



office of the  
independent  
adjudicator

# Annual Report

2023



[www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk)

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# Foreword from the Chair

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I was delighted to be appointed as Chair of the OIA Board from October 2023 to contribute to taking forward the OIA's important work.

The OIA has a unique and valuable role in promoting fairness for students. In these challenging times it is vital to keep students' experiences and wellbeing at the forefront of thinking about higher education.

Our Annual Report for 2023 reflects the breadth and depth of our work through the year. We handled more complaints than ever before, providing access to independent, impartial review of students' unresolved complaints. We continued to work with students and their representative bodies, providers, sector organisations and governments to share learning from complaints and contribute to policy developments. Equality, diversity and inclusion is vital to the OIA and important to me and I am pleased to report that we are advancing our work in this area.

These achievements are made possible by the commitment and skill of colleagues across the organisation and on the Board. We are fortunate to have an excellent staff team, jointly led by Ben Elger, Chief Executive and Helen Megarry, who joined us as Independent Adjudicator in May 2023, and an effective Board. I thank them all for their work and for their warm welcome.

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**Sim Scavazza**  
Chair of the Board



# Introduction to the Annual Report for 2023

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Welcome to our Annual Report for 2023. The Report gives an overview of our work during the year and reflects on our wider context and relevant developments as we progressed our strategic priorities and delivered against our Operating Plan for 2023.

2023 was another complex and challenging year in the higher education sector, with increasingly acute financial pressures in providers, the continuing high cost of living, housing issues, and ongoing concerns about student mental health and wellbeing.

Against this backdrop, and with complaint numbers still rising, we continued to provide an effective service for reviewing and resolving student's complaints. We met or exceeded all our key performance indicators for the timeliness of our complaints-handling processes. There is huge value in using learning from complaints to improve students' experiences of higher education. In 2023 we delivered a full outreach programme to share learning from complaints and to engage constructively with students, their representative bodies and providers.

We also worked extensively with others in the regulatory landscape to contribute to thinking around relevant policy developments, to help promote a joined-up approach and a focus on key issues affecting students. We continued preparations for the expansion of our remit in Wales to further education students, which will give more students the benefit of access to independent redress for their unresolved complaints.

2023 was an important year for developments in our organisation. We continued to grow capacity to manage our rising caseload, alongside our ongoing focus on efficiency. We maintained a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion in our organisation and in our work.

We said goodbye to some long-serving Trustees including the Chair, Dame Suzi Leather and the Deputy Chair, Andy Mack and we thank them for their exceptional contribution to the OIA. We were very pleased to welcome Sim Scavazza as our new Chair and to appoint Martin Kirke as Deputy Chair.

We would like to thank our colleagues for their outstanding commitment to our work again this year and our Board for their continued support and valued advice.



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**Helen Megarry**  
Independent Adjudicator



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**Ben Elger**  
Chief Executive

# Headlines of the year

## 3,137

Complaints received

10% up on 2022

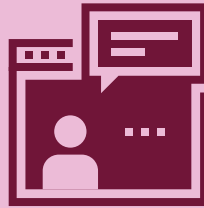
## 3,352

Complaints closed

19% up on 2022



Consulted on the revised Good Practice Framework: Delivering learning opportunities with others (published Feb 2024)



Ran an extensive outreach programme of 65 online events with over 1,100 participants as well as in-person visits to providers and student representative bodies, and contributed to a host of sector events



Worked closely with governments, sector bodies, NUS and other organisations to contribute to relevant discussions and developments

Worked with the Welsh government and others towards making our service available to students across the post-compulsory education and training sector in Wales



Welcomed Helen Megarry as Independent Adjudicator to jointly lead the organisation with Ben Elger, Chief Executive, and welcomed Sim Scavazza as our new Chair



# Trends in complaints

We include in this section some information about patterns and trends in our complaints data. The complaints we see reflect a broad range of issues that matter to students. They also show that some students are proportionately much more likely to complain to us than others.

Any wider interpretation of our data should be approached with caution, because the number of students who complain to us is still very small in relation to the student body as a whole and many factors can influence a student's decision to pursue a complaint. The contextualisation of the data we include in this Report by reference to wider information about the student population is more limited than usual this year due to the delay in publishing HESA data for 2022-23.

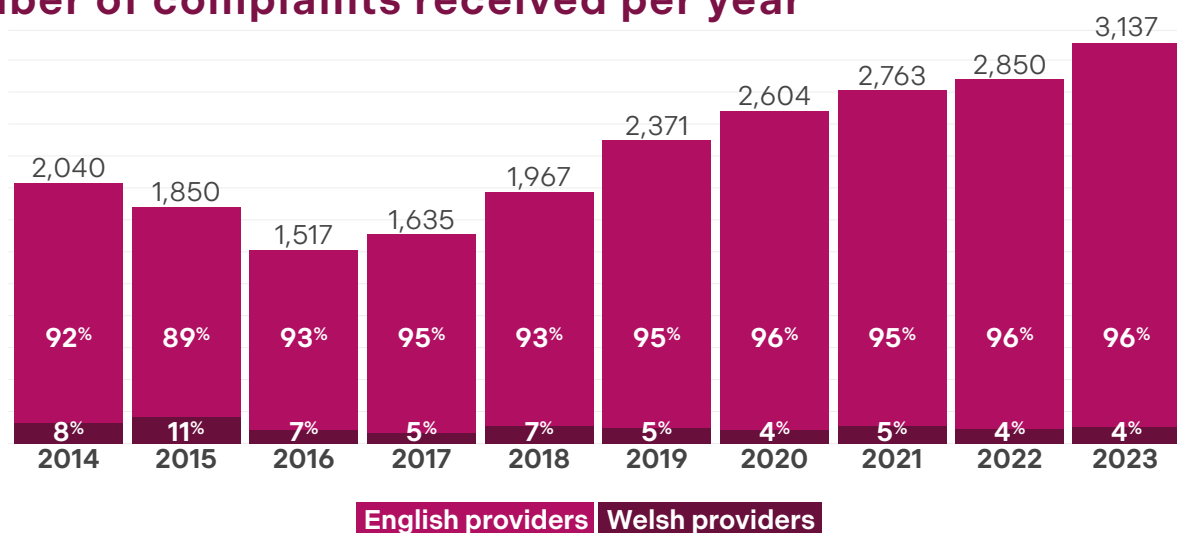
## Complaints received

In 2023 we received 3,137 complaints, our highest ever number and an increase of 10% on 2022 (2,850).

This continues the trend of annual increases since 2017. In 2023 the rise has been driven by complaints from postgraduate and non-EU students, with complaints from home undergraduate students reducing slightly. There has been an overall increase in complaints relating to academic appeals.

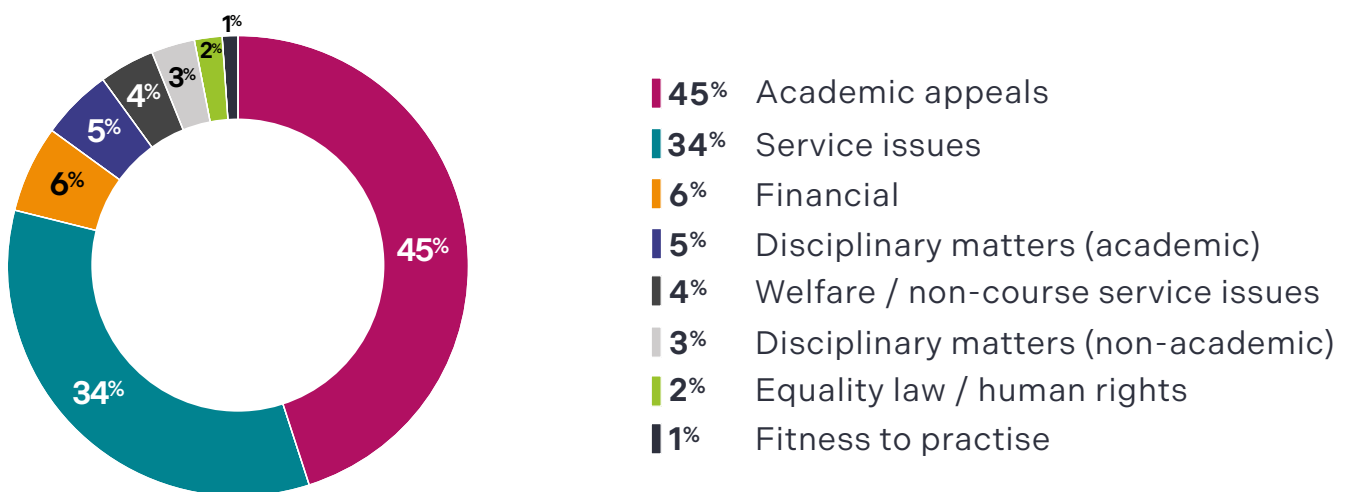
The proportion of complaints about providers in England and providers in Wales remains very similar to recent years.

### Number of complaints received per year



We continued to hear of higher volumes of complaints in providers, and this is supported by the information we have from providers about the number of Completion of Procedures (COP) Letters they issued in 2023 at the end of their internal processes. From our engagement with students and higher education providers, we also continued to hear that some students are finding it difficult with the other challenges they are facing to pursue their complaints, and that some providers are finding it difficult to progress complaints effectively through their internal procedures in the context of other pressures.

