

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

Decision notice

Date: 11 November 2024

Public Authority: The Governing Body of Girton College,
University of Cambridge

Address: Huntingdon Road
Cambridge CB3 0JG

Decision (including any steps ordered)

1. The Commissioner's decision is that, on the balance of probabilities, Girton College, University of Cambridge ('the College') doesn't hold the requested information about A-level raw scores and TMUA scores. The College has complied with sections 1(1)(a) of FOIA, and no corrective steps are necessary.

Request and response

2. The complainant has been corresponding with the College since August 2023.
3. The complainant had made the following information request to the College on 18 December 2023, and they re-submitted it on 23 March 2024:

"Point 2, Candidates were invited to send their A-Level raw scores to the email address applicants@girton.cam.ac.uk. As such, please confirm whether this information is still on this email server, or whether it has been deleted? I have the same question for Point 3, are TMUA scores still held on the respective email server, or have they also been deleted?"

4. The College's final position in its internal review of 18 June 2024 was that it doesn't hold the requested information.

Reasons for decision

5. This reasoning covers the College's compliance with section 1 of FOIA in respect of the complainant's request.
6. Under section 1(1) of FOIA a public authority must (a) confirm whether it holds information an applicant has requested and (b) communicate the information if it's held and isn't exempt information.
7. The complainant told the Commissioner that they believe individual A-level raw scores had been emailed to 'applicants@girton.cam.ac.uk' They would like those scores and the TMUA (Test of Mathematics for University Admission) scores that they consider candidates sent to that email account.
8. The College has provided the Commissioner with a submission. Regarding A-level raw scores, the College has advised the following:
 - The complainant's original request to the College and subsequent requests for, and references to, Mathematics information and statistics collated from other sources in their correspondence (which was ongoing prior to the current request) has focused on the candidates who **gained** a place to study Mathematics, to draw comparisons to their child's admissions scores and information.
 - The College, in its responses to the complainant, has also focused on the information for those who **gained** a place to study Mathematics.
 - The complainant's premise that "candidates were invited to send their A-level raw scores" is misleading. Candidates were invited to send their A-level raw scores **if and only if** they failed to meet their offer conditions. The College has stated, in correspondence of 31 October 2023 and 23 November 2023, that there is no requirement for Mathematics candidates to submit their A-level raw scores. They may choose to do so if they miss their offer conditions, but this is not compulsory, nor is it done in any systematic way. Any information provided in this way is considered immediately and individually and is not compiled or organised.
 - None of the candidates who gained a place to study Mathematics sent their A-level raw scores. There was no need for them to do so, as they had all met their A-level offer conditions set by the College.

- Therefore, the A-level raw scores for candidates who gained a place to study at the College were never held on its email servers, nor available to it via any other system for these candidates.
 - Deletion of this information is not applicable.
 - The College informed the complainant in its response of 18 June 2024 that it was unusual for candidates who had met their A-level offer conditions, such as their child, to send their A-level raw scores to the College.
9. Regarding TMUA scores, the College has advised the following:
- The College doesn't require candidates for Mathematics to sit the TMUA and therefore the scores were never provided to or held by the College.
 - The University Admissions Office receives the TMUA scores for other subjects – Computer Science and Economics – which are provided to the College if required.
 - The TMUA scores for these other subjects –Computer Science and Economics – are never emailed.
 - The information is made available, where necessary, via an online (Moodle) system.
 - Therefore, the College can confidently state that the TMUA scores were never held nor sent via email to the College, so haven't and won't be held on an email server. References to this information being deleted aren't applicable.
 - In correspondence between the complainant and the College, it was made clear that the College didn't require the information for Mathematics and therefore it wasn't held by the College for Mathematics candidates.
 - The complainant didn't request the TMUA scores for the Computer Science or Economics candidates that gained a place to study at the College.
10. Notwithstanding the situation that it has explained above, the College has also detailed its further considerations on whether it holds the requested information, at the time of the request and again, as a result of the complaint to the Commissioner.

11. The College says that its Admissions Officer is the recipient of the 'applicants@girton.cam.ac.uk' mailbox. It says that it searched that mailbox as part of the due diligence of this request, to ascertain if the information had been sent from successful candidates (ie those who gained a place).
12. The search was based on time critical dates in the mailbox. A-level raw scores for consideration should be submitted as soon as possible on the A-level results day (Thursday 17 August 2023), to ensure the scores decisions can be made without delay.
13. The emails submitted to the applicants@girton.cam.ac.uk mailbox received on the A-level results day were checked individually against the list of Mathematics candidates – successful and unsuccessful – by the Admissions Officer to determine if any relevant information was held.
14. The specific search criteria were as follows:
 - a. A search filter for all emails sent to the mailbox on 17 and 18 August 2023.
 - b. All emails checked individually against the Mathematics applicants list.
15. The initial search for A-level raw scores included all candidates that submitted emails on A-level results day, ie those from all other subjects, as the emails submitted did not necessarily state their subject of study.
16. Where applicants miss their A-level offer conditions and then choose to submit their A-level raw scores for review, the Admissions Team has two processes:
 - Where a candidate submits their A-level raw scores for review and is accepted by the College, the information is downloaded to the College's Google Drive for review by the Admissions Team and subsequently archived to a local network drive, organised by individual student records.
 - Where a candidate submits their A-level raw scores, but is unsuccessful, information relating to unsuccessful candidates is held for one year after the end of the admissions round, before deletion. The information relating to the unsuccessful mathematics applicants in the complainant's cohort was due for deletion in September 2024. However, the deletion of this information is on hold due to the Commissioner's current investigation.

17. In their request the complainant has indicated that the College invited candidates to send their A-level raw scores to a particular email address.
18. From their wider correspondence with the College, the complainant's focus is on candidates who **gained** a place to study **Mathematics**. The College has explained that candidates who gained a place aren't asked to submit their raw scores to the College. If a candidate doesn't gain a place, they can submit their raw scores if they choose to do so, but that isn't a requirement.
19. Because Mathematics candidates who gain a place aren't required to submit their raw scores, the College says it doesn't hold the information the complainant has requested, has never held it and hasn't deleted it.
20. Similarly, the College has explained that it doesn't require Mathematics candidates to sit the TMUA. As such it doesn't hold the requested information about the TMUA either, has never held it and hasn't deleted it.
21. The College says it has nevertheless searched the mailbox referenced in the request. It didn't identify any relevant information, for the above reasons. The Commissioner considers that the College has considered the complainant's request satisfactorily and has explained why it doesn't hold the information they've requested.
22. The Commissioner accepts that College's explanation. His decision is that, on the balance of probabilities, and for the reasons that it has given, the College doesn't hold the information the complainant has requested and has complied with section 1(1)(a) of FOIA.

Right of appeal

23. Either party has the right to appeal against this decision notice to the First-tier Tribunal (Information Rights). Information about the appeals process may be obtained from:

First-tier Tribunal (Information Rights)
GRC & GRP Tribunals
PO Box 9300
LEICESTER
LE1 8DJ

Tel: 0203 936 8963
Fax: 0870 739 5836
Email: grc@justice.gov.uk
Website: www.justice.gov.uk/tribunals/general-regulatory-chamber

24. If you wish to appeal against a decision notice, you can obtain information on how to appeal along with the relevant forms from the Information Tribunal website.
25. Any Notice of Appeal should be served on the Tribunal within 28 (calendar) days of the date on which this decision notice is sent.

Cressida Woodall
Senior Case Officer
Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF