



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

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04 February 2016

## **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: FOI 0010-16**

Thank you for your email of 3 January 2016 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

*Please provide me with details of the values of the following allowances given to your staff, by staff grade and country (most recent data):*

*1) Diplomatic Service Compensation Allowance (please provide me with a breakdown of the three elements)*

*2) Travel Package*

*3) Continuity of Education Allowance (ceiling amounts only)*

*4) Cost of Living Allowance*

*Where it is impractical or too costly to provide me with the required information (e.g. if spouse allowances are calculated on an individual basis) please provide me with your calculation formulae instead.*

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested.

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request.

Some of the information you have requested (in your first and fourth questions) is being withheld under Section 43(2) of the FOIA. Section 43(2) protects information which would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the public authority holding it).

The DSCA (Hardship element) and Cost of Living Addition (COLA) are calculated on behalf of the FCO by Employment Conditions Abroad (ECA), an independent company that provides similar services to other governments, non-government organisations and multi-national companies. Releasing the current rates could compromise ECA's position in this specialist market.

In applying section 43 we have had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosing it.

The use of this exemption was carefully considered. The factors in favour of disclosure of this information, including the general public interest and greater transparency and accountability, were carefully weighed against the need to allow business-people and commercial organisations the space to conduct their lawful business competitively and without fear of disclosure of sensitive commercial information. We consider that this transparency also poses risks to the protection of commercially confidential information. Failure to protect such commercially sensitive information could limit the number of companies willing to provide their services to the FCO, reducing our ability to keep our costs down. In this case after such consideration we believe that the public interest in withholding the redacted information outweighs the public interest in its release.

For these reasons, we consider that the public interest in applying this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

To answer the first part of your question, Diplomatic Service Compensation Allowance (DSCA) comprises of three elements:

- Diplomatic Service Allowance which compensates staff for the cost of unforeseen circumstances and added expenditure over a career resulting from the frequent changes of job, location and environment (it is paid at a lower rate to Partners Across Government in recognition of the lower frequency of such disturbances);
- Hardship which compensates staff for the additional costs of maintaining quality of life throughout a long term posting at hardship Posts. Qualification as a hardship post is based on a number of factors which give an overall assessment of the quality of life against that experienced in the UK. These factors include climatic conditions (including air pollution), availability of goods and services, isolation (both external and internal), cultural impact and restrictions caused by socio-political and personal security considerations.

and;

- Spouse/ Partner Pension Compensation which compensates those staff with partners who have a long term commitment to full global mobility and to recognise the impact this has on the partner's ability to follow a career and to contribute to a UK pension scheme.

The Diplomatic Service Allowance rates for 2015 are:

DSA 2015 – All FCO officers		
GRADE	TOTAL VALUE	TOTAL VALUE
	<u>MARRIED</u>	<u>SINGLE</u>
SMS3/4	£17,257	£8,629
SMS1/2	£12,300	£6,149
D6/D7	£9,013	£4,663
C4/C5	£6,777	£3,545
B3	£4,445	£2,378
A2	£3,909	£2,111

DSA 2015 - FCO Global Relief Staff (See Note)		
Grade	<u>MARRIED</u>	<u>SINGLE</u>
B3	£6,668	£4,756
A2	£5,864	£4,222

Note: A small cadre of officers deployed continually across the network to cover temporary absences

The Spouse/Partner Pension Compensation rate for 2015 is £2,922.

I attach a list of those Posts eligible for DSCA (Hardship) in 2015/16.

Although DSCA comprises of three elements, it is paid as a single amount calculated on the relevant DSA rate, Spouse/Partner Pension Compensation rate and, where applicable, the Hardship rate. We currently do not have the relevant data in order to calculate the amount spent on each element on an annual basis. As such, the annual amount of spend on DSCA reflects all three elements.

In relation to this and your fourth question, the amount spent on both DSCA and COLA for the last three financial years is shown in the table below.

	2012/13	2013/2014	2014/2015
DSCA	£20,346,492	£20,940,218	£20,489,235
COLA	£17,611,493	£18,171,000	£14,576,406

In relation to your second question, staff posted overseas by the FCO are entitled to a travel package (TP) to pay for their and their qualifying dependents travel during a posting. While TP funds can be used flexibly the fundamental basis remains that they are designed to allow staff and dependents to return to the UK to allow them to catch up with life at home, reunite with families and conduct personal business (e.g. medical/dental appointments, banking etc) which may not be possible due to the remoteness of postings or the specific circumstances at a given post.