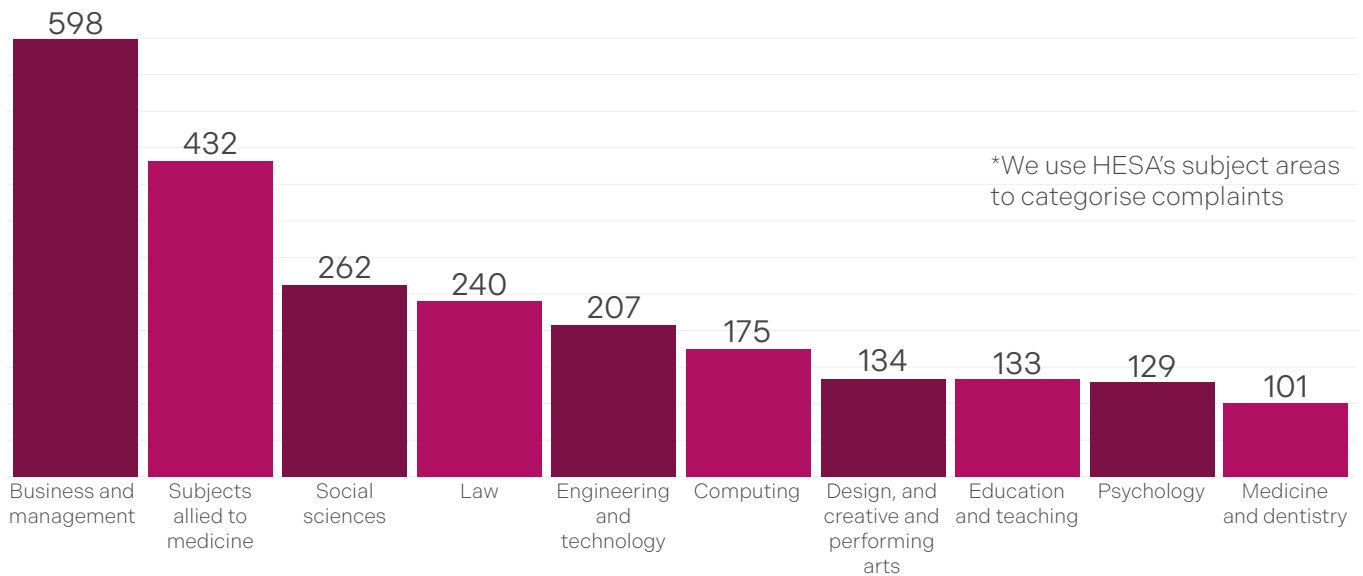
## Complaints received by complaint category



In 2023 the rebalancing of our caseload away from complaints relating to service issues (teaching, course delivery, supervision and course-related facilities) back towards complaints relating to academic appeals continued. Complaints relating to academic appeals accounted for 45% of the complaints we received in 2023, up from 38% in 2022, while the proportion of complaints relating to service issues reduced to 34% (38% in 2022). This continued rebalancing was at least in part related to reaching the end of complaints directly arising from the pandemic, but we think it is also related to the rise in complaints from international students (see below).

The number of complaints in our other complaint categories remained relatively small and at a similar level to 2022. Collectively these categories accounted for 21% of case receipts, a slightly lower proportion than last year (24%).

## Complaints received by area of study - Top 10



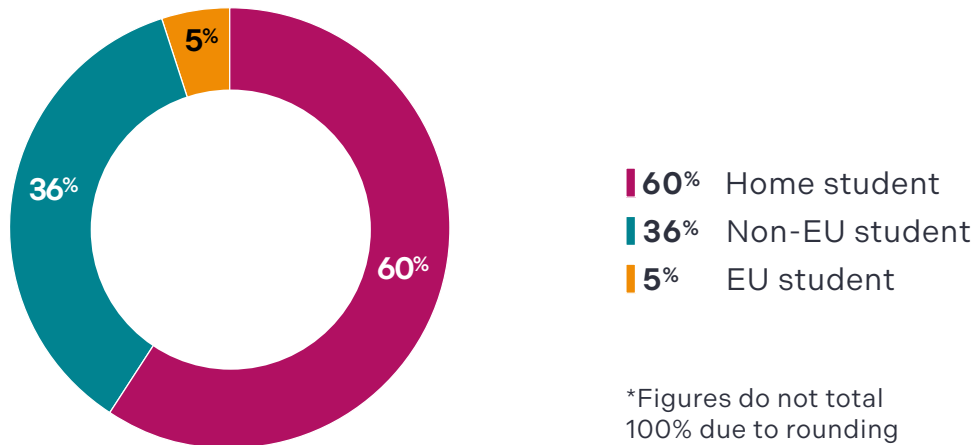
We consistently receive more complaints from students on Business and management courses, which mainly reflects the high overall number of students in this subject area. However, we saw a substantial increase in the number of complaints from students on these courses in 2023, which in the context of the rise in complaints from non-EU and postgraduate students we think is likely to be related to a high concentration of international postgraduate students studying in this area.

Complaint numbers by subject area can be quite variable, partly because numbers are fairly small once broken down in this way, but the distribution for other areas of study in 2023 is broadly similar to 2022.





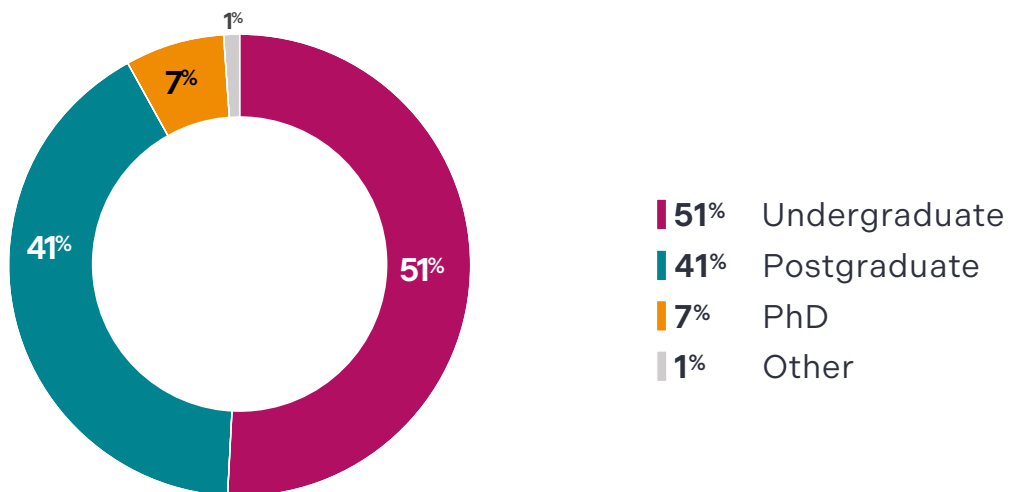
## Complaints received by student domicile



We saw a significant rise in the number of complaints from non-EU students in 2023, up around 330 on the previous year. It is notable that this increase has come in a year when the number of complaints from home students remained broadly stable and there was a reduction in the number of complaints from EU students. Non-EU students have long been overrepresented in complaints to us (as an indicative comparison, these students accounted for 19% of the student body in England and Wales as reported in HESA statistics for 2021/22, although it is likely that the proportion may have increased somewhat since then) and now account for 36% of complaints to us (27% in 2022). We explore some of the issues we see in complaints from international students under the [Themes in complaints](#) section below.



## Complaints received by level of study

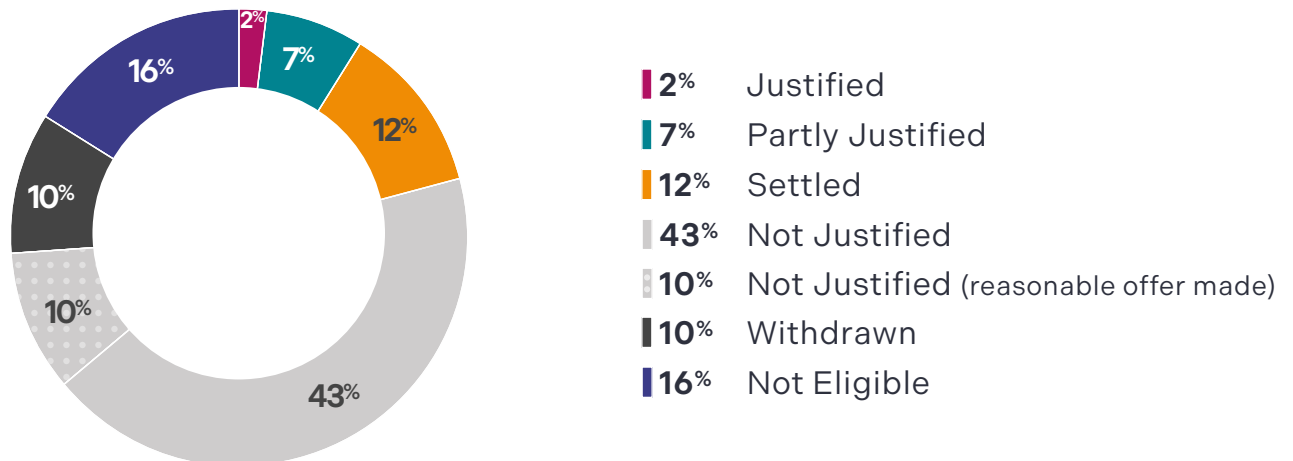


A consistent feature of the complaints we receive is the significant overrepresentation of PhD and other postgraduate students. In 2022 this overrepresentation had been less marked, but in 2023 we saw a substantial increase in the number of complaints from these students and together they accounted for nearly half of all complaints to us (as an indicative comparison, PhD and other postgraduate students made up 28% of the overall student population in England and Wales as reported in HESA statistics for 2021/22, although again the proportion may have increased somewhat since then). We have in previous years discussed the likely reasons for the overrepresentation, including that there are some issues that only affect postgraduate or PhD students such as issues with the PhD supervisory relationship. Another factor is the number of postgraduates who are international students, with the additional challenges that can bring: just over half of postgraduate student complaints to us in 2023 came from international students.

# Complaints closed

In 2023, we closed 3,352 complaints, an increase of 19% from 2022 (2,821), and we met our key performance indicator (KPI) of closing 75% of complaints within six months of receipt.

## The outcome of complaints



In total, 21% of cases were Justified, Partly Justified, or Settled in favour of the student. This is a decrease on last year (25%), in part because of the reduction in complaints about service issues and the increase in complaints relating to academic appeals (proportionately fewer complaints relating to academic appeals are upheld). We settled 12% of complaints in 2023, a slightly lower proportion than in 2022 (15%) but still exceeding our KPI. The proportion of outcomes is similar for complaints about providers in both England and Wales.

The proportion of cases that were Not Justified rose in 2023. Some of these complaints were Not Justified because the provider had made a reasonable offer to the student during the internal processes to resolve the complaint and it remained open for the student to accept (these complaints are shown separately from other Not Justified complaints on the chart above). We continue to engage with students and student advisers about our approach and what we consider to be reasonable so that students can make an informed decision about whether pursuing their complaint is likely to lead to the outcome they are hoping for.

In 2023 the proportion of complaints that we decided were Not Eligible for us to look at under our Rules reduced to 16%, the lowest level for many years.

Around 80% of ineligible cases were where the student had come to us before they had completed the provider's internal processes. We continued to try to make it clear to students when they can complain to us, and to emphasise that they normally need to complete those processes first. We also progressed work to better understand why some students complain to us too soon. We gathered information from some of those whose complaint had not been eligible and from some student advisers. Most of the students told us that they knew we may not be able to accept their complaint for review but had decided to submit it anyway. The most common reasons put forward were that their complaint was taking too long in the internal processes and that they thought complaining to us would move it forward, and concerns about whether they would get a fair outcome from the internal processes. We are now looking at how we can use the insights from this work to try to reduce the number of premature complaints.

