

ADR Biennial Activity Report for Period 9 July 2015 to 30 September 2017

1) Number of disputes received by type and totals for the period

Type	Total
Academic Status	1857
Service Issues	807
Financial	231
Academic Misconduct, Plagiarism & Cheating	168
Discrimination/Human Rights	148
Other	119
Welfare & Accommodation	113
Disciplinary Matters (non-academic)	63
Grand Total	3506

On our Complaint Form we ask students to answer the following question: "when you applied for your course, were you: Resident in the UK; or Resident outside the UK. If you are unsure, please explain your circumstances." Where students fail to complete this question, we write to them asking them to do so. However, students who have withdrawn their complaint or whose complaint we have ruled not eligible, may not respond. For the purposes of this report we have included the "not specified" in the "domestic" column.

2) Systematic or significant problems occurring frequently that lead to disputes between consumers and traders. Your recommendations on addressing them.

We have identified a number of common themes in the complaints we have reviewed, but we have not identified any "systemic or significant problems" occurring frequently in disputes. Nonetheless we continue with our wide-ranging programme of outreach and the publication of new guidance to disseminate good practice in the sector. For example: in December 2016 we published a revised and updated version of the Good Practice Framework and in March 2017 we published a new chapter to the Framework specifically concerning collaborative provision. For further information about common themes, please see our Annual Reports for 2015 and 2016 (<http://www.oiahe.org.uk/news-and-publications/annual-reports.aspx>).

3) Percentage of ADR procedures discontinued for operational reasons and those reasons

0%

4) Average time to resolve all disputes

	All
Average time to resolve disputes	93

Please note this figure shows the average time in days taken from receipt of the original complaint form from the student to the time the outcome is reached.

5) Percentage of compliance

100%

6) Co-operation with network of ADR entities

n/a

7) Training Provided to ADR Officials

We provide regular training for ADR Officials through a bi-weekly series of 'knowledge booster' peer led sessions on various issues which arise in complaints from the sector. In this period the topics covered have included student complaints about:

- Disability
 - Fitness to practise
 - Service failure
 - Student funding
 - International students
 - Disciplinary matters (non-academic)
 - Disciplinary matters (academic)
 - Procedural fairness
 - Students' Unions
 - Accommodation
 - Research supervision
 - Bullying and harassment
 - Professionally regulated courses
 - Discrimination
 - Academic Appeals and Extenuating Circumstances
 - Social Media
 - Course Specific matters for: Law, Medicine, Nursing
 - Higher education providers working in partnership
 - Sexual Harassment
 - Consumer rights and protection
 - Joint medical schools
 - Complaints relating to problems understanding English
 - Occupations and protests
- and the following elements of our complaints process:
- Settlement
 - Recommendations and redress
 - Learning from service complaints
 - Post-decision correspondence

In addition to the 'knowledge booster sessions, the following formal training was provided:

Title	No of ADR Officials	Date
Alternative Dispute Resolution	12	Jul-15
Resilience Masterclass - including managing work load and stress	All	Sep-15
Professional Certificate in Ombudsman and Complaint Handling Practice	4	Nov-15
Advanced telephone training	6	Dec-15
Advanced telephone training	7	Jan-16
Critical Thinking (evening class)	2	Jan - Mar-16
Seminar: 'What makes users trust an Ombudsman'	All	Mar-16
OIA Good Practice Framework	6	Apr-16
Language of the OIA	2	May-16
Resilience Masterclass - including managing work load and stress	All	Jun-16
Data Protection	All	Aug-16
Effective call handling in challenging situations	6	Sep-16
Effective call handling in challenging situations	6	Oct-16
Redress, Recommendations and Settlements	32	Oct-16
Casehandlers Connect Conference	25	Apr-17
A one day event with invited speakers from the higher education sector. Focus was 'current issues, trends and challenges' with sessions on: disability and changes to disabled students allowances; visa requirements and implications for providers; collaborative partnerships; engagement with students; alternative provision.		
Professional Certificate in Ombudsman and Complaint Handling Practice	2	Sep-17

All ADR officials also have access to an online learning portal which includes a wide range of training materials. The online self driven sessions cover topics as diverse as: Compliance e.g. health & safety, data protection; to Self development e.g. customer service, writing skills, time management, stress awareness etc.

8) Effectiveness of ADR Procedure

Our annual report for 2016 (<http://www.oiahe.org.uk/media/115360/oia-annual-report-2016.pdf>) highlights the significant reduction in the length of time taken to complete the review of a complaint against our KPIs. Our operating plan, within the annual report, provides details of our focus on providing an effective, timely and proportionate service.

A key aspect of our work is the sharing of good practice in complaints handling with the sector, focussing on early resolution. We have seen a significant increase in our outreach programme to share our learning from complaints and assist providers in developing and implementing fair processes.

We are continuously working to improve our processes. For example: later this autumn we will be rolling out improvements to our website and our online tool that enables parties to a complaint to track its progress through the OIA process. We are also re-designing our website to improve accessibility and communication in general with users of our scheme.