

Schedule 6

OIA Biennial Activity Report for Period 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2025

Information which an ADR entity must communicate to relevant competent authority every two years

(a) the number of disputes received by the ADR entity and the types of complaints to which the disputes relate;

No. enquiries received (total)	No. disputes received (domestic)	No. disputes received (cross-border)	No. disputes received (total)	No. disputes accepted (domestic)	No. disputes accepted (cross-border)	No. disputes accepted (total)
10,542	4553	2980	7533	3760	2484	6244

The reporting category of 'enquiries' includes those that have no relation to cases, and those related to a case before it is submitted. Those enquiries received related to a case (dispute) once it has been submitted are not included as they are part of our casework. We are not able to break the enquiries category down into domestic or cross-border sub-categories as, by their nature, we do not collect sufficient data during such interactions to be able to do so. We have not included cases which record a cancelled status (representing cases raised in error).

Types of disputes:

	Domestic	Cross-border	Grand Total
Service Issues	1836	514	2350
Academic Appeal	2105	1280	3385
Financial	347	243	590
Equality law / Human rights	101	11	112
Welfare / Non-course service issues	241	57	298
Disciplinary matters (academic)	174	163	337
Disciplinary matters (non-academic)	206	111	317

Fitness to practise	117	10	127
Other	27	12	39

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." If students do not 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 However, students who have withdrawn their complaint or whose complaint we have ruled not eligible, may not respond.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.

These figures do not include a small number of cases that are still early in the process and so do not have case categories recorded.

- (b) the percentage share of alternative dispute resolution procedures which were discontinued before an outcome was reached;

Reason	No. disputes discontinued	Percentage discontinued
a) the consumer has not attempted to contact the trader first	980	75%
b) the dispute was frivolous or vexatious	17	1%
c) the dispute had been previously considered by another ADR body or the court	12	1%
d) the value fell below the monetary value	0	0%
e) the consumer did not submit the disputes within the time period specified	84	6%
f) dealing with the dispute would have impaired the operation of the ADR body	22	2%
g) other (enquired too early, not yet complained to trader, trader not member, advice call etc)	199	15%

* Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

* Any discrepancy between (a) the number of disputes accepted and (b) the number of disputes discontinued, occurs due to the specified reporting period – some of the disputes we rejected between October 2023 and September 2025, were ones that we received before this reporting period started and so are not included within the disputes received/accepted figures.

Because of the change in terminology to 'discontinued' and the additional detail requested, we have not included in this section those cases that were 'settled' or 'terminated'. We consider such cases to have closed, and therefore reached an 'outcome' as a result of our involvement as the ADR body, they are reflected elsewhere as relevant.

The categories of Rejected for operational reasons, Case withdrawn by consumer, Case withdrawn by trader, Solution reached without ADR and The trader was not a member of the ADR scheme, are included under (g) other.

(c) the average time taken to resolve the disputes which the ADR entity has received;

	Domestic	Cross-border	Total
Average time taken to resolve disputes (from receipt of complaint)	71	68	70
Average time taken to resolve disputes (from 'complete complaint file')	19	16	18

*Total rounded.

We are pleased to note a significant decrease in the average time taken to resolve disputes from receipt of the complaint since the last reporting period (October 2021 – September 2023).

We continue to work towards reducing the overall time taken to resolve disputes across our scheme. Our commitment to reducing the timescale to resolve disputes is an ongoing organisational priority. We continue to exceed our KPI to close 75% of disputes within six months.

(d) the rate of compliance, if known, with the outcomes of its alternative dispute resolution procedures;

Percentage of provider compliance: 95.7%

During the 2024/25 reporting year we have had to use our non-compliance process with two providers. Excluding these instances:

Percentage of provider compliance: 99.7%

(e) any recommendations the ADR entity may have as to how any systematic or significant problems that occur frequently and lead to disputes between consumers and traders could be avoided or resolved in future;

Detailed information on the trends and common themes that we see in the complaints we review is provided in our Annual Report ([Annual Report 2024 - OIAHE](#)). This includes a specific section on trends in complaints and themes in our casework.

In 2023/24 and 2024/25 most of our complaints related to either academic appeals or service issues.

We have not identified any “systemic or significant problems” that occur frequently sector wide. Where we have identified information about potential systemic issues within individual providers, we share this with the relevant sector regulators.

This year we have started work on a new section of the Good Practice Framework. We are using the learning from our complaints and our engagement with the wider sector to develop good practice guidance for providers on designing and operating procedures to consider harassment and sexual misconduct. Many of the principles of dealing with casework related to harassment and sexual misconduct are already expressed in some of the other sections of the Good Practice Framework, but we are bringing this guidance together in one place and exploring the application of the principles in the specific context of dealing with cases related to harassment and sexual misconduct. We have completed a number of very informative discussions with providers, student representative bodies and other sector bodies, and we are now in consultation with our steering group on the draft section.

