UNIVERSITY *of* STIRLING

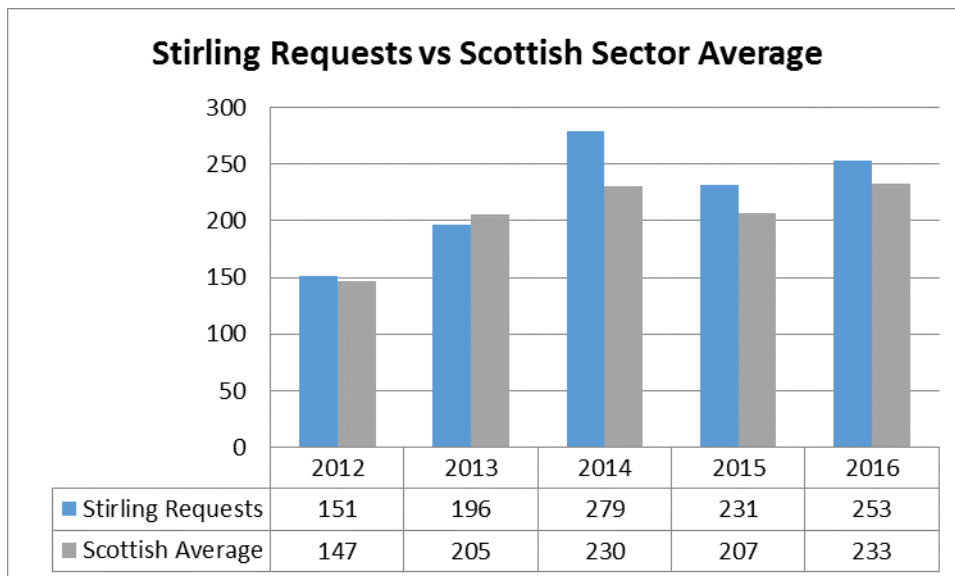**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ANNUAL REPORT- 2016**

Introduction

1   The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of activity during the calendar year 2016 in relation to information requests received and dealt with by the University under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. (FOISA).

Analysis of Freedom of Information requests received

2   The University had a total of 253 Freedom of Information requests in the period 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2016. This compares to a total of 231 in 2015. This is second highest number of requests received in a single year after the record level of 279 in 2014.

3   The number of requests received at Stirling is broadly in line with other Scottish HEIs. The graph below shows number of requests Stirling has received over the past five years against the average requests received by other Scottish HEIs. The average figure includes the small specialist institutions which brings the average down.

Stirling Requests vs Scottish Sector Average

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Stirling Requests	151	196	279	231	253
Scottish Average	147	205	230	207	233

4   Contained within the 253 requests were 1518 individual questions i.e. an average of 6 separate questions per request.

Requestor Details

5   In 2016 the largest identifiable group of requesters were journalists with 74 requests (29%). Journalists have consistently been the largest identifiable applicant group since FOI was introduced.   The number of requests received from campaigners has shown an increase in 2016 and commercial requesters also continue to make up a significant proportion of requests.   Commercial requesters are generally seeking information about University contracts.
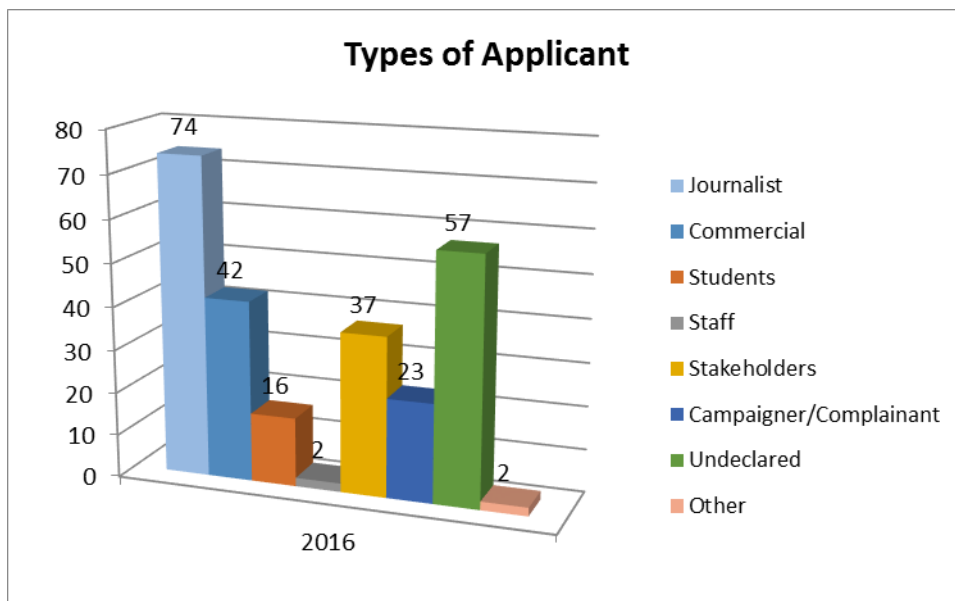

