

Freedom of Information Annual Report 2019

- This paper provides a report on our compliance with Freedom of Information legislation in 2019.

Recommendation

- To note the contents of this report.

Financial implications

- There are no direct financial implications arising from this paper.

Freedom of Information Annual Report 2019

Purpose

1. This paper provides a report on our compliance with Freedom of Information legislation in 2019.

Background

2. The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 requires public authorities to respond to requests for information from the public as soon as possible and in any case within 20 working days of receiving the request. If we hold the requested information, we must provide the information, unless there is an applicable exemption within the Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation.

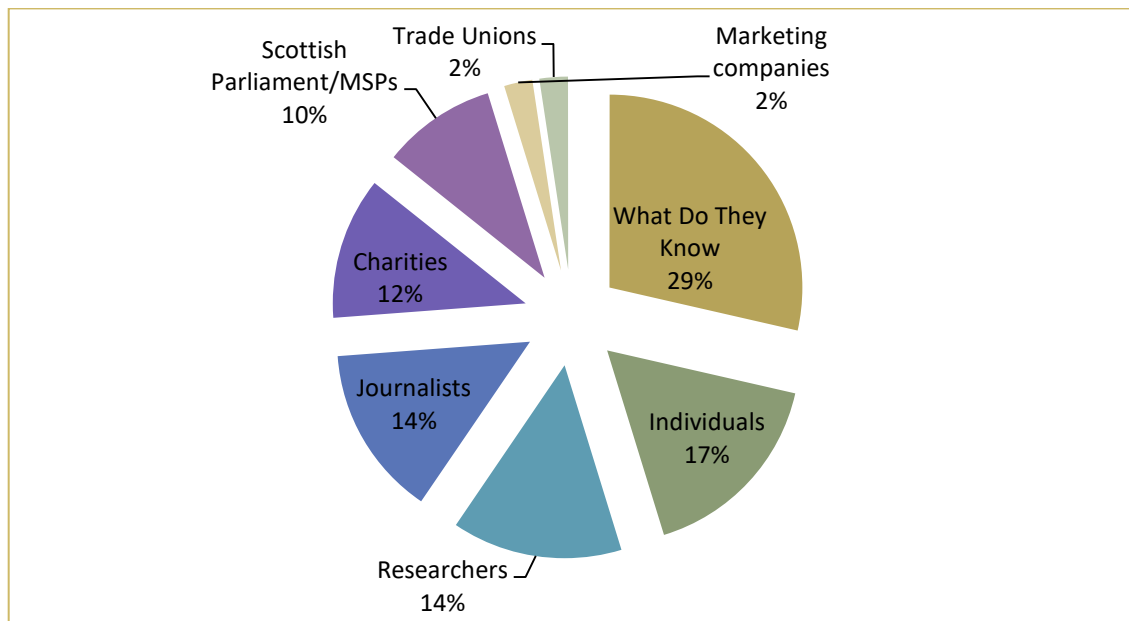
FOI request statistics in 2019

3. We received 42 FOI requests in 2019. This figure does not include the many 'business-as-usual' requests for information that we receive each year, such as requests for copies of publications or statistics, or routine queries from journalists.
4. For comparison, in the same year, Scottish Enterprise received 98 requests, Highlands and Island Enterprise received 113 requests, and the Scottish Qualifications Authority received 370 requests. The public authority with the largest number of requests was the City of Glasgow Council with 3088, while Scottish Ministers received 2910 requests.
5. We responded to all but one of the requests within the 20 working days' time limit.

| Year | Number of requests received | % of requests responded to on time |
|------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2015 | 34 | 85% |
| 2016 | 40 | 65% |
| 2017 | 135 | 58% |
| 2018 | 44 | 98% |
| 2019 | 42 | 98% |

6. The 42 requests received in 2019 came from 27 named individuals; however, it should be noted that it is possible that some requesters used pseudonyms.
7. The requests were received from a wide variety of sources, highlighting the broad interest in our information. The source of requests is summarised in the

chart below:



8. In terms of the subject of the requests, they covered a wide range of issues, including:

- Proposed mergers in the university sector.
- Details of SFC’s strategic investments.
- Funding of Innovation Centres.
- Allocation of budgets by colleges and universities.
- Equality Impact Assessments undertaken by SFC on its research funding.
- Characteristics of the student population in Scotland.
- Allegations of financial misconduct in the sectors.

Requests for a review and appeals to the Scottish Information Commissioner

9. Applicants who are dissatisfied with our response to their request for information are entitled under the legislation to request an internal review of the decision. We received only one request for a review in 2019.

10. Applicants who remain dissatisfied following the outcome of our review are entitled to apply to the Scottish Information Commissioner within six months for a decision. At the time of drafting this paper, no applications have been made to the Information Commissioner.

Proactive publication

11. We continue to publish a wide range of information on our website. We publish all Board and Committee agendas, papers and minutes – subject to applicable

exemptions – as well as a wide range of reports and announcements.

Risk assessment

12. Failure to comply with FOI legislation can lead to reputational damage or further regulatory action by the Scottish Information Commissioner. This paper is intended to provide assurance to the Committee that the Council executive are taking action to mitigate the risks.

Recommendations

13. The Committee is invited to note the contents of this report.

Publication

14. This paper will be published on the Council website.

Further information

15. Contact: Richard Hancock, Assistant Director, Strategy (tel: 0131 313 6645; email: rhancock@sfc.ac.uk).