Our programme of outreach work continues to expand and we continue to make in person/virtual visits to providers and student representative bodies. We have published the following casework notes and case summaries:

- October 2023: Complaints relating to disciplinary matters (non-academic)
- January 2024: Complaints relating to accommodation
- March 2024: Complaints relating to placements
- June 2024: Complaints from postgraduate students
- October 2024: Complaints on service issues, including consumer rights
- December 2024: Complaints relating to student transfer
- February 2025: Harassment and sexual misconduct
- July 2025: AI and academic misconduct

(f) This point has been removed in amendments on 1 January 2021

(g) where the ADR entity provided training to its ADR officials, details of the training it provides;

Formal training sessions:

<i>Title</i>	<i>No. of ADR Officials</i>	<i>Date</i>
ACAS EDI modules	98	June/July 2024
Customer Service	1	21/11/24
Effective call handling and video calls	13	13/05/25 17/09/25
Data Protection	13	New starter inductions throughout 2024/25
Data protection refresher	76	01/11/24
EDI (internal classroom training)	11	17/07/24 11/09/24 26/06/24 29/01/25
Sexual Harassment Part 1	1	19/12/24
Sexual Harassment Part 2	1	13/03/25
Mental Health/Wellbeing	5	23/09/25
Management training (including EDI)	17	13/03/25 08/04/25 30/04/25 21/05/25 17/06/25

		08/07/25 11/09/25
Safeguarding for new staff	13	New starter inductions throughout 2024/25

We also provide training for ADR Officials through a series of 'knowledge booster' peer led sessions on various issues arising from complaints in the sector and elements of our complaint handling process. In this reporting period the topics covered have included:

- The Student Loan Company
- Fitness to Practise
- Disability related cases
- Settlement
- AI in casework
- Safeguarding adults refresher
- Priority & single caseworker
- Delivering learning opportunities with others
- Kindness, Compassion and Inclusivity
- Recommendations and Compliance
- Judicial Review
- Support for Study

We also provide a comprehensive induction programme for new case-handlers that includes topic specific sessions. Existing case-handlers are welcome to join in with these sessions where needed to refresh their knowledge.

- (h) an assessment the effectiveness of an alternative dispute resolution procedure offered by the ADR entity and of possible ways of improving its performance.

We provide information about the effectiveness of our scheme for reviewing individual complaints, independently, fairly and effectively and our work in enhancing practice in the higher education sector in our annual reports for 2023 and 2024 ([Annual Reports - OIAHE](#)) and on our website (<https://www.oiahe.org.uk/>).

We are continually working towards improving the service that we offer and promoting good practice. For example, over this two year reporting period, we have:

- Maintained the resources available on our website, including the 'bite size OIA' area with information on our process and how we operate for students and providers, and 'toolkits' for student representative bodies and providers.
- During 2023/24, we upgraded our website platform to further improve functionality and accessibility. We focused the changes on the website infrastructure rather than how the website looks to users but it now includes: A new 'Learning from our casework' section under our Resources and publications. This brings together learning and observations from our casework, making it easier for external stakeholders to find; An improved search function for providers that are members of our Scheme; and an Improved 'calls to action', making it clearer for students and providers when they need to do something and how.
- Developed and published a revised section of our Good Practice Framework guidance (<https://www.oiahe.org.uk/resources-and-publications/good-practice->

framework/), covering [Good Practice Framework - Delivering learning opportunities with others](#) in February 2024.

- Continued with our outreach programme of webinars, workshops, focus groups, visits and discussions.
- Produced briefing notes, guidance, case summaries, statement responses and other helpful information for students and providers on our approach to complaints , including:
 - January 2025: OIA response to announcement regarding implementation of Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023
 - In July 2025 we, in collaboration with SUMS Consulting (SUMS), published the findings of a cross-sector study examining how higher education (HE) providers navigate challenging financial circumstances, specifically market exit. The focus of the study was how to reduce the impact of provider closure on students.
 - July 2025: Statement on provider closure
- Engaged with consumers using our scheme at the mid-point and end of our process to gather feedback on the service we provide, taking the learning from these surveys, and from service complaints, forward to inform our case-handling practices.

We have made over 1450 Recommendations across more than 630 individual cases, relating to over 130 providers. Of these 1100+ were student focused, aimed at putting things right for the student. With a further 250+ focused on good practice for the provider to ensure that similar matters did not reoccur.

We also take learning from the complaints that we see forward in our wider interactions in the higher education sector. For example through open communication with regulators, PSRBs and other sector bodies.

Please add any additional information or data you think might be useful or interesting at the bottom of this report.

We are members of the Ombudsman Association and the European Network of Ombuds in Higher Education (ENOHE) and regularly share learning and reflect on issues within the ombuds and higher education sectors.

In 2024 we developed and agreed a [new 2025 strategy](#) which is based around two objectives and four key priorities through which we fulfil our purpose to improve students' experience by resolving complaints fairly and independently and using the learning we gain to influence change.

Our [Operating Plan 2025](#) sets out how we will advance each of these priorities, in the context of the challenging circumstances facing students and the higher education sector.