



Ministry
of Defence

Air Command Secretariat
Spitfire Block
Headquarters Air Command
Royal Air Force
High Wycombe
Buckinghamshire
HP14 4UE

Ref: FOI2021/09966

[REDACTED]

29 September 2021

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your first e-mail of 18 July 2021, in which you requested the following information:

"Please will you confirm how many pilots (aircraft and helicopter) joined the RAF with a degree and went on to qualify as pilots and how many joined without a degree and went on to qualify as pilots over the last 5 years?"

In this request you were advised under Section 12 (cost compliance), that we were unable to answer your full request without exceeding the appropriate cost limits, which for central government is £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3.5 working days determining whether the department holds information, locating, retrieving and extracting it. You were also advised that subsequent requests could also exceed costs, and advised accordingly to refine your request.

You then emailed again on 13 August 2021 requesting the following:

"In light of your feedback please will you reassess my original question over the last 2 years rather than the last 5?"

Unfortunately, we were still unable to answer this request as this still exceeded cost limits under Section 12.

You then emailed again on 3 September 2021 requesting the following:

"Thank you for your response. Please will you supply as much information as is possible within the regulated budget."

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, and I can confirm that some information in scope of your request is held.

As stated in previous correspondence in order to comply with Section 12 cost limits, we have been able to supply you with the following information:

Financial year 2020/2021 (1 April to 31 March)		
No of pilots who gained their 'wings'	No of pilots who declared they had a degree	No of pilots who did not declare they had a degree
70	40	30

Please note that 'went on to qualify as pilots' has been defined as the point in training at which pilots are awarded their 'wings' (also known as a brevet). As advised previously, a degree is not an entry requirement to join the Royal Air Force as a pilot, nor is it mandated for individuals to record this information. Therefore, the data provided is only representative of those who chose to declare they have a degree.

In accordance with the Data Protection Act and our obligations in relation to the protection of confidentiality when handling personal data, data has been rounded to the nearest 10.

Please be advised that, under Section 12(4), public authorities can aggregate requests for information when considering the Section 12 cost limits. Therefore, if the MOD receives a further request from you on the same or similar subject within a space of 60 consecutive working days from the date of this letter, it can be aggregated with FO2021/09635 which would result in the request exceeding the cost limits and a refusal under Section 12 of the Act.

Please see below link to the ICO guidance on section 12, including guidance on aggregation:

https://ico.org.uk/media/1199/costs_of_compliance_exceeds_appropriate_limit.pdf

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

If you are not satisfied with this response or wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your request, then you should contact me in the first instance. If informal resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for 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.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may take your complaint 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 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,

Air Command Secretariat