

Guidance for OIA Timescales and Deadlines

In order to determine the deadlines we set when requesting information from providers and students, we balance the need to have access to everything we require to review a case with the need to progress cases as efficiently as possible. The following guidance sets out our process for determining our timescales, deadlines and responses to extension requests.

Timescales

When we set a deadline, we will consider factors such as complexity of cases, the level of documentation we are requesting and whether the complaint is a priority. By being more proportionate about deadlines based on individual cases, we will be able to improve the OIA's efficiencies and the user experience.

Extensions

Whilst we acknowledge that it is sometimes difficult for providers and students to meet the deadlines we set, requests for extensions and late responses result in longer case-handling times.

Our approach to extensions ensures that we provide extensions on a consistent basis. While the list below is not exhaustive it provides guidance on our approach to the most commonly received extension requests.

Reason for request	The OIA's approach
Staff Sickness	If a provider requests an extension due to staff sickness, a one week extension may be given.
Annual Leave	We will not normally provide extensions for annual leave periods.
Busy Periods	We will not normally provide extensions for busy periods. However, we will consider extensions if there is a large group complaint from the same provider.
Complexity of a case	Case-handlers will consider the complexity of a case when providing an initial deadline. However, we will consider providing extensions if the complaint becomes more complex as the review progresses.
Bank Holidays and Provider closure days	If the date of a deadline for a provider to respond to us falls on a bank holiday, we will add one extra day to the timeframe. For the holiday period in December, we will add an extra 3 days in addition to the bank holidays.

At all times case-handlers will exercise discretion in making decisions about providing extensions and ensure that a reasonable deadline is set for providers to comply with information requests.

For further information on the best way to respond to information requests from the OIA, please see the guidance on our website: <http://oiahe.org.uk/media/100309/information-request-guidance-for-provider-poc.pdf> or email us at casework@oiahe.org.uk.