

Request Reference: 3649

FOI Request dated 18/05/2026 -

I am writing to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. I would like to request the following information concerning the use of non-disclosure agreements and settlement agreements containing confidentiality clauses with current or former members of staff.

For the purposes of this request, a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) is defined as any agreement, or any clause within a broader agreement, that prevents or restricts a departing or former employee from disclosing information about the circumstances of their departure, any workplace dispute, or any conduct by the institution or its staff. This includes, but is not limited to, standalone non-disclosure agreements and settlement agreements (formerly known as compromise agreements) that contain a confidentiality clause.

The request is as follows:

1.
 - a. *In each calendar year from 2016 to the date of this request, how many settlement agreements or non-disclosure agreements meeting the above definition were concluded between the institution and current or former members of staff?*
 - b. *Please provide this information broken down by year. Where the number in a given year falls below five AND you consider that a precise figure risks identifying individuals, please amalgamate adjacent years so that each reported cell contains at least five agreements.*
2.
 - a. *In each of the same calendar years, what was the total value of financial payments made to employees as part of the agreements described above?*
 - b. *Please provide this information broken down by year, applying the same approach to aggregation as in Question 1.b) where necessary.*
3.
 - a. *Does the institution have any policy, guidance, or internal procedure governing the circumstances in which non-disclosure clauses may be included in settlement agreements or other agreements with departing staff? If so, please provide a copy or summary of that policy.*
4.
 - a. *What is the total headcount of the institution's workforce as of the most recent available date? Please state the date to which this figure relates.*

Please cover the period from 1 January 2016 to the date of this request.

Response

Section 1 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) places two duties on public authorities. Unless exemptions apply, the first duty at Section 1(1)(a) is to confirm or deny whether the information specified in a request is held. The second duty at Section 1(1)(b) is to disclose information that has been confirmed as

being held. Where exemptions are relied upon Section 17 of FOIA requires that we provide the applicant with a notice which: a) states that fact b) specifies the exemption(s) in question and c) states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies.

To retrieve ten years' worth of data would require a manual search of various HR records which would exceed 18 hours work. Therefore, s12 of the Act applies.

Section 12 – Exemption where cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit.

Under section 12(1), a public authority is not compelled to fulfil a request for information if it anticipates that the cost associated with compliance would surpass the defined 'appropriate limit' (set at 18 hours).

The time estimations for our calculations include:

- Determining if the information is held;
- Locating the information or a document containing it;
- Retrieving the information or a document containing it; and
- Extracting the information from a document containing it.

However, the following activities are not factored into our calculations:

- The time spent identifying information subject to exemption.
- The time devoted to the redaction process.

This communication serves as a refusal notice in accordance with section 17(5) of the Act, which stipulates that a public authority, relying on the applicability of section 12, must notify the applicant of this fact within the stipulated timeframe for complying with section 1(1).

While the excess cost relieves the University of its obligations under the Freedom of Information Act, I have, as a goodwill gesture, provided information relevant to your request. This information was retrieved or available before it was determined that the cost limit would be exceeded. I hope this is beneficial, but it does not alter our legal right to rely on the fee regulations for the remainder of your request.

As part of our duty to advise and assist, we have provided the number of agreements from 2019 onwards, as this is the earliest date from which accessible records are available.

2019	68
2020	33
2021	6
2022	17
2023	18
2024	28
2025/2026	21
Total	191