## Legal challenges to our decisions

Our case decisions can be challenged by judicial review. During 2023 we received a total of 10 new judicial review claims, compared to four in 2022. This follows a period of many years over which there had been a steady downward trend in the number of claims received. There are no clear reasons for the increase in 2023, and it is also not yet clear whether a higher level of claims is likely to continue longer term.

Eight of the claims received in 2023 were refused permission and we are waiting for the court to reach a decision on one of them. Permission was granted in relation to one claim, and based on the Judge's ruling we made an offer to the student to reopen their complaint, which the student accepted.

Judicial review cases often provide useful learning and insights for us, and reflections from judges on our decisions and processes.

*"The defendant has a broad latitude to determine its own procedure. This is essential to ensure a flexible approach to meet the demands of individual cases. ... The process adopted fell comfortably within the range of the defendant's wide discretion. The rationale for the approach taken was spelled out in the impugned decision. ... It is incumbent on the defendant to genuinely engage with the substance of the complaint rather than conduct a fresh investigation itself. Its duty is to consider the validity of the approach of the University. It did that."*

During the year we also received two county court legal claims, one of which was discontinued and the other struck out.

# Themes in our casework

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Complaints to us often come from students who have additional challenges of some kind. This might be that they have a disability or difficult personal circumstances, or because they have other additional challenges affecting their studies, for example international students unfamiliar with the academic expectations of UK higher education.

As well as thinking about what may be helpful for different groups of students such as international students, it's important that providers think about each student as an individual. Complaints often arise when a student feels that their needs are not being met. Listening carefully to the student to understand what they would find helpful and being responsive to their individual needs and circumstances can go a long way towards addressing this. Students are less likely to pursue their complaint if they feel they have been seen and heard by their provider.

Students' expectations also influence how they feel about their experiences. Clear information for students about what they can expect from their course and from any internal processes they may need to follow, and about what is expected of them, can help to reduce complaints arising.

It is also very important that providers follow a fair process when considering issues. This includes investigating issues properly, considering what evidence is necessary and proportionate, and thinking about what support or adjustments for disability the student or students involved may need.

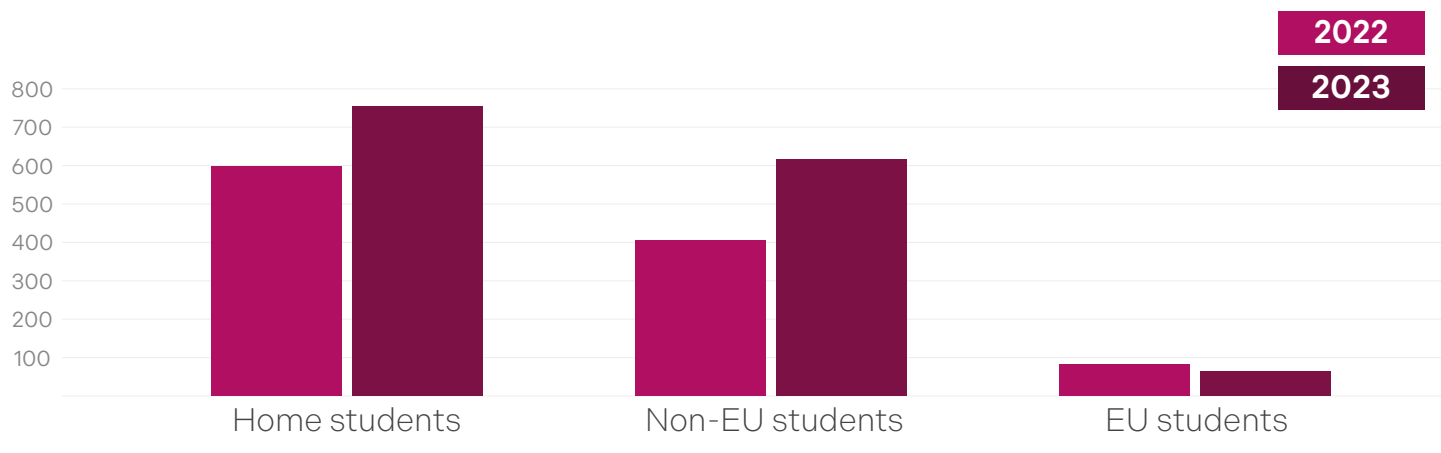
In this section we explore in more depth complaints relating to academic appeals and complaints from international students, which both rose significantly in 2023. We also look at complaints from disabled students as part of our wider work to promote equality, diversity and inclusion through sharing learning from our casework.



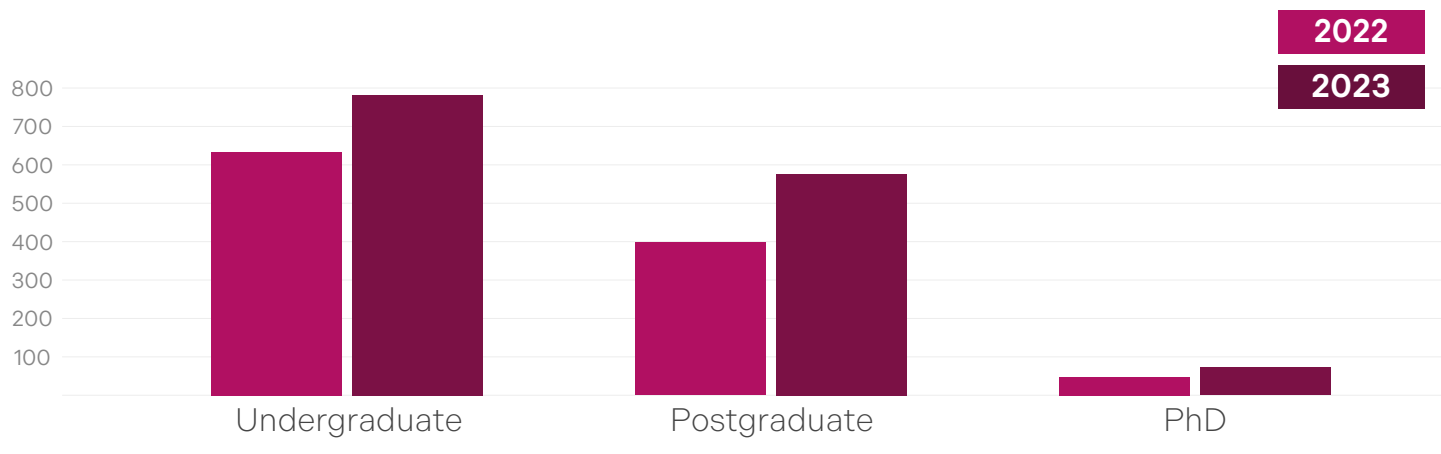
# Complaints relating to academic appeals

The return to higher levels of complaints relating to academic appeals since the pandemic has been broadly based. Higher numbers of these complaints have come from students at all levels of study, and from both home and international students. However, the rise has been concentrated in complaints from non-EU students and postgraduate students.

## Academic appeals by student domicile



## Academic appeals by level of study



When we look at complaints relating to academic appeals, we can't look at matters involving academic judgment. We consider this to be a judgment that is made about a matter where the opinion of an academic expert is essential, not any judgment made by an academic.

## Case summary 1

A student made an academic appeal against a fail grade for a practical exam involving interaction with patients in a healthcare setting (an OSCE). The student said that the feedback they received did not match how they remembered the exam at all. For example, the feedback recorded that the student did not wash their hands, but the student was certain that they had done so. The student asked the provider to check that the feedback and mark had not been mixed up with another student's.

The provider rejected the student's appeal, saying it was a challenge to the academic judgment of the marker. The student asked for this decision to be reviewed. The person investigating the appeal tried to find the feedback records for the OSCE exam. The module leader had left the provider and the records were not easy to find. The provider rejected the appeal and the student complained to us.

We upheld the complaint (we decided that the complaint was **Justified**). We did not agree that the student was challenging the academic judgment of the markers. We thought that the provider ought to have done more to establish whether the feedback definitely belonged to this student. We recommended that the provider reconsider the appeal. We also recommended that the provider should review its record-keeping practices so that exam feedback is not lost when there are changes in staff.

As in previous years, in 2023 the majority of complaints relating to academic appeals involved students who were experiencing personal difficulties but did not seek support or use the procedures to request additional consideration of their circumstances at the appropriate time. We also saw complaints where students had unrealistic expectations of what the process could have achieved, for example thinking that their grade could be increased in situations where this was not a possible outcome.

In the complaints we saw, providers were generally handling academic appeal processes in line with the guidance in our [Good Practice Framework](#) and this was reflected in the lower uphold rate for this type of complaint. In almost all cases, we were satisfied that information about making a request for additional consideration and seeking support was made available to students. It's important that providers continue to make this information clear and easy to find and to promote it to students at relevant points in the academic calendar. It's also important that providers make it very clear what the possible outcomes to a process are so that students can make an informed decision about whether or not to pursue an academic appeal.

## Case summary 2

A student passed a foundation year course but did not meet the grade boundary to progress onto a four-year MPharm course. The student was offered an opportunity to enrol onto a different BSc course. The student met with the head of the foundation course and explained that they had suffered a bereavement, and felt that their pastoral needs in the foundation year had not been met. The provider took the issues raised at this meeting forward under its academic appeals and its complaints processes.

The provider rejected the student's complaint. It decided that all students had been told about a number of ways to access support, and that the student had not made use of the support available. The provider accepted the student's academic appeal, on the basis that the student had been affected by difficult personal circumstances and there were good reasons for not raising this at an earlier time. The provider offered the student the opportunity to repeat the foundation year as if for the first time, so that they had another chance to meet the entry requirements for the MPharm course.

The student complained to us. They believed that they were very close to the grade boundary and should be allowed to enrol or, alternatively, they should be allowed to just resit some assessments in order to meet the entry requirements.

We did not uphold the student's complaint (we decided the complaint was **Not Justified**). The student's overall mark was not close enough to the grade boundary to be rounded up. Because the MPharm course was regulated by a professional body, the provider did not have any discretion to be flexible in the way the student hoped.

It was clear from the cases we saw that students experience barriers to making use of available processes, even though most knew about them. Some expressed concerns about privacy, and about having to overcome different cultural norms to share personal information. Some described trying to be resilient and push on through. Students who were experiencing mental health difficulties often said that they didn't fully understand the impact of their mental health on their studies at the time. Some students explained that they did not raise their circumstances because they expected to be advised to defer an assessment and that this would have been so difficult in terms of financial or other practical considerations that they preferred to make an attempt and hope for the best. Some did not feel able for various reasons to obtain documentary evidence to support a request. But most of all, students said that they did not engage with the relevant procedures at the required time because they were overwhelmed by the circumstances they were experiencing at that time.