Types of Applicants over the past 5 years

	Journalist	Commercial	Students	Staff	Stakeholder	Campaigner	Undeclared	Other
2012	51	8	4	2	21	17	37	11
2013	57	20	6	3	32	14	62	2
2014	88	39	42	1	35	18	56	0
2015	56	46	14	2	39	11	62	1
2016	74	42	16	2	37	23	57	2

6   In 2016, 94 out of the 253 requests (37%) came from requestors who had previously submitted a request on one or more occasions in the previous 10 years and hence are classified as repeat requestors.

Request Details

7   The following chart shows the breakdown of the types of information requests in broad categories. The largest category is for students/admissions. These requests can be broad ranging but this year have included: requests relating students in particular subject areas (e.g. Law, Nursing); student demographics (e.g. disability, ethnic status, nationality); student support and opportunities (e.g. learning support, hardship funding, counselling services, bursaries); impacts on students (e.g. sexual assaults, suicides) and student behaviour (academic misconduct, etc). The next highest category is for management/administration, this is often a catch all category used when the request does not fit neatly into another category but would include requests for information about the University's policies, procedures and services. The majority of requests about ICT are asked by commercial requesters who want to know about software, hardware and maintenance contracts.

Subject of requests
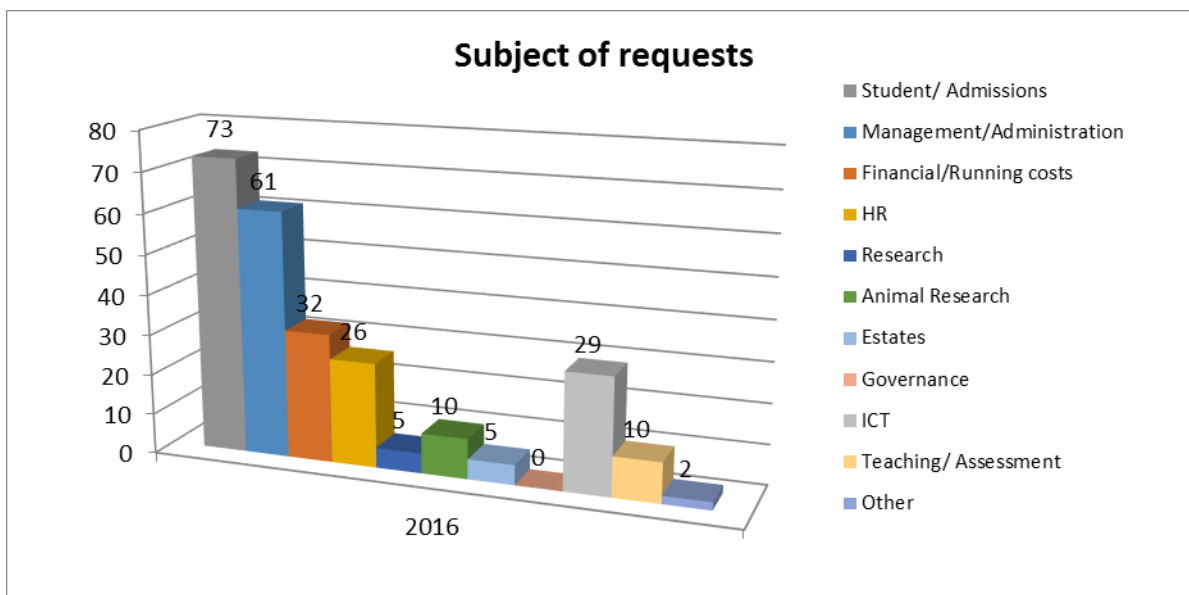
Request Outcomes

8   As can be seen from the chart below, the majority (77.1%) of queries were answered with all the information available. There were 14 responses in 2016 where none of the information requested was held by the University. Refusals, either of the whole request or one of its components, accounted for 14.6% (37 responses) of requests compared to 16.5% in 2015.