The Travel Package is calculated based on the officer's location, personal circumstances, and length of appointment using fare costs produced independently by Hogg Robinson Group which are reviewed every six months. As a result of these variables, we are unable to

provide TP costs for individual locations. The amount spent on the TP for the last three financial years is shown in the table below.

2012/13	2013/2014	2014/2015
£16,027,452	£17,293,316	£16,136,563

In relation to your third question, it is a condition of their employment that members of the diplomatic service must be prepared to serve anywhere in the world at any time during their career, sometimes at very short notice. Those with children have a legal obligation as parents to ensure that their children receive a full-time education from the age of five years. Most parents prefer to take their children with them abroad, but in some of the 168 countries and territories where the FCO has UK based staff, we do not permit staff to take their children either for health or security reasons. In others, local schools of an acceptable standard are not available. It is longstanding practice that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) helps staff meet their potentially conflicting obligations by providing financial support for their children's education in the UK (Continuity of Education) where staff choose this, or are obliged to do so given local conditions in the country to which they are posted, particularly at secondary level.

The FCO refunds standard term fees up to a ceiling which is reviewed annually. Where staff opt to send their children to more expensive schools, staff meet the difference in cost. The maximum amount the FCO will pay is determined by an independent survey conducted by ECA International, which is used by public and private sector employers whose staff work across the world. Various factors, including availability of places (sometimes at short notice) and proximity of other family members, influence which schools staff choose for their children.

The CEA ceilings for the 2015/16 school year are (per term, 3-term school year):

Senior Boarder	£9,883
Senior Day	£6,918
Junior Boarder	£8,687
Junior Day	£6,081

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](http://gov.uk) in the [FOI releases](#) section. All personal information in the letter will be removed before publishing.

Yours sincerely,

International Policies Unit (Allowances)  
International HR Department.



We keep and use information in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. We may release this personal information to other UK government departments and public authorities.

## Hardship Posts for 2015

Post
Abidjan
Abu Dhabi
Abuja
Accra
Adamstown (Pitcairn)
Addis Ababa
Ahmedabad
Al Khobar
Alexandria
Algiers
Almaty
Amman
Ankara
Antananarivo
Ascension Island
Ashgabat
Asmara
Astana
Asuncion
Athens
Baghdad
Baku
Bamako
Bandar Seri Begawan
Bangalore
Bangkok
Banja Luka
Banjul
Beijing
Beirut
Belgrade
Belmopan
Belo Horizonte
Bishkek
Bogota
Brasilia
Bucharest
Buenos Aires
Bujumbura
Cairo
Cape Town
Caracas

Casablanca
Castries
Chandigarh
Chennai
Chiang Mai
Chisinau
Chongqing
Colombo
Conakry
Dakar
Damascus
Dar es Salaam
Dhaka
Dili
Doha
Dubai
Durban
Dushanbe
Ekaterinburg
Erbil
Freetown
Gaborone
Georgetown
Goma
Grand Cayman
Grand Turk
Guangzhou
Guatemala City
Hanoi
Harare
Hargeisa
Havana
Ho Chi Minh City
Honiara
Hyderabad
Islamabad
Istanbul
Jakarta
Jedda
Jerusalem
Johannesburg
Juba
Kabul

Kampala
Kandahar
Karachi
Kathmandu
Khartoum
Kiev
Kigali
Kingston
Kinshasa
Kolkata
Kuala Lumpur
Kuching
Kuwait
La Paz
Lagos
Lashkar Gah
Lilongwe
Lima
Luanda
Lusaka
Managua
Manama
Manila
Maputo
Maseru
Mbabane
Mexico City
Minsk
Mogadishu
Monrovia
Monterrey
Moscow
Mumbai
Muscat
Nairobi
Nanjing
Nassau
N'Djamena
New Delhi
Nouakchott
Nuku'alofa
Panama City
Phnom Penh

Plymouth (Montserrat - Plymouth itself no longer exists)
Podgorica
Port Louis
Port Moresby
Port of Spain
Port Vila
Port-au-Prince
Pretoria
Pristina
Pyongyang
Quito
Rabat
Rangoon
Rio de Janeiro
Riyadh
San Jose
San Salvador
Sanaa
Santo Domingo
Sao Paulo
Sarajevo
Shanghai
Sofia
St George's
St Helena
St John's
St Petersburg
Suva
Taipei
Tarawa
Tashkent
Tbilisi
Tegucigalpa
Tehran
Tel Aviv
The Valley (Anguilla)
Tirana
Tripoli
Tristan da Cunha
Tunis
Ulaanbaatar
Victoria
Vientiane

Windhoek
Wuhan
Yaounde
Yerevan