Some students already have complicated and challenging lives and then find themselves impacted by events such as short-term illness, bereavement, financial crisis or being a victim of crime. It's reasonable for providers to expect students to engage with processes at the right time but it's important to balance this with recognising the difficulties this can present for some students and where possible to take steps to reduce the barriers. This can be particularly important where a student is managing ongoing and sometimes fluctuating circumstances. [The Good Practice Framework: Requests for additional consideration](#) gives guidance for providers on considerations when personal circumstances are affecting students' studies.

The accessibility of support services is important. Many providers offer a wide range of supportive services but we commonly see students who did not engage with any formal support mechanism. Students may not always think that their circumstances fit into the areas covered by these services. Students and student representatives have also told us that these services can be extremely busy, and students may not persist if it is difficult to get an appointment.

## Case summary 3

A student submitted their assignment online, four minutes after the submission deadline. The work was marked and the student was told the provisional mark was 58%. The provider then lowered the mark to the pass mark because it was a late submission. The student submitted an appeal asking for their personal circumstances to be taken into account. The student described experiencing anxiety and panic attacks following an incident in their student accommodation. The work was due on the first anniversary of the death of a close family member. The student had felt so overwhelmed that they took a short time away from their studies but this meant their work piled up. The student said that they were so anxious that they were unable to articulate their concerns to their tutor, and had not been able to get a medical appointment. They had experienced a panic attack when trying to submit the work.

The provider rejected the student's appeal because they did not supply any independent evidence about their mental health at the time of the submission.

The student complained to us, and was able to supply new medical evidence. In the light of this evidence, and considering what was proportionate in the circumstances of this case, the provider agreed to remove the penalty it had applied for late submission. The student accepted this offer and the complaint was **Settled**.

Another area where providers may be able to reduce barriers is in their evidence requirements. In most of the cases we saw, there was no reason to believe that the student was not telling the truth about the circumstances they were experiencing. Some providers had given students examples of circumstances where they were willing to accept that there had been a significant impact on the student without documentary evidence, for example death of a parent, partner, sibling or child. Students with mental health issues often found it particularly difficult to provide supporting evidence of the impact, particularly where they were not able to point to a specific event or incident that caused a change in their wellbeing. It is helpful if providers can be more flexible about deadlines for providing supporting evidence while circumstances are ongoing, and make it clear to students in this kind of situation whether they may exercise any discretion over their evidence requirements.

In our experience students also often don't understand that if they have not raised their personal circumstances until after the deadline set by the provider, they will usually have to evidence not only the circumstances themselves, but also provide a good reason for not raising them at the time, and support this by further evidence. Many were unable to do this. Sometimes the students hadn't realised that their reasons for not raising the issues at the time were not sufficiently exceptional for the provider to accept a late submission. It's important to make the requirements around late requests for additional consideration as clear as possible to students.

## Case summary 4

A postgraduate student did not achieve a passing grade for their dissertation at the second attempt. They appealed against the decision to award them a Postgraduate Diploma rather than a Masters award. The student described feeling under pressure before submitting their dissertation and explained that after submitting it a family member had been very unwell.

The student did not make their appeal until eight months after the provider's deadline. They explained to the provider that they had sought help from an agency and paid them to make an appeal, but they had taken the money and not offered any help. The provider decided that the student did not have a good reason for submitting the appeal late and it did not accept it. The student complained to us.

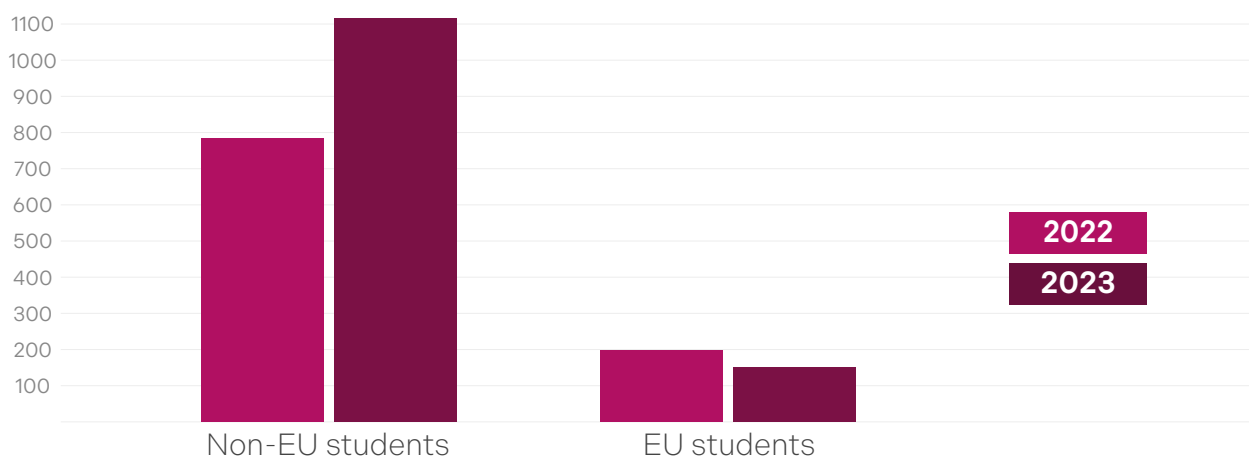
We did not uphold the complaint (we decided it was **Not Justified**). We accepted that the student had approached the agency in good faith expecting them to help with the appeal. But the provider had made information available to students about sources of free advice within the provider and via the student's union, and the student had chosen not to use this help. The student did not have any evidence that showed they were unable to make any contact with the provider during the eight-month period to ask for help.

Academic appeals based on late submission of requests for consideration of additional circumstances create a considerable volume of complaints and administrative burden for providers and are often not beneficial for the students involved. This is a longstanding issue in the sector and we encourage providers to think about what more they may be able to do to address this, from the kinds of approaches outlined above to wider considerations such as course and assessment design.

## Complaints from international students

Overall, in 2023 complaints from international students rose to their highest level yet. Within that, the number of complaints from non-EU students (who accounted for nearly 90% of complaints to us from international students) rose by 43% and the number from EU students reduced by 24%, which at least in part reflects the changing numbers of non-EU and EU students in the student population. The sharpest rise in complaints from non-EU students was at postgraduate level.

### Number of complaints from international students



International students who have decided to study in the UK often have a clear vision of what they hope to gain from their experience. However, there can be challenges for international students that sometimes mean their experience does not fully live up to their expectations. International students are affected by issues that face students in general, such as cost-of-living and accommodation pressures, and there are also issues that only affect international students or are more likely to affect them, including the political climate and changes in policy direction such as the tightening of visa restrictions, international conflict, public perceptions about their home country, and changes in the relative value of their home currency.

When students find something challenging, they can feel the distance between themselves and their family and home support networks keenly. It can also be difficult for students to cope with news about problems at home when they are unable to return to offer support to family members.

Over half of the complaints from international students related to academic appeals, a higher proportion than for home students. For international students there is often substantial personal and financial investment involved in coming to study in the UK, and sometimes sponsorship arrangements, leading to a possible greater sense of pressure to “succeed” in their studies. It can also be more difficult for international students to make use of options such as taking time out from their studies if they are experiencing difficulties, and some options may not be available to them due to visa requirements.

## Case summary 5

After two assessment opportunities, an international student was successful in some modules but unsuccessful in others. The provider decided that the student could not progress onto the next year of the course until they had passed the outstanding assessments. The student was allowed to re-take the assessments in the next academic year without attending the teaching again. This meant that the student would need to leave the UK until the assessment period, because their visa was only valid while they were attending classes on a full-time basis.

The student submitted an academic appeal based on personal circumstances which had affected their mental wellbeing during their studies. The student asked to be allowed to attend teaching for the outstanding modules on a part-time basis because they felt that a repeat of the teaching would be helpful to them, and explained that because their family had relocated they did not have a family home to return to.

The provider rejected the student’s appeal. It noted that the information about the student’s personal circumstances should have been submitted earlier. But even if it had been, the provider couldn’t offer what the student wanted, as it was not allowed to sponsor any international students on a part-time basis. Even if the student’s claim for mitigation had been upheld, the outcome would have been to allow the student a further opportunity to take the outstanding assessments, which had already been allowed.

The student complained to us. They supplied new medical evidence about their mental health during their studies and suggested that their mental health difficulties might amount to a disability. Our review focused on the matters which the student had raised with the provider in their appeal. We decided not to uphold the complaint (we decided it was **Not Justified**). We were sympathetic to the student’s difficult circumstances, but it was not open to the provider to offer the student an opportunity to stay in the UK and study on a part-time basis.

The issues raised in academic appeal complaints from international students were quite similar to those from home students, mainly around requests for additional consideration due to personal circumstances including late submission of requests. In some cases students mentioned concerns about the quality of teaching or supervision in their academic appeal to the provider even though they had not raised these issues with the provider or made a complaint about them while their course was ongoing.

Understanding and adapting to academic expectations in UK higher education can be difficult for international students, especially for those whose previous academic experience is very different. It's important that providers do all they can to help international students to understand what is expected and what is and is not considered acceptable academic practice. International students were disproportionately represented in the complaints brought to us at the end of academic misconduct procedures, and the proportion with a favourable outcome (Justified, Partly Justified or Settled) was lower than for home students.

We also saw some cases where the student's English language level had made it difficult for them to understand expectations and processes and more widely to fully benefit from their studies. Using clear, simple language in guidance and procedures and avoiding unnecessary jargon and legal terms benefits all students but can be particularly important for students whose first language is not English.



## Case summary 6

An international student was called to an academic misconduct meeting because their answers to a closed book exam had included a significant proportion of text copied from published sources and lecture notes. The student had not cited the source of the text in their answers.

The student explained that their practice was to memorise large portions of text and present these in exams, and that this approach had earned them high marks in the past.

The provider concluded that the student's method had been deliberate but that they had not understood that this approach could appear to present the work of others as the student's own and that this was a type of academic misconduct. It decided that this was a case of poor academic practice. It imposed a mark of zero for the exam and allowed the student to attempt the exam again, for a capped mark.

The student complained to us because they did not feel it was fair to have a disciplinary concern on their record. We acknowledged that the student had been acting in a way that was familiar to them from their previous educational experiences. We decided not to uphold the student's complaint (we decided it was **Not Justified**). The provider had made it clear to all students that answers given in closed book exams should be in the students' own words. The provider had taken account of the student's explanation in imposing the lowest penalty available under its procedures.

Various other issues were raised in complaints from international students. These included termination of studies due to a lack of attendance or engagement, most commonly in the context of visa requirements, and small numbers relating to significant changes in the value of some currencies and to the practices of some agents used to recruit international students.

