



UNIVERSITY
of HULL

Request Reference: 3461

FOI Request dated 18/07/2025 –

I am requesting information on the number and nature of agency/student counsellor partnerships your university has established for recruiting international students from non-UK countries for each academic year from 2018/19 to 2023/24 (or the latest possible date). Specifically, please provide:

- *The number of all active agency partnerships (cumulatively) per year, for all academic years from 2018/19 to 2023/24 (or latest possible date). If providing data for all requested academic years (2018/19 to 2023/24) is too onerous, please prioritize data for the earliest year (2018/19) and the most recent year (2023/24 or the latest available).*
- *Please provide data on the number of non-UK students recruited via agents from academic years 2018/19 through to 2023/24 (or latest possible date).*
- *Please provide information on the total commission payments made to agents for the recruitment of non-UK students in each academic year from 2018/19 to 2023/24. If you cannot disclose the exact figures, please disclose any changes to the commission rates or structures paid to agents for recruiting non-UK students between 2018/19 and 2023/24, including whether rates have increased or decreased during this period.*

Response

The University of Hull can confirm that it holds information relevant to your request. However, we consider that the detail of the agency and student counsellor partnerships, including the number of partnerships, student recruitment figures, and commission payments, is commercially sensitive and is therefore exempt from disclosure under Section 43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Section 43(2) permits information to be withheld if its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person or organisation, unless the public interest in disclosure outweighs the potential harm.

The recruitment of international students is a highly competitive sector. Disclosing the number of agency partnerships, the volume of students recruited through these channels, and the associated commission payments would reveal commercially valuable insights into the University's international recruitment strategy. Competitors could use this information to infer the effectiveness and financial terms of our partnerships, potentially undermining our position in the market.

Furthermore, it would not be difficult for those familiar with the sector to deduce which agencies the University works with and estimate the value of individual agreements. This could unfairly disadvantage both the University and its partners by enabling competitors to target or undercut existing arrangements. Such disclosures could damage current relationships, deter future collaboration, or lead to increased costs in securing new agreements.

While we acknowledge the importance of transparency in the use of public funds, we believe that releasing this level of detail would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of both the University and its agents. We are therefore satisfied that Section 43(2) is engaged in this instance.