15th January 2019

Freedom of Information ref UKRI 2018/0212

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request submitted on 15th November 2018 addressed to the BBSRC in which you requested the following:

Your Request:

I would like you tell me (i) which of your Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTPs) had a mid-term review in 2017, (ii) the results of those reviews, specifically including all the feedback given to each of the DTPs

Our response:

I can confirm UK Research and Innovation does hold information relevant to your request.

The list of Institutions at which BBSRC DTP mid-term reviews were undertaken in 2017 is attached at annex A.

Copies of the feedback letters to the DTPs are attached individually.

Exemptions applied and Public Interest Test

UK Research and Innovation has applied the following exemptions to text contained within feedback letters.

Section 36 – Prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs
Section 40 – Personal Information
Section 36 – Prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs.

Section 36, as a qualified exemption, requires the application of a Public Interest Test and consideration by the public authority’s ‘Qualified Person’. The appointed Qualified Person for UK Research and Innovation is Sir Mark Walport, our Chief Executive Officer. Sir Mark has considered the BBSRC DPT mid-term review feedback letters and it is his opinion that the material contained therein should be exempt as prejudice would occur from disclosure.

The factors considered under the Public Interest Test, for and against disclosure of the material within the scope of the request are summarised below:

Factors in favour of releasing the information were:

- There is a general interest in the disclosure of this information to ensure openness of a public authority.
- The quality of the reviews may improve if there was an expectation of the information being made publicly available.
- Release of mid-term review details may lead to improvements in DTP performance.

Factors against releasing the information were:

- Disclosure could inhibit the process of providing free and frank advice, which are needed for robust scrutiny and decision making about important academic and financial matters.
- Safe space is needed for UKRI to be able to rigorously scrutinise and make fully informed decisions about the institutions it funds.
- Parties may be discouraged from participating in future reviews if information provided in confidence is released into the public domain.

UK Research and Innovation has also taken account of ICO Decision Notice FS50707186 (Kirkham v’s UK Research and Innovation) which supported the application of Section 36 to withhold detailed feedback from mid-term reviews. While there are differences between DTPs and EPSRC Centres for Doctoral Training (CDTs) there are sufficient similarities for this Decision Notice to be relevant. The Decision notice required UK Research and Innovation to release the scores from the EPSRC mid-term reviews, the BBSRC mid-term review letters do not contain similar high level material that could be released.

Overall UK Research and Innovation considers that the public interest is best served by maintaining this exemption.

Section 40 – Personal Information

Redactions have been made to withhold personal information. Releasing the names and contact details of individuals concerned in this process constitutes personal data under UK Data Protection Legislation. Section 40 (2) of the Act provides an absolute exemption for the disclosure of personal data of individuals who would not expect these details to placed in the public domain in this manner.
As an absolute exemption Section 40 does not require a Public Interest Test.

If you have any queries about this response or are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to request a review of our decision, please write to:

**Complaints Officer**  
UK Research and Innovation  
Polaris House  
North Star Avenue  
Swindon  
SN2 1FL  
Email: foi@ukri.org

Please quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are still not content with the outcome of the review, you may apply to refer the matter to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review procedure provided by UKRI. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner  
Wycliffe House,  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF

Further information about the Office of the Information Commissioner can be found at [http://www.ico.gov.uk/](http://www.ico.gov.uk/)

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted]

Head of Information Access  
Information Governance  
UK Research and Innovation  
Email: foi@ukri.org
**Annex A**

**BBSRC DTP 2017 mid-term review Host Institutions**

Durham University

Imperial College London (x 2)

John Innes Centre

University College London

University of Bristol

University of Cambridge (x 2)

University of Edinburgh

University of Leeds

University of Manchester

University of Nottingham

University of Oxford

University of Warwick