

Mr John Gilchrist
Freedom of Information Officer

21 September 2017

Ref: FOI/August 2017/ Andy McNicoll

By email to andy.mcnicoll@basw.co.uk

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Dear Mr McNicoll

Your request for information received on 23 August 2017 has been dealt with under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

You asked:

1. A list of all the undergraduate and postgraduate social work courses your institution currently runs and the year in which the courses were launched.
2. A list of any undergraduate or postgraduate social work courses your institution has withdrawn or closed since 2010, including the date the courses stopped accepting new students.
3. The number of applications your university has received for your undergraduate social work courses for each of the past five years (please list by academic year – i.e. 2017, 2016, 2015, 2014, 2013).
4. The number of applications your university has received for your postgraduate social work courses for each of the past five years. (please list by academic year – i.e. 2017, 2016, 2015, 2014, 2013).
5. The number of students who took up places on your undergraduate social work courses for each of the past five years.
6. The number of students who took up places on your postgraduate social work courses for each of the past five years.

University Response

1. The University was accredited by the professions' former regulatory body, the General Social Care Council (GSCC) in July 2002 to provide the new social work degree which replaced the previous 2 year DipSW (regulator CCETSW). The first social work degree- BA (hons) Social Work was validated in May 2003. When the statutory regulator changed to the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) the BA (hons) Social Work was then re-validated and approved in May 2014. Similarly, the MA Social Work -2 year programme was validated by the GSCC in February 2004 and then by the HCPC in May 2014.

2. GradDip Spec Soc Wk Child & Fam and GradDip Spec Social Wk Adults both had their last new students in 2015.

Critical Thin&Ana in SW(B)(TWH) last their last new students in 2013.

These programmes were for Continuous Professional Development only and were not qualifying level programmes.

3. 2013 = 993, 2014 = 867, 2015 = 838, 2016 = 650

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 contains exemptions from the disclosure requirements. One such exemption is section 44 (prohibitions on disclosure). Another is section 43 (commercial interests).

Information about the University's applications, places, offers and acceptances for social work undergraduate programmes for the upcoming academic year 2017/18 as requested under questions 3) is considered to be exempt from disclosure by reference to s.43 and s.44 FoIA. This is explained further below.

Section 44 (1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 permits the University to withhold information if its disclosure would be prohibited by another legislative provision. Due to competition law, under the Competition Act 1998, the University must exercise caution in releasing any information of a strategic nature such that it may constitute an exchange that would infringe competition law by placing it in the public domain where it could potentially be access by other Higher Education Institutions.

Competition law is seen to be infringed if parties do not actually agree on an anticompetitive act but exchange information that would lead competitors to understand how and what benchmarks have been set.

This would include the release of strategic, or strategically useful, information. It is therefore necessary to withhold such information that is not already in the public domain and would include specific information about the University's recruitment activity for social work programmes. Such information has therefore been withheld because the University believes that its release would breach the Competition Act 1998.

By disclosing the information it would be placed in the public domain where it would be readily accessible to other institutions in the Higher Education sector; thus it could adversely affect the free competition between institutions.

This is an absolute exemption and the University is not required to consider the public interest in the release of this data.

We also believe that the information requested is likely to prejudice our commercial interests. Therefore we have withheld this information under s.43 of the FOIA. As a qualified exemption we need to be satisfied that the public interest in withholding the requested information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it. In reaching our decision the points below were considered:

Points in favour of disclosure:

- General public interest in transparency
- Demonstrating the best use of public resources and in ensuring fair commercial competition

Points on favour of withholding the information:

- Providing an insight into the University's tactical approach in a competitive environment that might allow competitors to gain an advantage or imitate our strategy.
- The fact the information is very recent, and will inform practice going forward.

This letter therefore constitutes the refusal notice required to be given under section 17(1), 17(3) and 17(7) of the Act.

4. 2013 = 482, 2014 = 443, 2015 = 436, 2016 = 427

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 contains exemptions from the disclosure requirements. One such exemption is section 44 (prohibitions on disclosure). Another is section 43 (commercial interests).

Information about the University's applications, places, offers and acceptances for social work postgraduate programmes for the upcoming academic year 2017/18 as requested under questions 3) is considered to be exempt from disclosure by reference to s.43 and s.44 FoIA. This is explained further below.

Section 44 (1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 permits the University to withhold information if its disclosure would be prohibited by another legislative provision. Due to competition law, under the Competition Act 1998, the University must exercise caution in releasing any information of a strategic nature such that it may constitute an exchange that would infringe competition law by placing it in the public domain where it could potentially be access by other Higher Education Institutions.

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5. 2013 = 43, 2014 = 52, 2015 = 48, 2016 = 49
For 2017 at the point your request was made enrolment for 2017/18 was not yet finalised so we do not hold the information you have requested.
6. 2013 = 36, 2014 = 45, 2015 = 55, 2016 = 58
For 2017 at the point your request was made enrolment for 2017/18 was not yet finalised so we do not hold the information you have requested.

I trust this satisfies your request sufficiently. Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, you have the right to complain about the University's response to your request for information. If you have such a complaint, you may contact Mrs Teresa Kelly, Clerk to the Board of Governors, Middlesex University, Hendon campus, London NW4 4BT, tel: 020 8411 6018, t.kelly@mdx.ac.uk within 40 days of the date of this letter for a review of the University's decision. If you remain unsatisfied with the outcome of that complaint, you may seek further recourse by lodging an appeal with the Information Commissioner.

Yours sincerely

John Gilchrist
Freedom of Information Officer