"Thank you for your review of my case... I appreciate the clearly comprehensive review that you have undertaken."



## Case summary 7

An international student studying in the UK on a Student visa received a letter from the provider telling them that their studies had been terminated because their attendance was 0%. The student appealed against this decision. They described a series of problems at the beginning of the academic year in getting their student card to work and in receiving correct timetable information. The student said that they had spoken to a student helpdesk to resolve the issues. They had attended all their classes, had submitted all of the required work and had achieved good marks so far.

The provider rejected the student's appeal, saying it was not satisfied that the student had provided evidence that there had been problems with their student card and registration. The provider said that the student should have asked individual academic staff to record their attendance in classes. It asked some of the academic staff if they could recall the student being present, but academic staff were not able to confirm this.

The student complained to us. We upheld the complaint (we decided it was **Justified**). The provider had not looked for any information about the student's card and whether there was a record of the student seeking advice from its helpdesk. The provider could not show that the student had been advised to ensure that academic staff made an additional record of their attendance. The academic staff who had been asked about the student's attendance had noted that much of the delivery was in lectures with a very large number of students in attendance and they could not recall individual attendance accurately.

We recommended that the provider should consider the student's appeal afresh, having gathered more relevant information about the accuracy of its records of attendance for this student.

"Thank you very much to the team at OIA for investigating my complaint thoroughly. After reading the outcome report, I agree with the OIA's findings and I believe all of their comments to be fair and accurate.... I would like to... also thank [the provider] for deciding to address my complaint when they were under no obligation to do so."

# Complaints from disabled students

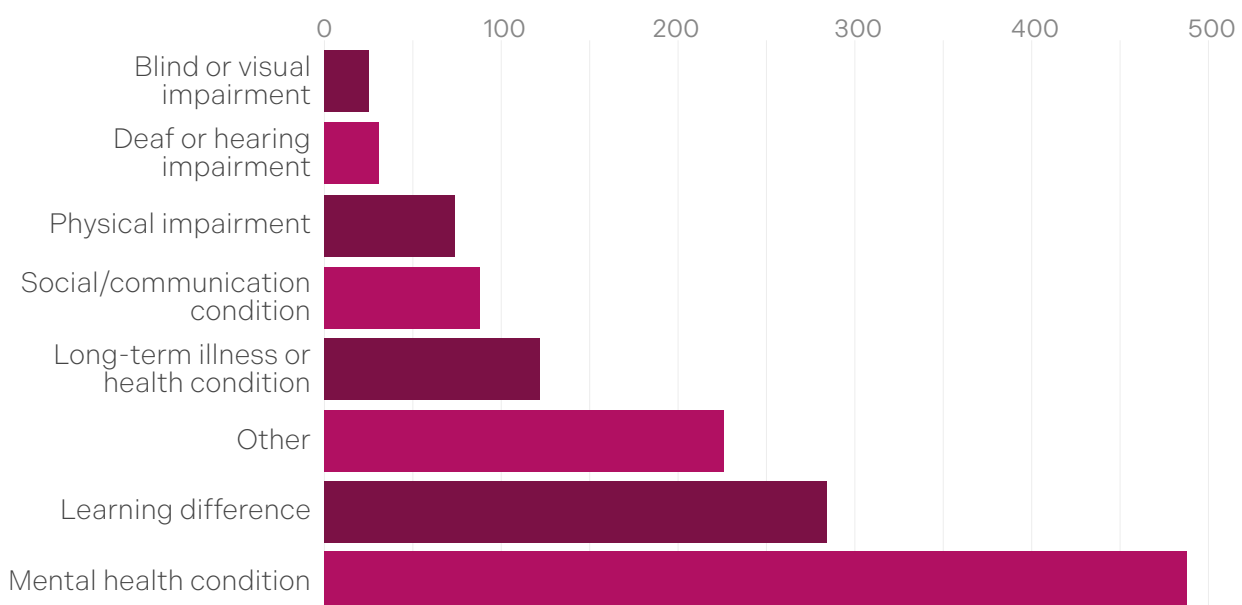
A third of students who complained to us in 2023 identified themselves as disabled. This is self-reported, so it is possible that some of these students' conditions may not meet the definition in the Equality Act 2010, but it is also likely that some students chose not to tell us about their disability. While numbers are not exact, disabled students continue to be significantly overrepresented in complaints to us (as an indicative comparison, disabled students made up 16% of the student population in England and Wales as reported in HESA statistics for 2021/22, although this may be somewhat higher now as numbers of students known to be disabled have been rising). The proportion of students who complain to us who have disclosed a disability has also been steadily rising over the last few years.

## Prevalence of different types of disability

Of students who identified themselves as disabled, around 45% reported a mental health condition, and the actual proportion is likely to be higher as some of those who selected "Other" described experiencing mental health difficulties. Around a quarter indicated that they had a specific learning difference. A large majority reported that they had more than one disability (students can select all that apply). Many students selected "Other", possibly suggesting that they didn't relate to the available options and in some cases that they preferred not to specify their disability.

## Breakdown of reported disability types

Of complaints received where a disability was reported





While there are some differences between the prevalence of different types of disability in currently available sector-wide data and in complaints to us, the increasing number of students reporting mental health conditions is a consistent theme. We see in our casework the impact that poor mental health can have on a student's ability to engage effectively with their studies and with providers' internal processes. It is very important that students who are experiencing mental health issues are supported. During the year we contributed to wider work on this issue.

## **What disabled students complain about**

In 2023 there were some small differences in the category of complaints from students who have disclosed a disability to us, in comparison to those students who have not. The proportion of academic appeals was slightly lower, and as might be expected there were a higher proportion of complaints categorised as equality/human rights and welfare/non-course service issues.

There are broadly three types of complaint we receive from disabled students. Many of the complaints to us in 2023 were either unrelated to the student's disability (for example how their domicile has been categorised for tuition fee purposes) or about issues that can affect any student but had a greater impact on the individual student because of their disability. We also received a smaller number of complaints about issues that can only affect disabled students, such as concerns about reasonable adjustments.

It can be challenging for providers, especially in the context of a large number of students, to recognise and meet the needs of individual students. It's very important that providers think carefully about disabled students in their planning, including when making changes to course provision, and listen to and address the needs of individual disabled students.

Course changes can sometimes present particular difficulties for disabled students. While all students benefit from clear and timely communications about their studies, students affected by anxiety or who have conditions affecting how they process and respond to unexpected circumstances can be more significantly affected where communication is late or unclear. A change such as how a module is delivered can also create practical difficulties for some disabled students.

## Case summary 8

A student affected by generalised anxiety disorder was part of a cohort affected by industrial action. The provider proactively considered whether any teaching had not been delivered, and offered students on this course compensation of £250. The provider had set up a special process for students to make further submissions about the impact that the industrial action had had on them individually. The student made a submission and the provider increased its offer to the student to £500.

The student was dissatisfied and complained to us. They described the impact of the industrial action as very severe, because of their pre-existing anxiety. The student described how this worsened because they were unable to talk to tutors about their studies at various points of industrial action. The student had felt that they needed to suspend their studies. The student provided medical evidence that described how they had been feeling in recent months.

The provider contacted us. It said that in light of the more detailed statement the student had made in their complaint to us, it would like to offer more compensation. The student accepted the offer of £2,200 and the complaint was **Settled**.

Some of the complaints we saw showed the difficulties disabled students can experience studying within a system that is primarily designed around full-time study within defined academic years. In a number of cases, providers had tried to enable students to take a flexible route through a course of study by allowing time away, extending the time allowed to complete work, or allowing a student to flex between full-time and part-time attendance. However, students were not always clear how these options may affect their eligibility for financial support or be compatible with visa requirements. Sometimes the student couldn't take advantage of the flexibility that was offered because of these practical issues. Similarly it can be more difficult for some disabled students to engage effectively with the expectations of structured processes and timeframes.

In 2023 we continued to receive complaints from disabled students about how they were or were not supported to access their studies. For example, we saw complaints about how reasonable adjustments were agreed and communicated to academic staff and staff in placement settings, and complaints from students about particular academic staff being reluctant to change their practices to be more inclusive.

## Case summary 9

A student with an autistic spectrum condition and a physical disability was studying a course in the performing arts at one provider (provider A) leading to the award of another provider (provider B). During their second year, the student raised concerns with provider A about a lack of support and said they were unsure if they could continue on the course. After informal discussions did not resolve their concerns, the student made a formal complaint to provider A. Provider A acknowledged some serious shortcomings in its communication with the student due to staff changes, but rejected the complaint overall. It referred the student to provider B's Complaints Policy. Provider B told the student that it did not have any remit to review the complaint because it was not about the quality and academic standards of the course. The student then received a Completion of Procedures Letter from provider A and complained to us.

We upheld the student's complaint (we decided it was **Justified**). There had been a failure to explore what the student's specific needs were in the context of the course, and to identify and put in place support or reasonable adjustments. There had been confusion about whether students should seek this support from provider A or provider B, and about what kinds of complaints could be referred to provider B. Provider A had acknowledged some significant areas for improvement and had taken steps to improve some policies and to deliver staff training. In spite of this, it had rejected the complaint in full and missed an opportunity to put things right for the individual student. The student had lost faith in the provider and withdrew from the course.

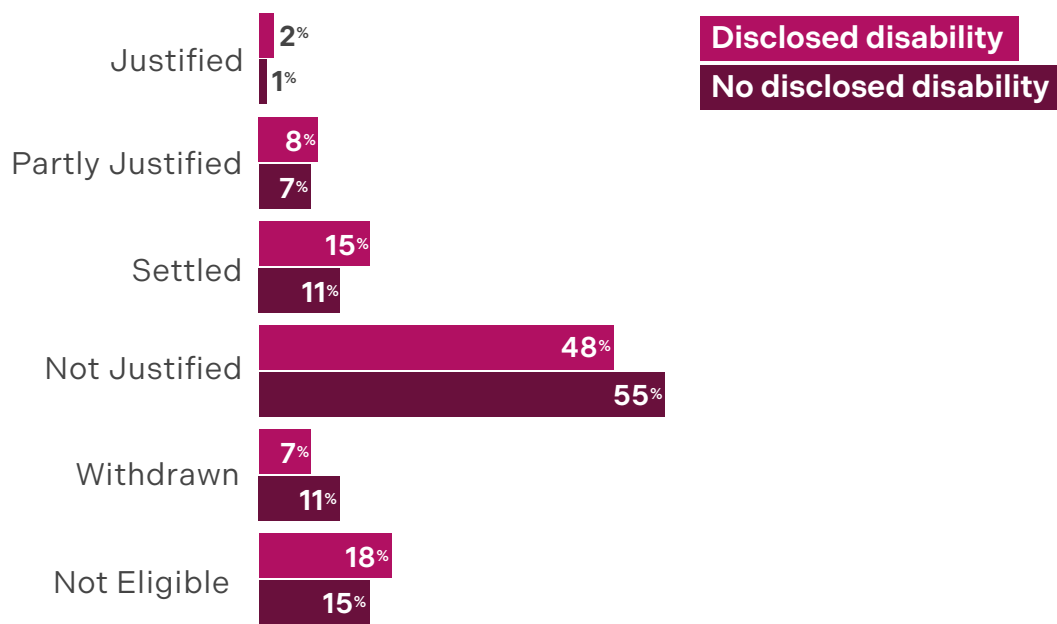
We recommended that provider A should apologise to the student and pay them compensation of £5,000. We also made Recommendations to provider A about the operation of its complaints procedures drawing on the guidance in our Good Practice Framework.

