



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

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2 April 2015

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 - REQUEST REF: FOI 0289-15

Thank you for your email of 10th March 2015 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

- ‘1. *How many works of art does your department own?*
2. *How many are on public display and how often?*
3. *What is the total value of the collection?*
4. *What is the annual departmental spend on art? Provide figures for each of the last five years?’*

With regard to your questions, 1 and 3, to gather the information you requested will exceed the appropriate limit of Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act, which makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit. The limit has been specified in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004. For central government the appropriate limit is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one or more persons spending 3 ½ working days in determining whether the Department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting it. Your request as presently formulated is widely-framed and I estimate that it will take more than 3 ½ working days to locate, retrieve and extract this information. In these circumstances we are not obliged under the Act to comply with your request. You may therefore wish to refine your request to narrow its scope to bring it within the appropriate limit, for example by defining more clearly what you mean by art and in which parts of the FCO’s global network. However, you should be aware that this does not guarantee an automatic release, as all information must be assessed in detail. Any reformulated request will be treated as a fresh request under the Act.

Regarding your question 2, the FCO uses its art collection to help its work in promoting the UK overseas – showing our rich tradition of art, culture and heritage. For this reason, this art is usually on public display in our Embassies, High Commissions and Consulates or in the public rooms of the Residences of our Heads of Mission. I would also add that under section 21 of the Act, we are not required to provide information that is already reasonably accessible to you. Please note that details on artwork displayed by the FCO can be found at <http://www.qac.culture.gov.uk/information/publications.asp>, and that costs since 2009 can be found at <http://www.qac.culture.gov.uk/reports.html>.

In answer to your question on the annual Department spend on artwork, I can advise that since May 2010 the FCO has not purchased any original artwork. This does not include artwork purchased locally at our Posts, such as commercially available posters, as this information is not held centrally, and is also subject to Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act, as detailed above.

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Yours sincerely,

Desk Officer
Estates Department



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