

FOI Release
Information released under the Freedom of Information Act

Title: Patents and trade marks granted to Scottish universities

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Information request:

How many trade marks and patents has each university in Scotland filed and been registered/granted for the past five years.

Information released:

The latest data we have for patent applications dates from the end of 2012. We are preparing an update for 2013, but it won't be available until sometime next month, so I've extracted information for years 2008 to 2012.

It is a dataset of published patents, so it won't include applications which were terminated for some reason prior to publication. (If you are not familiar with the patenting process and timing of the publication stages, you may want to take a look at our booklet at <http://www.ipo.gov.uk/p-basicfacts.pdf>, in particular the summary on pages 10 and 11.) The grant of a patent is indicated by a date in the 'B' publication column. Please bear in mind that the data is a 'snapshot' taken on 31 December 2012, so there may be patents on the list which have been granted since then. As you are probably aware, the whole process from filing to grant may take 4 years or longer.

We don't categorise applicants by type, but for a small number of years in a single region, it was a fairly straightforward matter to search for applicant names that include the word 'university'. Similar searches for 'college' and 'institute' didn't produce any hits. However, the search may have bypassed any patents filed in the name of a commercial branch set up to exploit patents commercially. For example, during the 1980's Imperial College set up a company called Imperial Innovations Limited to do just that, which wouldn't be captured by the obvious search terms.

Another limitation of the data is we only capture the first named applicant on the patent, so joint applications may not have been picked up where the university in question was not first named. I would have thought it unlikely, but possible.

I regret that similar information for trade marks is not available. We do publish trade mark information on subscription, so it is exempt from disclosure under section 21 of the FOI Act because it is already available by other means, albeit on payment of a fee. However, I don't think it would be searchable for your purposes anyway. It may be simpler just to do a search via our website, for current and past names and images (e.g. heraldic symbols) for the past five years, or search by owner, using a list of Scottish universities. You can search trade marks at: <http://www.ipo.gov.uk/types/tm/t-os/t-find.htm>.