In some cases, students raised issues within their complaint to us about how they had been supported to use internal processes at the provider. For example, some students with social communication difficulties said that meetings had felt hostile and that decision-makers had misinterpreted their intentions, even though the provider had made what it considered to be appropriate adjustments to enable the student to participate fully. It is helpful if providers engage in an open way with individual students to find out what they feel will be most helpful, and are clear about what adjustments they are offering.

During the year we heard from our Disability Experts Panel about difficulties that some students had faced in obtaining evidence for claiming Disabled Students' Allowance, in getting a needs assessment, and in finding suitably skilled people to provide recommended support, in particular a shortage of British Sign Language interpreters. However, we did not see this reflected in many complaints. It is likely that some students are being supported by providers to overcome these obstacles, but it is also possible that some disabled students are not raising these issues through complaints processes. We heard from the Panel that it is hard for some disabled students to find the time and energy to make a complaint, due to both their disability itself and the need to engage with other processes or arrangements because of their disability.

There were also some differences in the outcomes to complaints between students who disclosed a disability, and those who did not. A higher proportion of disabled students received favourable outcomes to their complaints in 2023. In particular, more complaints were settled, sometimes where additional information in the student's complaint to us led to providers being willing to consider students' circumstances afresh.

### Outcomes by disclosed disability / no disclosed disability



“Thank you for your email, and taking the time to get back to me. Your answers were very clear, so I wanted to express an additional thank you for responding within my reasonable adjustments request.”



## Other observations from our casework

In 2023 although the number of complaints we received from home students overall was broadly stable, there was a small reduction in complaints from home undergraduate students. This was most notable in the number of complaints relating to service issues, which had been higher in recent years primarily due to complaints relating to the pandemic and to a lesser extent industrial action.

The marking and assessment boycott that affected some providers did not result in a large number of complaints to us. This may be at least in part because providers have become more experienced at minimising the impact of disruption on students, and at assessing and taking appropriate steps to remedy any negative effects on individual students. We hope that our [guidance on handling complaints arising from significant disruption](#) has been helpful.

Sexual misconduct and harassment continues to be an important concern. The number of complaints we receive relating to these issues has risen slightly in recent years but remains small. We have seen more instances where students whose complaint is mainly about a different issue mention experiences such as harassment or domestic violence as part of the context of their complaint, perhaps reflecting a greater confidence in talking openly about these experiences. In 2023 we also continued to receive complaints from students who had been accused of sexual misconduct. These complaints were often centred on the fairness of the disciplinary process. There is a difficult but important balance for providers in trying to handle concerns about these issues sensitively and in a way that minimises distress for the reporting student whilst making sure that processes are fair for all involved. During the year we engaged with relevant developments, learning from work such as [Higher Education After #MeToo: Institutional responses to reports of gender-based violence and harassment](#). We also shared learning from complaints to promote good practice, including publishing a [casework note on complaints relating to disciplinary matters](#) and contributing to sector discussions and events on these issues.

# Putting things right

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Our casework can help to put things right for students in many different ways.

Where possible and appropriate, we will try to settle the complaint as this can often be a positive way forward for everyone. Where we decide that a complaint is Justified or Partly Justified we usually make Recommendations. Our Recommendations aim to put things right for the student or students involved (“student-centred Recommendations”) and, where appropriate, to improve procedures or processes for the benefit of other students as well (“good practice Recommendations”). In 2023 we made Recommendations in over 300 cases. In complaints we have not upheld, we may still make suggestions to help providers to improve their practices.

Some students who come to us don’t get the outcome they had hoped for. There is still value for some of these students in knowing that an independent organisation has looked at their concerns. It can be reassuring and can sometimes help to bring closure to what may have been long-running and emotional involvement with their complaint.

“Firstly, I wanted to thank you for reviewing [the student’s] complaint in such a detailed and professional manner. We have spent a few days considering your report and despite the outcome of ‘Not Justified’ we have finally reached a feeling of acceptance with this decision. Your explanations behind the outcome were very helpful and we have both come to terms with the closure of [the student’s] case.”

## Early resolution and settlement

Our case-handlers look for opportunities to resolve complaints at an early stage where possible.

Sometimes talking through a complaint with a student, either before they submit their complaint to us or in the early part of our process, can give the student a new perspective on their complaint and they may decide not to pursue it further. For example, we may be able to explain that the steps a provider has already taken to resolve their complaint appear to be reasonable, or that the remedy the student is seeking is unlikely to be possible.

Where appropriate to the case, we will try to settle the complaint by finding an outcome the student and provider can agree on. Settlements can be a quicker and less stressful way to resolve complaints. They can be particularly beneficial for students who are continuing with their studies

because it can help to restore a relationship of trust with their provider. Settlements can also offer greater flexibility in the remedy for the complaint.

Examples of settlement agreements that students and providers agreed to in 2023 included:

- ◆ To allow a student back onto a course and give them an opportunity to resubmit their dissertation
- ◆ To consider an academic appeal based on mitigating personal circumstances that had been rejected as out of time, in recognition that the student had good reason for not raising their circumstances sooner because at the time they did not have the agreement they needed from a third party to share relevant information
- ◆ To take a case back for consideration, and to apologise to the student for delays and take into account the time that had passed in their new consideration of the appeal
- ◆ To accept a complaint previously ruled out of time, to take into account the cumulative nature of the impact on the student of separate periods of industrial action.

## Student-centred Recommendations

When we uphold or partly uphold a complaint, where possible we recommend a practical remedy or remedies to put the student back in the position they would have been in if things had not gone wrong. Examples of practical remedies we recommended in 2023 included:

- ◆ To reconsider the penalty the provider had imposed on a student under its non-academic misconduct procedure, taking into account whether and how the student's disability was a mitigating factor in their behaviour, and to also consider whether the impact of the standard penalty could be disproportionate because of the student's individual support needs
- ◆ To apologise to a student for the way in which staff had been dismissive in their description of the student's case in internal correspondence
- ◆ To provide a student with a letter explaining why they had been unable to complete the course of study within the usual timeframe as a result of the provider's actions, that could be used in support of future requests for access to student finance
- ◆ To take steps to ensure that the reasonable adjustments identified in the student's needs assessment will be in place for all future assessments, and to pay the student compensation because these arrangements had not previously been made
- ◆ To offer a student assurance in writing that they would receive appropriate acknowledgement in future publications making use of their laboratory work.

Where a practical remedy is not possible, or is not enough, we may recommend financial compensation. Examples of financial compensation we recommended included:

- ◆ To reimburse a student for an additional maintenance loan that they had to take out and compensate them for significant distress and inconvenience because of serious and repeated administrative errors by the provider that led to a two-year delay in the student graduating
- ◆ To compensate a student for distress and inconvenience caused by procedural issues in how a student disciplinary procedure was handled
- ◆ To refund a student's costs for a year abroad and offer a payment in recognition of the lack of teaching relating to the provision of language learning, together with an additional sum in recognition of the severe distress and inconvenience caused by issues with the provider's handling of the case
- ◆ To pay compensation to a group of students for the distress and inconvenience caused by delays in the provider's consideration of their complaint.

In 2023, 86% of our student-centred Recommendations were complied with on time. In almost all the cases where this was not done in a timely way, there was only a short delay in implementing the Recommendations. If a provider is late in complying, or does not comply, we take steps to address this.

The Recommendations we made in 2023 included financial compensation totalling £580,311. Financial compensation can alternatively be part of a settlement of a case. In 2023 compensation through settlements totalled £638,564, exceeding compensation through Recommendations for the second consecutive year. The overall total compensation in 2023 was £1,218,875, somewhat higher than the total (excluding the compensation to students in the large group complaint we reviewed) in 2022 of £1,050,114. The highest single amount of financial compensation was £42,500. 58 students received amounts of £5,000 or more, of whom 24 received £10,000 or more.

## Good practice Recommendations

Our good practice Recommendations are usually for providers to review and improve internal procedures and practices, taking into account the guidance in the relevant sections of our Good Practice Framework. Examples of good practice Recommendations we made in 2023 included:

- ◆ To revisit procedures relating to students who report sexual assault to ensure that staff are aware of and able to complete the necessary risk records effectively, and to review how the provider shares information with students about these processes



- ◆ To review student disciplinary procedures to ensure that a written record is kept of any meeting or hearing and that the reasons for any decisions taken are sufficiently detailed that students can easily understand the reasons for the decision and any penalty applied
- ◆ To review a policy on non-academic misconduct and provide further guidance and/or training for staff, particularly about the approach to penalties
- ◆ To review processes to consider how any decisions made outside of an established procedure or policy are still considered with procedural fairness in mind.

In 2023, 63% of our good practice Recommendations were implemented on time, a slight increase on the year before. We follow up cases where our Recommendations are not implemented on time. Where there are delays, these are usually due to practical issues rather than any reluctance to comply. For example, the provider may need to go through formal approval processes to make changes to policies or procedures. In these circumstances we sometimes ask the provider to put in place interim measures to address the issues of concern. Virtually all of our good practice Recommendations from 2023 have now been complied with.



# Sharing learning

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Sharing learning to help improve policy and practice is a key part of our role. We do this through our published good practice guidance, and through our extensive outreach engagement with providers, student representative bodies and students. This engagement is also a valued opportunity for us to learn, deepening our understanding of the sector and the issues affecting students and providers.

## Good Practice Framework

Our Good Practice Framework sets out principles and operational guidance to support higher education providers in England and Wales. It draws on our broad experience in handling complaints, and informs the way we consider complaints.

The Framework currently has six sections: Handling complaints and academic appeals, Delivering learning opportunities with others, Supporting disabled students, Requests for additional consideration, Disciplinary procedures, and Fitness to practise.

