

Video Transcription

Who we are and what we do – Bite Size OIA

Link: <https://youtu.be/Jg3uJx8pg98>

Duration: 0:05:31

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Steph: Welcome to Bite Size OIA. In this video, we'll give you a quick introduction to who we are, what we do and some of our key good practice guidance.

[Intro music]

When you're ready to find out more, our website, resources and other videos explore some of these areas in more detail.

Who we are.

We are the Higher Education Ombuds for England and Wales. The Higher Education Act 2004, say that there must be an organisation to review students' complaints. We are the designated operator of the student complaints scheme for England and Wales. We've been available to students since 2005.

We were also approved as the Alternative Dispute Resolution entity for higher education for England and Wales under an EU directive that came into force in 2015.

We are independent and free to students - member providers pay a compulsory subscription fee.

Membership isn't usually optional. The Higher Education Act defined which providers need to be members of our Scheme, and this has since been expanded. Providers who providing courses designated for student support funding; providers on the Office for Students Register; and providers who provide higher education courses leading to the grant of an award by another OIA member are all members of our Scheme.

This means that we have a large and diverse membership. As well as universities and other higher education institutions, our members include further education colleges, alternative providers and providers of school-centred initial teacher training (or SCITTs). You can find out more and search for members on our website.

We operate within a set of Rules. We set our own Rules - but we consult interested parties on the content and any amendments as required by the Higher Education Act 2004.

Our Rules explain: how the scheme works; who can complain; what we can and can't look at; how we review complaints; and what higher education providers should do. There's a guidance note that sits alongside our Rules, which explains them in more detail. You can find them both on our website.

What we do: reviewing complaints

Many students complaints are resolved through their provider's own processes. But when a student is unhappy with the outcome of these processes, it's important that they have access to an independent, impartial and transparent review. This is what we do.

We can look at a very wide range of issues that students might be concerned about. We don't have general powers to inspect or audit what providers are doing. Our role is to look at what individual students complained to us about. We look at whether the provider followed its procedures, whether its procedures themselves are fair and reasonable, and whether the provider's decision was reasonable.

If we think that something has gone wrong, we can recommend a range of remedies to put things right, both for the individual student and to improve practice at the provider.

There are several resources on our website that look at our review process in more detail.

What we do: Promoting good practice

Our casework gives us a unique perspective on student complaints, appeals and other processes. Sharing our learning with providers and student organisations is a vital part of improving practice. We do a wide range of outreach to share good practice and insights from our work reviewing complaints, and to learn from others in the sector.

Some providers may not have many complaints with us. But we want all of our members and associated student representative

bodies to benefit from our good practice guidance and opportunities to participate in our outreach activities.

On our website you'll find the various sections of our Good Practice Framework. The sections contain overarching principles and good practice guidance for providers to consider when designing and operating different types of procedures and supporting students.

The Good Practice Framework draws on our broad experience of handling complaints. It's been developed in consultation with a steering group with additional input from a wide range of consultees.

Each of these sections informs the way we deal with complaints related to those issues and procedures. The Good Practice Framework isn't a set of compulsory requirements - but we expect providers' procedures and practices to be consistent with the principles in this guidance.

All the sections can be downloaded from our website, where you'll also be able to access any new sections when we publish them or make them available for consultation.

On our website you'll also find other useful resources such as briefing notes and guidance documents. Our e-newsletters also include key information and updates.

We publish case summaries which, along with our Annual Reports, give useful insight into the complaints we review and the decisions and Recommendations we make. You can also explore the Annual Statements we publish for each of our members.

We've produced a Toolkit for Providers, which is designed to help providers understand their membership, how our scheme works and the things they need to do.

Our Toolkit for Student Representative Bodies includes resources to help students' unions, associations and guilds explain to students who we are and what we do. The student pages of our website also include key information for students on how our Scheme works, the complaints we can look at and what we can do to put things right.

Each year we run a series of outreach events, which may include visits, webinars and workshops. All our webinars and workshops are free and open to staff at member providers and associated student representative bodies.

We also have a dedicated Outreach and Insight Team. Please get in touch if you have any questions about our Scheme or good practice guidance.

[End music]

Thank you for watching.

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