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Mr James McCumiskey
By email: jl_mccumiskey@yahoo.ie

22 June 2020

Reference: FOI12_1_544 Internal Review

Dear Mr McCumiskey,

I refer to your application for an internal review under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 of a decision by Ms Debbie Scanlan, dated 22 May 2020, concerning item 1 of your request for access to records of the National Virus Reference Laboratory (NVRL), as follows: *"1) I am looking for a scientific paper, which demonstrates how the Novel Coronavirus was purified? Surely, if the NVRL is able to detect the Novel Coronavirus, it should also be able to demonstrate how it is purified?"*

In the original decision, Ms Scanlan refused part 1 of your request on grounds that the University do not hold records to answer your request (Section 15 (1) (a)).

I have now conducted an internal review in accordance with Section 21 of the Act. I wish to inform you that I affirm the original decision.

The University's position is that matters of academic debate cannot be conducted under FOI and we would not regard academic research material as administrative records of an FOI body that would make them available for release under the legislation. The NVRL have advised that they do not culture live SARS-CoV-2 or purify SARS CoV 2 antigens. They detect SARS-CoV-2 RNA in diagnostic samples, as per the PCR assay that was shared with you previously. As such, there are no relevant records held and no further searches that may be taken for records that would provide an answer to your query. Section 15 (1) (a) of the FOI applies.

The University is committed to its obligations under the Act to provide requesters with access to records held by it and with reasons for its decisions that affect them. In this case, we regret that we cannot assist you further.

Under the Act, the University is required to advise you of your right, following receipt of your internal review decision, to make a further review application by writing to the Information Commissioner, 18 Lower Leeson Street, Dublin 2.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Julian Bostridge
Director of Legal Services