We regularly review and update the Framework to make sure that it continues to be relevant and current. In 2023 we developed and consulted on a revised version of the Delivering learning opportunities with others section of the Framework. In January and February, we held a series of informal webinar discussions to help inform the initial stages of our review, with attendees from both providers that are delivering learning leading to an award from another provider, and providers that have awards which are delivered elsewhere. We then consulted on the draft revised section. We are grateful to everyone from providers, student representative bodies and sector organisations whose feedback informed the final version, and to our Good Practice Framework Steering Group for their valuable input.

The section sets out guidance on handling complaints, academic appeals and other internal processes in the context of delivering learning opportunities with others. The main developments in the revised section are:

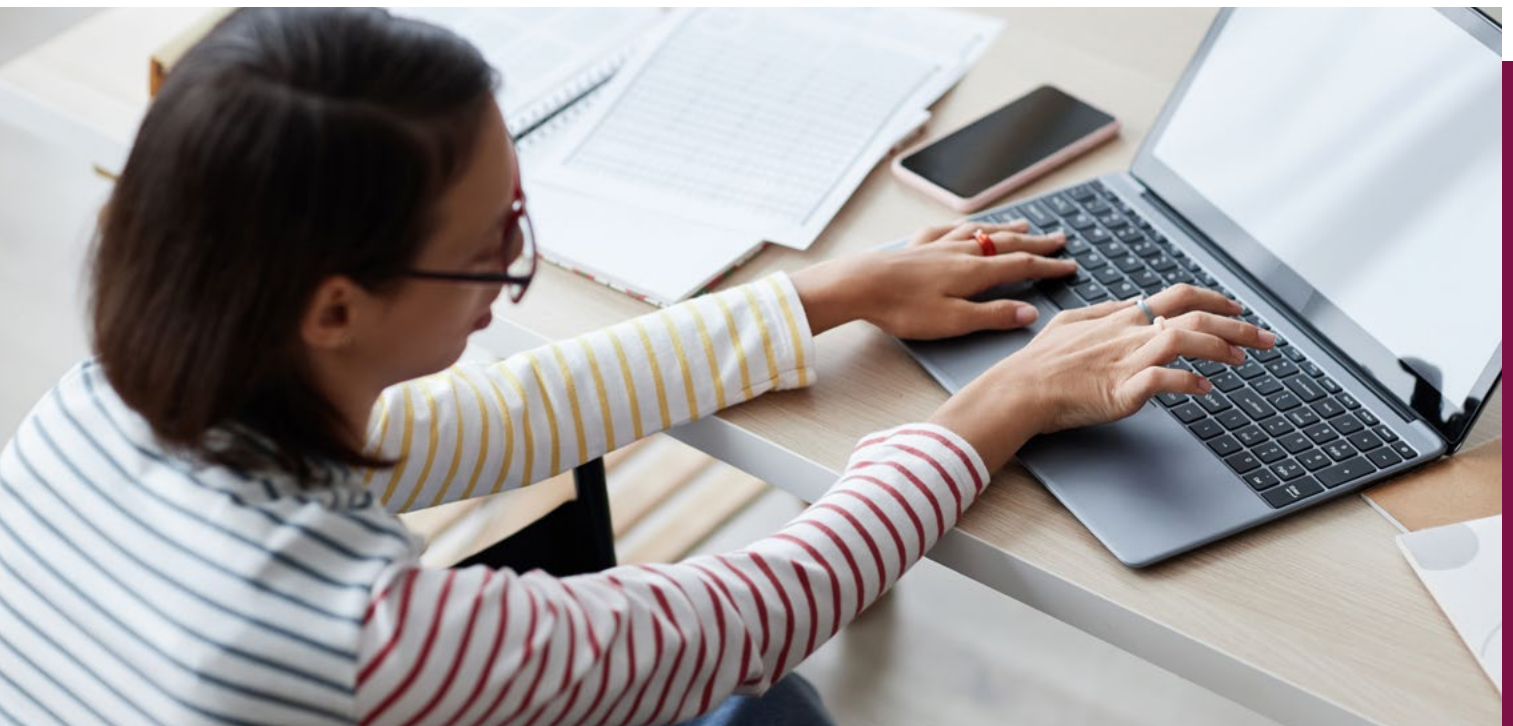
- ◆ We developed the guidance on how overarching good practice principles apply in partnership contexts
- ◆ We clarified the principles that apply to student-focused internal processes such as fitness to practise and disciplinary procedures as well as complaints and academic appeals procedures

- ◆ We expanded the guidance on considering complaints, appeals and other internal processes through the life cycle of a partnership, particularly around key points in partnership relationships and when those might come to an end
- ◆ We updated the case studies to reflect learning from our casework.

We published the final updated version in February 2024.

## Casework notes and case summaries

In addition to the Good Practice Framework, we share learning from complaints through other published information such as briefing notes, casework notes and case summaries. We often hear anecdotally that people find our case summaries a particularly helpful way to access information about and learn from our approach. For students, seeing the approach we have taken in previous cases can help them to understand better what the possible outcomes to their complaint might be, especially in terms of remedy, and student advisers also use our summaries to help explain this to students. In 2023 we published case summaries, accompanied by casework notes, on [academic misconduct](#) and on [disciplinary matters](#).



## Outreach activities

Our outreach activities through the year included workshops, webinars, visits to providers, other discussions with individual providers and student representative bodies, discussion groups, and contributing to external events.

### Workshops and webinars

We ran a range of workshops and webinars, including events tailored for providers and for student representative bodies, both to introduce people to us and our work and to look at particular topics such as early resolution and settlement, academic misconduct, disciplinary matters, fitness to practise, requests for additional consideration, and accommodation. Demand was high, with around 900 people joining these events. Participants valued the opportunity to learn more about good practice and our approach, and found the sessions a useful prompt to look again at procedures and practice in their own organisation, as well as to share experiences with others often facing many of the same or similar challenges.

"I felt reassured that my thought processes were on the same page as other colleagues from different institutions. I learnt the pros and cons of mediation, and the importance of early resolution (and the challenges involved with this). I also thought the suggestion of student Focus Groups to determine potential barriers experienced by students accessing internal complaints/appeals processes was a very good idea."

"This was a really helpful event and I would highly recommend it to others. It was really well organised which allowed us to make the most of the time available, which is so important when you are busy, it felt like a really good time investment. Thank you."

### Visits

In 2023 we continued to visit providers and student representative bodies across England and Wales. Visits are an opportunity for providers and student representative bodies to hear more about our work and to talk with us about current patterns and trends in complaints and appeals. We don't carry out audits or inspections of procedures or processes during visits. The visits enable us to discuss and understand challenges faced by providers separately from the review of individual complaints, and explore how good practice can be applied in a provider's particular context.

Visits are also an opportunity for us to listen to and learn from student representative bodies and providers: the concerns and challenges they have and what is working well, the unique features of individual providers and the makeup of their student body, and their experience of our service. A common theme in these discussions was ongoing significant difficulties for students struggling with the cost of living and finding it difficult to get accommodation that is affordable, local to their place of study and of an adequate standard.

In our visits we often discuss the importance of strong links and regular information sharing between services that offer advice and support to students and staff working in providers addressing student complaints and appeals. Those who advise and represent students can benefit from seeing the outcomes of complaints made to the OIA, where these can be successfully anonymised, to better tailor their advice to students. Providers may be able to reduce complaints by taking action to address students' misunderstandings or concerns flagged by advice services.

"Thanks so much for reaching out. The team and I found the visit very helpful and thank you for arranging this."

(from a provider following a visit)

We are also grateful to the providers and student representative bodies in England and Wales who helped to welcome Helen Megarry to the sector since she took up the role of Independent Adjudicator and generously shared insights into their own context and the sector more widely.

## Discussion groups

During the year we ran discussion groups with students, student advisers and with our Points of Contact in providers.

The student discussion groups enabled us to hear directly from students who had not complained to us, to help us understand more about students' experiences, and were also an opportunity to raise awareness of our work and how we can help. They included sessions focused on the experiences of disabled students, students from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, and students of different faiths (see also [Equality, diversity and inclusion](#)). We are grateful to all the students who have shared their perspectives with us.

The cost of living was a common concern raised in these discussions, and some students described making difficult choices about attending teaching, having to balance factors including the cost of transport and the need to undertake paid employment. We also heard how industrial action in other spheres including transport and primary education meant that some students were prevented from attending scheduled teaching. Some students shared that they were feeling very anxious about the

potential impact of industrial action in higher education on their studies. In general students were aware that there were processes to raise concerns or seek support but often felt that these would be time consuming or intrusive.

*“Great meeting with fellow students from various cultures and backgrounds discussing key struggles, obstacles and worries that international and domestic students face everyday.”*

Participants in the student adviser groups and the provider Points of Contact groups told us they valued the learning and networking opportunity and the chance to share their experiences and learn about practice elsewhere. We have also benefited from the groups, learning from participants’ depth of knowledge and experience.

## External events

In addition to events we hosted ourselves, we also spoke at events run by other organisations. Some of these were mainly for those who manage complaints and appeals at providers. Others gave us the opportunity to talk to a wider audience about the service we provide, and about learning from complaints across a range of topics including sexual misconduct, harassment and gender-based violence, mitigating circumstances, reasonable adjustments for disabled students, and consumer rights. We took part in events hosted by a wide range of organisations including the Academic Registrars’ Council (ARC), the Committee of University Chairs (CUC), GuildHE, Independent HE, the Medical Schools Council, the National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers (NASBTT), and Universities UK (UUK), as well as contributing to the NUS Membership Services Conference and the NUS Lead & Change programme.

We are always happy to answer any queries about our Scheme or good practice guidance, and we welcome conversations about emerging issues or anything else it may be useful to discuss. Please get in touch at [outreach@oiahe.org.uk](mailto:outreach@oiahe.org.uk).

# Working with others

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As an ombuds scheme and registered charity we are independent from governments, sector organisations and from the higher education providers in our Scheme, and our independence underpins our ability to review complaints impartially and fairly. But we are also an integral part of the higher education regulatory landscape in England and in Wales, working in the distinct contexts and approaches of each.

The many challenges for students and the sector deepened over the year. Keeping focused on fairness for students in this context is not easy, but it is important, and we have continued to contribute to the development of policy and practice with this in mind.

We shared insights from our understanding of student concerns and complaints in relevant discussions to support a joined-up, student-focused approach. We worked with a range of organisations, including the Department for Education (DfE), the Welsh government, the Office for Students (OfS), the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), Universities UK (UUK), National Union of Students (NUS) and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), among many others. We regularly contributed at the UK Standing Committee on Quality Assessment (UKSCQA) (now the Quality Council for UK Higher Education) and had regular joint meetings with DfE, the OfS and the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). We engaged with and contributed to a range of relevant initiatives including the Higher Education Mental Health Implementation Taskforce and the Parliamentary Taskforce on Antisemitism in Higher Education, and fed into a number of inquiries and consultations.