Types of responses
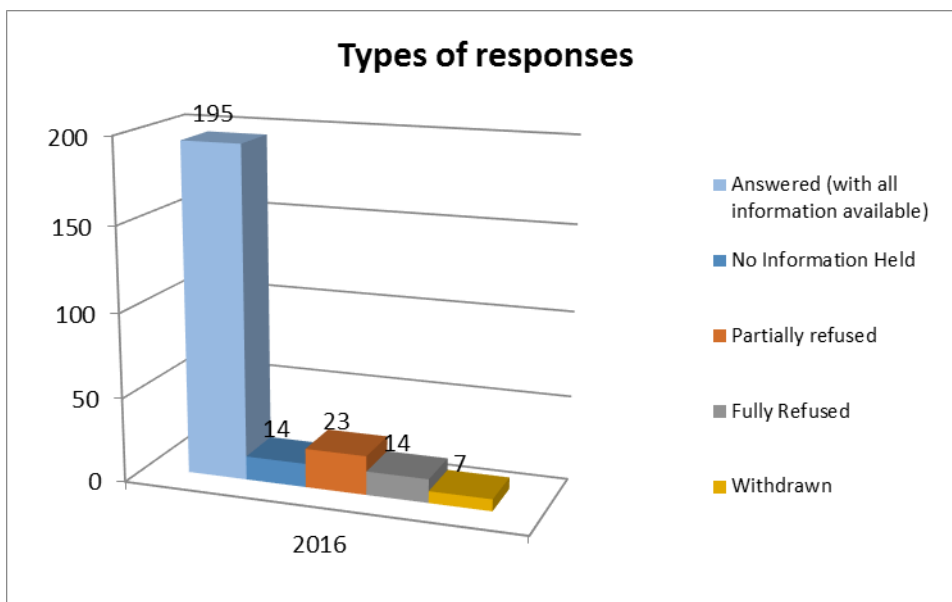
9   The most common reason for fully or partially refusing the requested information was on the grounds of data protection (section 38). Some other exemptions used included 'commercial interests' (section 33) and 'information otherwise available' (section 25).

Exemptions Used over the past 5 years

	S25 – Otherwise available	S27 – Intended for future publication/ Research	S30 – Prejudice to conduct of public affairs	S33 – Commercial Interests	S35 – Law Enforcement	S 36 - Confidentiality	S38 – Personal Information	S39 – Health & Safety
2012	5	0	0	4	0	2	13	0
2013	2	2	0	2	1	5	12	1
2014	7	0	2	9	0	3	13	0
2015	5	2	2	2	0	3	17	1
2016	5	1	2	6	1	2	17	1

Note that more than one exemption can be used to refused one request

10 Six requests were refused on the grounds of excessive costs (i.e. the cost of complying would exceed £600)[1]. There were two requests classed as repeat requests and there were two requests where we did not confirm or deny whether the information was held as saying whether or not the information was held would breach another exemption.

Other reasons for refusal

	S8 – Not valid request	S12 – Costs	S14 Repeated or vexatious	S18 – Neither Confirm nor deny
2012	0	3	0	0
2013	0	5	0	0
2014	1	10	3	0
2015	0	6	4	0
2016	1	6	2	2

11 There were no requests during the year which were not sent within the statutory 20 working day time limit.

12 During 2016 there were six requests for an internal review where the applicants were dissatisfied with the original response to the request. This is the highest number of review requests that has been received in a single year. Four of the reviews upheld the original decisions and two resulted in additional information being provided to the requester. To date there have been no appeals to the Scottish Information Commissioner relating to requests dealt with during 2016. Requesters have 6 months to lodge an appeal.

Equality implications

13 There are no equality implications arising from this report.

Resource implications

14 There continue to be resource implications across faculties and services to consider and deal with FOI requests under the requirements of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA).

Policy & Planning
May 2017

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[1] Fees can be charged where the cost of complying is between £100 and £600 but only 10% of the cost can be recovered and the first £100 of cost can not be claimed. The maximum fee that can be charged is therefore £50. The maximum salary rate that can be used to calculate the costs is £15 per hour.