

For information

Freedom of Information Annual Report 2014-15

Agenda: 20
HEFCW/15/66

Disclosable

03/07/2015

1 Issue

- 1.1 The Freedom of Information (Fol) Act 2000 gives the public a right of entitlement to information held by HEFCW. This paper provides a report on the number of requests received by HEFCW under the Fol Act for the financial year 2014-15.

2 Corporate Planning Implications / Rationale for paper

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

3 Recommendation

- 3.1 The Council is invited to note the requests for information under the Fol Act, and the number of other information queries, received during FY 2014-1:

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

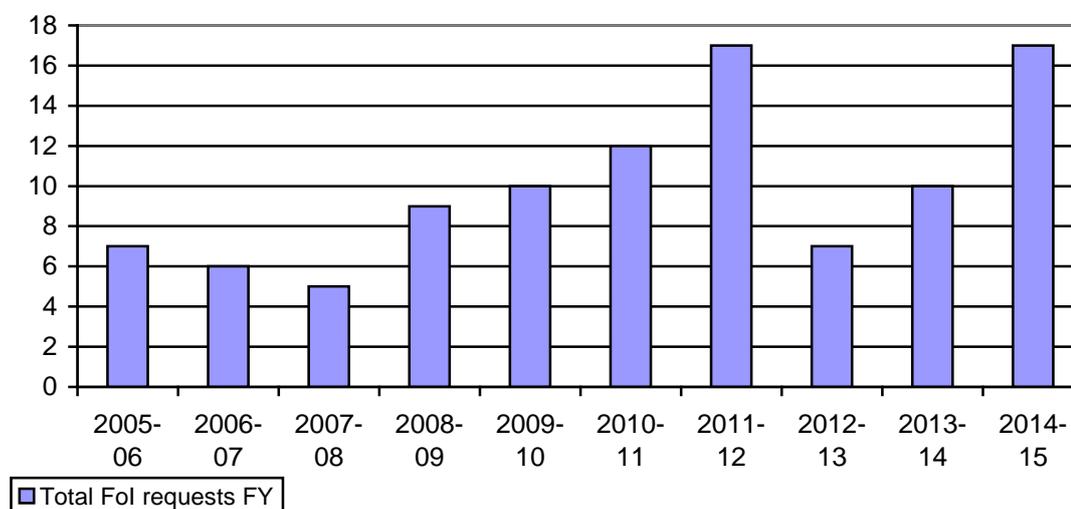
- 5.1 No conflicts of interests have been declared in advance of the meeting.

6 Further information

Dale Hall (029 2068 2280; dale.hall@hefcw.ac.uk)

7 Requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2014-15

7.1 To date HEFCW has received a relatively small number of FoI requests. The number of requests received since 2005-6 has fluctuated annually but has remained at under 20 requests a year. In 2014-15 the total number of FoI requests received was 17.



7.2 Applicants requesting information under the FoI Act in 2014-15 comprised: six from press/media outlets; six individual enquirers/researchers; three special interest groups; and two private companies. For five of the FoI requests received the information sought was released in full. In four cases the information requested was judged to be exempt under the FoI Act and therefore was either not provided or was released in redacted form. One enquirer was informed that the estimated cost of responding would exceed the appropriate limit of £450 and was advised to re-focus their request, which they subsequently did. For the remaining seven requests received during the year, the information sought was not held by HEFCW.

7.3 In addition to requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act, HEFCW received 108 queries for information in 2014-15 via its 'info@hefcw.ac.uk' email address, of which 52 were queries from the Welsh Government.

8 Financial implications

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this paper.

9 Communications implications

9.1 Transparency in communicating HEFCW's work should help to reduce the number of FoI requests received. In accordance with our Publication Scheme, we proactively publish information on our website. This includes circulars; information about HEFCW policy priorities; and 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 in the public domain. Work is on-going to further develop the electronic information available as part of a review of the structure and content of the HEFCW website.

9.2 A *Handling of Freedom of Information Requests* protocol is in place between HEFCW and the Welsh Government's Higher Education Division intended 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.

10 Diversity and Equal Opportunities implications

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

11 Risk Assessment

11.1

Risk	Action to address risk
<p>Legal action taken by the requestor under the Fol Act for failure by the Council to respond to, or appropriately deal with, requests for information under the Fol Act.</p>	<p>Requests received and co-ordinated by the Council Secretary, who manages the responses and maintains a log of requests received.</p> <p>When information requested is refused there is a process in place whereby applicants may apply for a review of the decision, in which instance the review is carried out by a senior officer independently of those HEFCW staff who dealt with the original request. If an applicant is dissatisfied with the final outcome of HEFCWs' internal review they can appeal to the Information Commissioner.</p>
<p>Resource implications of a request for a large volume of information held by the Council.</p>	<p>Requests discussed with information holder at earliest possible stage to determine volume. Information requests can be refused if the estimated cost of responding would exceed the appropriate limit under Fol of £450.</p>