

Schedule 5

OIA Annual Activity Report for Period 1 October 2024 to 30 September 2025

(a) the number of domestic disputes the ADR entity has received;

No. enquiries received (total)	No. disputes received (domestic)	No. disputes received (Cross-border)	No. disputes received (total)	No. disputes accepted (continued to case) (domestic)	No. disputes accepted (Continued to case) (cross-border)	No. disputes accepted (total)
5564	2367	1523	3890	1931	1227	3158

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 and 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). As of September 2025, receipts are 10% higher than at the same point in 2024, with record volumes over the summer. July saw 406 new complaints — the first time we have exceeded 400 in a month (excluding groups).

(b) the types of complaints to which the domestic disputes and cross-border disputes relate;

Types of disputes:

	Domestic	Cross-border	Grand Total
Service Issues	930	243	1173
Academic Appeal	1077	648	1725
Financial	195	128	323
Equality law / Human rights	50	7	57
Welfare / Non-course service issues	141	37	178
Disciplinary matters (academic)	101	87	188
Disciplinary matters (non-academic)	99	22	121
Fitness to practise	64	6	70
Other	14	7	21

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 However, students who have withdrawn their complaint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.

- (c) a description of any systematic or significant problems that occur frequently and lead to disputes between consumers and traders of which the ADR entity has become aware due to its operations as an ADR entity;

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 2024/25 most of our complaints relate 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.

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 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
- 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.

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.

- (d) any recommendations the ADR entity may have as to how the problems referred to in paragraph (c) could be avoided or resolved in future, in order to raise traders' standards and to facilitate the exchange of information and best practices;

We have made Recommendations in individual complaints as well as incorporating our insights into guidance we have published (see details in section (c) above). Providers have responded positively to our guidance and case summaries, for example through: engaging with students, finding ways to deliver learning opportunities that have been

missed, and adjusting formal processes, as well as attempting to resolve complaints internally, and being open to settlement opportunities that we identify.

- (e) the number of disputes which the ADR entity has refused to deal with, and the percentage share of the grounds set in paragraph 13 of Schedule 3 on which the ADR entity has declined to consider such disputes;

Total no. of disputes rejected	732
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Reason	No. rejected	Percentage of rejected
a) the consumer has not attempted to contact the trader first	530	72%
b) the dispute was frivolous or vexatious	7	1%
c) the dispute had been previously considered by another ADR body or the court	5	1%
d) the value fell below the monetary value	0	0%
e) the consumer did not submit the disputes within the time period specified	52	7%
f) dealing with the dispute would have impaired the operation of the ADR body	15	2%
g) other (enquired too early, not yet complained to trader, trader not member, advice call etc...	123	17%

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

We continue to promote materials on our website (e.g. case summaries, briefing notes and guidance, FAQs for students) and through our contact with student representative bodies to help make it clear to students that they need to complain to their higher education provider in the first instance.

- (f) the percentage of alternative dispute resolution procedures which were discontinued for operational reasons and, if known, the reasons for discontinuation;

	No. discontinued	Percentage of discontinued
Discontinued for operational reasons	0	0

Reasons for discontinuation: N/A

(g) the average time taken to resolve domestic disputes and cross-border disputes;

	Domestic	Cross-border	Total
Average time taken to resolve disputes (from receipt of complaint)	71	66	69
Average time taken to resolve disputes (from 'complete complaint file')	19	15	17

*Total rounded.

We continue to work towards reducing the overall time taken to resolve disputes across our scheme. The average time taken to resolve cases from the time of receipt remains stable from 2023/24, despite an increase in receipts in 2024/25 of 10%. We take an adaptable and proportionate approach to our reviews, using our processes flexibly and trying to resolve cases at the earliest opportunity. Our commitment to providing a timely service and reducing the timescale to resolve disputes is an ongoing organisational priority.

(h) the rate of compliance, if known, with the outcomes the alternative dispute resolution procedures (amongst your members, or those you provide ADR for)

Percentage of provider compliance: 92%

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

Percentage of provider compliance: 100%

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

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.