



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST: 475-09

Thank you for your request dated 15 June 2009, under the Freedom of Information Act. You asked that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) should disclose:

‘details of all additional ways FCO civil servants’ (working in the UK or abroad) pay may be increased either on a one off basis or a permanent basis.’ Specifically you asked about ‘clothing allowances, travel allowances, golden hello's, allowances linked to specific locations, hours or other etc, etc.’

You asked that we should provide details of the maximum and minimum size of these additional allowances.

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office does hold information to answer your request.

Staff working overseas are paid a Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) to compensate them for the additional cost of maintaining, at their overseas Post, a standard of living comparable to that in the UK. Rates of COLA vary from one country to another and from individual to individual (since they are calculated by deducting salary from a notional household budget). In countries where the cost of living is cheaper than in the UK COLA might be zero. COLA rates are revised every six months: staff are warned that they can change significantly during the course of a posting.

Rates of COLA are calculated for the FCO by an independent organisation, Employment Conditions Abroad (ECA). ECA is a private company that provides data on expatriate terms and conditions to a wide range of international companies, organisations and other governments. ECA's data is based on information sent in by their members, i.e. expatriates employed by the companies and organisations who are part of the network. It is checked against independent sources such as the Internet, international surveys etc. The information they gather is treated as commercial in confidence. If you would like further information about their methodology you should contact ECA International, Anchor House, 15 Britten Street, London SW3 3TY (Telephone: 020 7351 5000). ECA have a website at: <http://www.eca-international.com>.

In addition to COLA, staff may also receive a number of other allowances when working overseas. The allowances can vary according to location, grade and family size. I attach a guide to these allowances.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the Freedom of Information Act, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless exempt.



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