

Meeting	Agenda Item	Reference No
04/07/14	20	HEFCW/14/60

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**1 Issue**

- 1.1 This paper provides for information an annual report of requests received by HEFCW under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 for the financial year 2013-14.

**2 Corporate Planning Implications/rationale**

- 2.1 This report is received annually by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and by Council.

**3 Recommendation**

- 3.1 The Council is invited to note the requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, and the number of other information queries, received during FY 2013-14.

**4 Timing for decisions**

- 4.1 No decisions required. This is an annual report to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and to Council.

**5 Council members' interests**

- 5.1 No conflicts of interests have been declared in advance of the meeting.

**6 Further information**

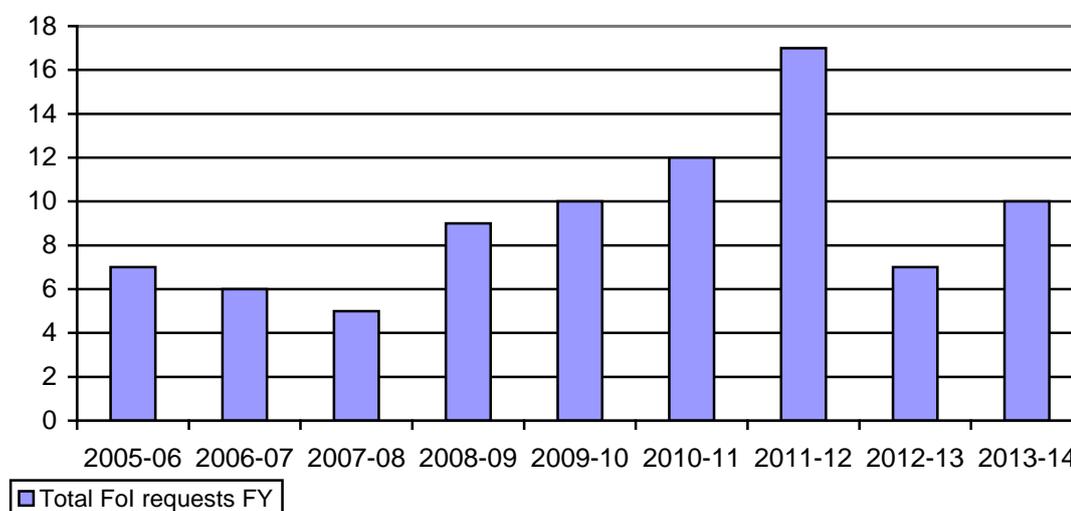
Contact: Dale Hall (Tel 029 2080 2280; E-mail: [dale.hall@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:dale.hall@hefcw.ac.uk))

## 7 Background

- 7.1 The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives the public a right of entitlement to information held by HEFCW.
- 7.2 Requests in writing are received either through the [info@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:info@hefcw.ac.uk) email account or directly by the Council Secretary. The Council Secretary co-ordinates the response with the relevant staff (the 'information-owners').
- 7.3 When requests are refused, the applicants may apply for a review of the decision. In such instances the review is carried out by senior officers independently of the officers who dealt with the original request. If an applicant is dissatisfied with the final outcome, they may appeal to the Information Commissioner.

## 8 Requests under the Act 2013-14

- 8.1 Following a relatively small number of requests for the first few years from 2005-06, the number of FoI requests received by HEFCW increased on an annual basis between 2008-09 and 2011-12, reaching a total of 17 requests in the latter year. In 2013-14 the total number of FoI requests received was 10.



- 8.2 Applicants requesting information under the FoI Act in 2013-14 comprised: three special interest groups; three individual enquirers/researchers; two private companies; and two HEFCW staff. No FoI requests were received during the year from the press or media outlets. For all 10 requests, where the information sought was held by HEFCW it was released in full.
- 8.3 In accordance with HEFCW's Publication Scheme, we are proactively publishing information on our website. This includes past disclosable Council agendas and papers from 2005 to date. We have transferred to The National Archives all Council papers for the period 1992 to 2002 inclusive, which therefore places these papers fully in the public domain.

8.4 In addition to requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act, HEFCW received a further 161 queries for information in 2013-14 via its [‘info@hefcw.ac.uk’](mailto:info@hefcw.ac.uk) email address, of which 75 were queries from the Welsh Government.

## 9 Financial implications

9.1 There are no financial implications for the Council arising from this paper.

## 10 Communications implications

10.1 Transparency in communicating the Council’s work serves to reduce the number of Fol requests. Work is on-going to further develop the electronic information available following a review of the structure and content of the HEFCW website which will be implemented in 2014-15.

10.2 There is in place a *Handling of Freedom of Information Requests* protocol between the Welsh Government’s Higher Education Division in DfES and HEFCW to ensure efficient and effective communication in dealing with Fol requests and to enable both parties to come to a common understanding of the information to be released.

## 11 Diversity and Equal Opportunities implications

11.1 This paper has no implications for age, disability, gender, race, religious belief, sexual orientation or the Welsh language.

## 12 Risk Assessment

Risk	Action to address risk
Legal action taken by the requestor under the Act for failure by the Council to respond to requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act within the statutory 20 days	Requests received and co-ordinated by the Council Secretary who manages the response schedule.
Resource implications of a request for a large volume of information held by the Council	Requests discussed with information holder at earliest possible stage to determine volume.