, students, prospective students, private companies, professional bodies and the press and the media.

HESA outputs include free statistics available via annual publication introductions and free statistics online web pages with many facts and figures in text, tables and chart formats. Details of which can be found at <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis>

HESA also offers a bespoke data service in respect of information not specifically ascertainable via free online statistics or publications or products. Details of which can be found at <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/services/custom/data>

Although HESA charge a fee for their bespoke data service, it is our opinion this does not preclude such information from being 'reasonably accessible' under section 21 of the FOIA 2000, which specifies that information may be reasonably accessible, even though it is only accessible on payment.

By virtue of section 2(3)(a) FOIA 2000, s.21 FOIA2000 confers an absolute exemption to provision of information held by a public authority and does not oblige Teesside University to consider whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. In any event however, the University considers that it would be inappropriate to undermine the function and purpose of HESA by freely supplying data which otherwise provides income to support HESA's activities.

5. The category 'North-East university' is a geographical region defined by HESA. Data can be requested which only includes this provider region. The University has used this provider region when requesting and using the HESA data.

A copy of Teesside University's Appeals and Complaints process relevant to Freedom of Information requests is attached.

Yours sincerely

Clair Flynn
Information Compliance Caseworker on behalf of Teesside University