



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

15 October 2015

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0489-15

Thank you for your email of 21 May and subsequent email of 9 June clarifying your original request of 21 May for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

Please provide the full Registers of Gifts and Hospitality for each of the last two calendar years for the

- a) central department*
- b) central procurement department*
- c) top three business areas with the largest budgets showing, where possible, the*
 - a) grade of civil servant / role of minister*
 - b) name of civil servant / minister*
 - c) description of gift / hospitality*
 - d) date gift / hospitality offered*
 - e) date accepted / declined*
 - f) cash value of gift / hospitality*
 - g) reason for gift / hospitality*

Please release this information in Microsoft Excel spreadsheet format.

And your subsequent clarification email dated 9 June:

I am interested in the register of gifts and hospitality for the following departments:

- a) Commercial Procurement*
- b) Central Policy Group*
- c) Ministerial Offices and Parliamentary Relations*

d) Defence and International Security

e) Estates and Security

and the top three business areas with the largest budgets which are: HR Directorate (HRD), Estates and Security (ESD), and Knowledge and Technology Directorate (KTD) in that order.

I am writing to confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold some information relevant to your request and we have now completed the search for the information which you requested.

The FCO has clear and strict rules in place on Ministers and staff accepting gifts or hospitality. However, it is recognised across HMG that the exchange of gifts, advantages and hospitality is a core part of our diplomacy work and in building relations, particularly overseas. Our guiding principle, and one mirrored by Cabinet Office, Ministerial and Partners Across Government policies, is that staff should automatically refuse a gift, advantage or hospitality, unless to do so would cause offence and could be detrimental to building international relations.

Ministers and FCO staff must record any gifts and/or hospitality they receive and can only keep items valued below the Cabinet Office defined thresholds, and where there can be no question of impropriety. However, for gifts retained which are valued above the Cabinet Office defined thresholds, Ministers and staff must pay the difference in value. Options on acceptance of a gift are further explained as follows:

- Purchase (as explained above)
- Retain for Representational Purposes
- Send to auction and the proceeds remitted to HM Treasury (if not retained)
- Donation (if not retained)

Please find attached the 2013 and 2014 Gifts and Hospitality Registers for the Commercial Procurement Group, the Central Policy Group (which includes the Communications Directorate and the Diplomatic Academy), Defence and International Security Directorate, Estates and Security Directorate, HR Directorate, Knowledge and Technology Directorate, and those pertaining to the Foreign Secretary and all FCO Ministers. The joint UKTI register is held by BIS, so that information is not available to the FCO.

We do not have information for a) grade of civil servant/role of minister, d) date gift/hospitality offered, e) date accepted/declined and g) reason for gift/hospitality because this is not recorded. However, the date shown in the attached Register is the date on which the gift/hospitality was recorded by the respective Department.

Please find attached the information that the FCO can release to you. Some of the information we hold which is relevant to your request is, in our view, already reasonably accessible to you. Under Section 21 of the Act, we are not required to provide information in response to a request if it is already reasonably accessible to the applicant. The information relevant to your request which has been already published is available at the following links:

<http://data.gov.uk/dataset/gifts-recieved-by-fco-ministers>

<http://data.gov.uk/dataset/disclosure-ministerial-gifts-received->

Some of the information you have requested relating to the gifts and hospitality register is exempt under Section 22 of the Freedom of Information Act as it is intended for future publication. Section 22 provides that:

1. Information is exempt information if:
 - (a) the information is held by the public authority with a view to its publication, by the authority or any other person, at some future date (whether determined or not),
 - (b) it is reasonable in all the circumstances that the information should be withheld from disclosure until the date referred to in paragraph (a).

The exemption under Sections 22 of the Freedom of Information Act recognises that it must be reasonable in all the circumstances to withhold the information until the date of publication. Given the necessary preparation and administration involved in publishing the information, which includes liaison with all geographical departments and Ministerial offices, we consider that our publication timetable is reasonable.

Once an FOI request is answered, it is considered to be in the public domain. To promote transparency, we may now publish the response and any material released on gov.uk in the [FOI releases](#) section. All personal information in the letter will be removed before publishing.

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Yours sincerely,

FCO Gifts Policy Team

HR Directorate



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