University of Essex

Private and Confidential By Email

12/03/2024

Dear Ms Sullivan,

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) – Outcome of Internal Review

Thank you for your email of 13 February 2024 complaining about the handling of your request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and requesting additional information. This complaint has been taken forward as an internal review, in the spirit of openness, despite being received outside the statutory period for internal reviews. Your email of 13 February 2024 read as follows:

> *"I am following up on an FOI request that was sent to you on the 13/10/2023. This request was focused on Academic partnerships the university held with arms trade companies. In this request, you stated that you had student placements with the ministry of defence and qinetiq, and that BAE had attended careers fairs, the table you provided is shown below.*
>
> *My request for information on this response is as follows:*
>
> *In the request previously sent, 'Academic partnership' refers to 'arms trade companies' involvement of any of the following:*
>
> *• Graduate schemes/apprenticeships/Careers fair appearances*
>
> *• Directly sponsored PhDs or Studentships*
>
> *• Company involvement in university departments - i.e. MoD Laboratories, EPSRC centres for doctoral research.*
>
> *• Any consultancy role.*
>
> *It was recently brought to my attention by University of Essex staff that BAE systems have an active and ongoing Apprenticeship programme with the University of Essex's BEng degree (https://www.linkedin.com/jobs/view/apprentice-%E2%80%93-embedded-electronic-systems-design-and-development-engineer-%E2%80%93-great-baddow-2024-at-bae-systems-3751414913/?originalSubdomain=uk)*
>
> *- Why was the internship programme with BAE systems not included in the original FOI request?*
>
> *- What is the financial value of the apprenticeship?*
>
> *- How long has the apprenticeship with BAE been running for?"*

Your original request under FOIA, received by the University on 13 October 2023 was as follows:

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"In the below request the phrase the phrase 'arms trade companies' relates to, but not limited to:

1.BAE systems

2. Babcock

3. QinetiQ

4. Rolls-Royce

5. Serco

6. Cobham

7. Raytheon

8. Airbus

9. General Dynamics

10. Leonardo MW

11. Lockheed Martin

12. Thales

13. MBDA

14. Elbit Systems

15. Caterpillar

16. MOD

17. DSTL

18. Atomic Weapons establishment

19. GKN

20. Boeing

'Academic partnership' refers to 'arms trade companies' involvement of any of the following:

- *Graduate schemes/apprenticeships/Careers fair appearances*
- *Directly sponsored PhDs or Studentships*
- *Company involvement in university departments - i.e. MoD Laboratories, EPSRC centres for doctoral research.*

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• *Any consultancy role.*

Please may I request any relevant information or appearance of arms trade companies in the aforementioned capacities in the past five years:

• *May this be broken down by financial year, with the start/end date where applicable*

• *The name of the arms company involved*

• *The financial value of the relationship*

• *The name of the relevant university department*

• *The name and description of the research being conducted in the studentship."*

The purpose of an internal review is to assess how your Freedom of Information (FOI) request was handled in the first instance and to determine whether the original decision given to you was correct. I commissioned an internal review into the way in which your original requests were handled.

Timeliness of response

As well as looking at the content of the responses you received, I also asked the Internal Reviewer to assess timeliness. Having examined the correspondence between you and the University's Information Assurance Team, I have noted that my colleagues acknowledged your first request on the same day it was made (13 October 2023), and responded in full on 10 November 2023, 20 working days later. I find, therefore that the University fulfilled its obligations under the law in terms of timeliness of response to your request.

Was the response correct?

I have reviewed the findings of the review, and, after careful consideration, I have concluded that you should have been provided with additional information in response to your request. I have also found that the University omitted to share with you the information about the apprenticeships with BAE Systems. I can see that best efforts were made to find this information; however, human error led to the information about these apprenticeships not being returned to you in our response to your original request. I apologise for this.

I am able to provide this additional information to you now, both to augment the original response you received, and also in response to the questions posed in your follow-up email. This additional information appears below.

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Information additional to our original response (highlighted in yellow)

Name of company	Financial Value	Name and description of research	University department(s)
BAE	Information not held	Attended careers fairs from 2019 to 2023	N/A
BAE	No financial value	Capstone projects, agreed in February 2023, to be completed by April 2024	School of Computer Science and Electronic Engineering
BAE	£9,000 per student per year for three years	Apprenticeships involving employees of BAE Systems, from 2020-21	School of Computer Science and Electronic Engineering
MoD	Information not held	Student placements 2021-22 and 2022-23	Department of Psychology, Department of Economics, Essex Business School
QinetiQ	Information not held	Student placements 2022-23	School of Computer Science and Electronic Engineering

Response to your follow-up questions

Why was the internship programme with BAE systems not included in the original FOI request?

We do not run an internship programme with BAE Systems. We do, however, manage an apprenticeships programme on which employees from BAE Systems are enrolled (see https://www.essex.ac.uk/apprenticeships/computer-science-and-electronic-engineering-apprenticeships).

These apprenticeships were not highlighted in the original search through an oversight. A number of other, related "projects" had been identified through the search, although these had not been disclosed due to the fact that they had been thought to be outside the time parameters of the original request. While they will not be completed until April 2024, these capstone projects had been agreed in February 2023, however, and so they may have been relevant to your original request and have been included in the table above.

In addition, seven apprentices currently enrolled on the Embedded Electronic Systems Design & Development Engineer (EESD&DE) degree apprenticeship within the School of Computer Science and Electronic Engineering are employed by BAE systems. The reason for these not having been returned in response to your original request has been put down to human error – the result of confusion caused through there being the same number of capstone projects (which had been deemed not to be disclosable) and apprentices, leading to an assumption that they were one and the same. We apologise for this oversight.

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What is the financial value of the apprenticeship?

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) cap for training fee is set at £27,000; this is the fee the University charges for the full apprenticeship course (over 3 years, at 9,000 per year).

How long has the apprenticeship with BAE been running for?

Since 2020-21.

I hope that you consider that this letter fully addresses your concerns. However, should you be dissatisfied with the outcome of this Internal Review, you have a further right of complaint to the Office of the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
Tel: 08465 30 60 60
Or: 01625 54 57 45
Website: www.ico.org.uk/

Yours sincerely



Bryn Morris

Registrar and Secretary