



Ministry
of Defence

Ministry of Defence
Defence Business Services Secretariat
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Ref: FOI2020/05540

Email: DBSRES-Secretariat@mod.gov.uk

8 June 2020

Dear Thank you for your email of 7 May 2020 to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) requesting the following information:

"I am interested in the ease of hiring and firing within the Civil Service. I am writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request the following information:

- *1. Length of the probation period in your Department (split out by new starter/promoted civil servant or other factors if necessary). Please state whether and how the length of probation period has changed since the year 2015.*
- *2. Number of staff in the Department who had their employment terminated for performance reasons in the calendar years 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019. Please also provide total staff figures at the start of each calendar year to allow for calculation of the percentage of total staff who had employment terminated each year.*
- *3. Spreadsheet of each position advertised in the calendar year 2019, showing: the position's Grade; how many applicants applied; length of time between the position being advertised and a successful candidate starting in post; whether the post was advertised to external applicants outside of the civil service; and whether the successful candidate came from within the Department/another Department/outside the civil service.*
o If this data is unavailable or cannot be provided in this form for any other reason, please provide all the relevant information you can, e.g. instead of providing a spreadsheet of each position you might provide average figures."

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence and I can confirm that all the information in scope of your request is held. However, some of the information you have requested falls entirely within the scope of an absolute exemption under Section 21 of the FOIA as it is reasonably accessible by other means. As Section 21 is an absolute exemption, there is no requirement to consider the public interest in making the decision to withhold the information.

In answer to question 1, I should explain that probation normally lasts for six months. However, in certain roles, where specific training or qualifications are required, probation may last up to twelve months. The Civil Service Management Code states that any probation period should not usually exceed two years. The probation policy for fixed term appointees is the same as for permanent employees or will last for the length of the appointment if this is shorter than six months. In exceptional circumstances, the probation period may be extended for up to three months.

In answer to question 2, the table below shows the number of individuals that have been terminated for the action reason description 'Dismissal Performance' taken from the Human Resources Management System (HRMS), for each calendar year.

Calendar Year	Number of Employees
2015	18
2016	15
2017	14
2018	28
2019	32
2020 (to 15 May)	14

Please note that these figures relate to dismissal's captured exclude Royal Fleet Auxiliary, Trading Funds, Executive Agencies and Arm's Length Bodies.

Section 21 has been applied to part of this question as the total staff figures at the start of each calendar year are reasonably accessible to you. The information you have requested can be found on the Gov.UK website at the following links:

Headcounts for 2015 to 2017 can be found on the Gov.UK website at – <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mod-civilian-personnel-quarterly-statistics-index>

Headcounts for 2018 and 2019 can be found on the Gov.UK website at – <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mod-biannual-civilian-personnel-statisticsindex>

In answer to question 3, the spreadsheet at Annex A shows each position advertised in the calendar year 2019, the position's grade, the number of applicants, the length of time between the position being advertised and a successful candidate starting in post, whether the post was advertised to external applicants outside of the civil service and whether the successful candidate came from within the Department/another Department/outside of the civil service.

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance

If you wish to complain about the handling of your request, or the content of this response, you can request an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, Ground Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.gov.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review should be made within 40 working days of the date of this response.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may raise your complaint directly to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website at <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely,

Defence Business Services (Secretariat)