

Independent Review Team – UEA/CRU

Final

Notes of Interviews with SCI FOI Contact – Science Faculty FoIA contact

Interviewers Sir Muir Russell & Prof. Jim Norton

Interview carried out at UEA on 30th March 2010

Introduction

1. SCI FOI Contact explained that he was Director of Faculty Administration, working with the Dean of the Science Faculty and reporting to the Registrar. He was the formal FoIA contact for the Science Faculty.

Background

2. Sir Muir Russell and Jim Norton briefly summarised the purpose of the Review. It was noted that we were particularly interested to make forward looking recommendations to improve the overall effectiveness of processes

FoIA/EIR processes

3. SCI FOI Contact explained the Freedom of Information Act (FoIA)/ Environmental Impact Regulations (EIR) processes within UEA. He highlighted the key role of Info Policy Mgr (Information Policy and Compliance Manager - IPCM) as the intended first point of contact. The IPCM would create and maintain the individual case files. If an individual member of staff were approached with a FoI/EIR request they were asked to report this immediately to the IPCM such that the case could be tracked formally.
4. FoI/EIR training was made available roughly every twelve to eighteen months – targeted particularly at new members of staff. Typically this would last three hours and provide a general overview, covering the rationale of FoIA/EIR, the actions required, allowed exclusions and finally good practice demonstrated through case studies. Participation in such training was voluntary.
5. SCI FOI Contact's key role was to review FoI/EIR case responses related to the Science Faculty in draft before they were sent to the requestor. He would also assist the FoI Policy manager in terms of access to contacts, resources and information within the Faculty.
6. The Appeals process was discussed. This was noted to involve normally the Director of Information Services Department -ISD (Dir Info Services) reviewing the case file. However if the case related to ISD itself, then the University Registrar would carry out the review. The Review Team noted that there was no provision for independent working level investigation as part of the Appeal process.
7. SCI FOI Contact noted that just prior to the unauthorised release of e-mails there had been a real concern within the Science Faculty about the impact on

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Academic Freedom inherent in the FoI requests for access to content from personal e-mails. Internal discussions had been taking place about this issue with a view to submitting a paper to Universities UK, but had not advanced due to the pressures of dealing with increased FOIA requests

Jim Norton

12th June 2010