## Towards the expansion of our remit in Wales

The Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022 includes provisions to extend access to our Scheme to all post-compulsory education and training students in Wales (except for those in school sixth forms where alternative arrangements apply). We continued to liaise with the Welsh government, HEFCW and others to align the timing of the expansion of our remit with the wider implementation of the Act. We will continue to work with all involved, including the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research as it becomes fully established, as this progresses. We began more detailed planning for a phased implementation of our expanded remit, which we expect to begin in September 2025.

We engaged with ongoing developments around the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023, with a focus on promoting clarity for students about complaints involving free speech (the number of these complaints to us remains very small, fewer than 10 in 2023). We and others remain concerned that having two different routes for complaints relating to freedom of speech through our Scheme and the OfS scheme once established could be confusing for students. We continued to work with the DfE, the OfS and others towards making it as clear as possible for students about where to raise their concerns and what the different routes can offer. We are also concerned that it may be difficult for providers to work with potentially different expectations under the two schemes and to signpost students effectively in this context. We expect that once the OfS consultation process has been completed we will be able to better understand and explain how the schemes will work together.

We continued to work with the OfS, HEFCW and relevant professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) across a range of issues and to share information under our formal agreements to support a joined-up approach. This includes information about issues in complaints that may indicate a systemic concern at a provider, and OfS registration information that may impact a provider's membership of our Scheme. We were pleased to agree a Memorandum of Understanding with Ofqual to support effective working and information sharing between the two organisations, and we welcomed their confirmation that awarding organisations voluntarily being in membership of the OIA Scheme is compatible with Ofqual regulation.

Access to independent redress for unresolved complaints is an important part of achieving fairness for students. We are continuing to engage with the UK government around developments such as the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) and the wider strategy on access to tertiary education to ensure that independent redress for complaints is considered as part of the greater integration of higher and further education.

Protection for students in the event of a provider closure has become a more pressing concern as the financial situation in the sector has worsened. We continued to encourage and contribute to discussion of this issue, including how to make sure that remedies are available for students who have unresolved complaints, especially where a provider closes and there are no suitable transfer options or funds available. A closure at course or department level can also have a significant impact on the students involved. During the year we fed in [learning from our previous experiences of closure events](#) to help minimise the impact on students in these circumstances.

Throughout the year we regularly participated in meetings and events with other ombuds schemes through our membership of the Ombudsman Association, including contributing to the annual conference. We also engaged with the international higher education ombuds sector through the European Network of Ombuds in Higher Education (ENOHE). These were valuable opportunities to share insights and learning and keep up to date with issues and developments in the ombuds sector.



# Improving what we do

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In this section we talk about some of the work we did in 2023 to continually improve what we do.

## Our approach to our case-handling process

For some students bringing their complaint to us is not easy. Often the issues students complain about matter a lot to them and can have a big impact on their lives. Some students have been through deeply upsetting experiences, and some have significant ongoing difficulties. We approach the developments we make to our casework processes with this in mind. This also supports the efficiency and effectiveness of our casework.

It can be helpful to a student to discuss their complaint with us at an early stage. During the year we offered students a conversation when we received their complaint, in addition to opportunities to speak with us later in our process, to help them to better understand the approach we were likely to take and what we could and couldn't do.

We also identified at an earlier stage, complaints where the student may benefit from having their complaint handled by a single case-handler throughout our review process.

## Our Commitment to Kindness in practice

In 2023, following our adoption of a Commitment to Kindness in 2022, we continued to develop the ways we embed kindness across our organisation and put kindness into practice in our approach to casework. We looked at how showing kindness in difficult situations, with people who may be distressed or vulnerable, can be complex. For example, we often need to balance expressing empathy with a student with the need to manage their expectations. We also thought about how we may be able to minimise the impact of a disappointing decision by thinking about when and how we communicate it to the student.

We hope that by doing what we can to make sure that students know that they have been heard and that we understand how they feel, we can make a difference to their experience of using our Scheme.

A student brought a complaint to us about a number of issues at their provider, which had caused them distress and anxiety. The provider had upheld their complaint and offered them compensation, a refund of tuition fees and the opportunity to restart the course. We checked that the provider was willing to keep the offer open throughout our review and confirmed this to the student. We decided that the complaint to us was Not Justified because the provider had made a reasonable offer to resolve the student's complaint. In our Complaint Outcome, we used wording to communicate our decision more kindly, making it clear that our decision did not mean that we thought the student's complaint to the provider was not valid. We received positive feedback from the student to say that they understood the reasoning behind our decision.

Both students and providers benefit from our processes being as streamlined as we can make them while maintaining fairness. We are conscious of the pressures in many providers' complaints and appeals teams and we continued to look for opportunities to minimise the work involved in responding to a complaint. For example, where it was clear early on from the information provided by the student that we would not uphold a complaint, we offered the provider the option of not responding to the complaint.

During 2023 we made significant progress with reducing the time that cases are with us. We built on our collaborative working across teams to further improve efficient allocation, progression and resolution of cases. We also benefited from improved functionality in our new IT system which we introduced at the start of the year.

It is important for students and providers to have easy and secure access to information about their complaints. In early 2023 we launched our upgraded MyOIA portal, which offers enhanced security and more autonomy for providers and students to access and upload information to a case file. Following its launch, we continued to ask providers and students for their feedback and we were grateful for their insights. These helped us ensure that our guidance for users was clear and effective.

"I really appreciate being told [of the changes to our systems] now. I would've worried if the email was genuine and then worried about my data. It's very considerate of you all. Thank you!"

Call from a student, following our communication about the MyOIA portal

"As a wider point, please could you feedback that the OIA portal, for me, works exceptionally well, and is much improved over the previous process. It's a much cleaner, clearer approach to providing documentation."

Feedback from a provider about the improvements to the portal

# Students' experience of our service

In 2023, we continued to give students the opportunity to tell us their experiences of our service, by inviting feedback during and at the end of our process through surveys, through the feedback form on our website, and through our engagement with students during our case-handling process.

Some students are very satisfied with our service. A high proportion of those who respond to our surveys say that we have treated them with respect and politeness. Others express concerns, most commonly around the extent and nature of our remit, understanding our decisions and processes, or a perception of a lack of impartiality.

We want all students who use our service to have a positive experience of it, and while many students are very satisfied, it is important and valuable for us to understand what we could do better for those students that have not experienced it in that way. Students who are unhappy with their experience can make a complaint about our service. In 2023, we received 52 service complaints, compared to 57 in 2022.

Some of the complaints we received raised issues about the merits of the student's complaint about their provider, but we can't consider those issues under our service complaints procedure. Where the concerns were about our service, the issues raised were generally similar to the concerns expressed in the wider student feedback.

The complaints we receive about our service give us the opportunity to put right something if it has gone wrong. The concerns raised also provide us with valuable feedback about some students experience our process. Complaints about our service are considered separately from casework, and learning is then fed back in, for example it contributed to our work around how we more proactively support students through our process.

"Thank you very much for the prompt and kind response. I'll get the documents to you as soon as possible, but do appreciate the flexibility and understanding."



"Can I just thank you for your professionalism and hope you are successful with the university and we can bring this issue to a close..."



# Advisory Panels

Our two Advisory Panels enable us to access expertise and advice on issues related to our casework. Each panel met twice in the year to discuss topics of interest. Our case-handling staff can also refer issues to Panel members outside of meetings for their expert input. The meetings provided valuable insight into issues in the sector and we were able to share information about our approach. The Panels do not see or make decisions on individual complaints.

## Higher Education Advisory Panel

The Higher Education Advisory Panel (HEAP) discussed a wide range of issues including the continuing impact of cost-of-living pressures on students and steps providers are taking to help, the effect of industrial action on students, continuing increases some providers are seeing in complaints, appeals and disciplinary issues, the challenges and issues arising from sexual misconduct and harassment cases and how providers are navigating these, ongoing challenges around mental health, and artificial intelligence (AI) and misconduct.

The Panel reflects the diversity of our Scheme membership and includes student advisers and a balance of administrators and academics from providers.

### HEAP members during 2023

- ◆ Zoë Allman, Associate Dean (Academic), De Montfort University
- ◆ Claire Blanchard, Partnership Team Leader, University of Wales Trinity Saint David
- ◆ Dr Mark Hollingsworth, Deputy Chief Operating Officer, City, University of London
- ◆ Charlotte Levy, Registrar, Royal Academy of Dance
- ◆ Dr Nathan Morris, Head of the Student Complaints and Academic Casework Team, University of Warwick
- ◆ Carmen Neagoe, Head of Educational and Teaching Support, Cambridge Judge Business School, University of Cambridge
- ◆ Melissa Reilly, Advice and Response Manager (Safeguarding, Gender-based Violence and Hate), The University of Manchester
- ◆ Adrian Spence, Head of Advice, Wellbeing and Accommodation Support, Aston Students' Union, Birmingham
- ◆ Cat Turhan, Director of Membership Services, Imperial College Union
- ◆ Nicholas Whitehouse, Coordinator, Mixed Economy Group of Colleges

## Disability Experts Panel

Our Disability Experts Panel (DEP) is made up of disability practitioners and experts in disability matters from specialist organisations and higher education providers. From time to time we refresh the membership of the Panel to bring in different expertise and in 2023 we ran a successful recruitment round and appointed three new members.

The Panel discussed issues including access arrangements for online assessments, academic integrity, accommodation, continuing pressure on disability services, uncertainty around future arrangements for DSA assessments, the difficulties disabled students can face in obtaining supporting evidence from GPs, the Disabled Student Commitment and the duty of care debate in the higher education sector.

### DEP Members during 2023

- ◆ Harriet Cannon, Disability Advisory Team Manager, University of Leeds
- ◆ Antony Chuter, Elected Trustee, Pain UK
- ◆ Martin McLean, Education and Training Policy Advisor (Post-14), National Deaf Children's Society
- ◆ Lucy Merritt, Education Policy Manager, Thomas Pocklington Trust (from 1 July 2023)
- ◆ John Milligan, Team Leader, Visually Impaired Children, Young People & Families, Virtual School Sensory Support; Representative from VIEW (to 31 July 2023)
- ◆ Laura Nettell, Interim Head of Disability Services, University of Gloucestershire (from 1 July 2023)
- ◆ Levi Pay, Director and Principal Consultant, Plinth House (to 31 January 2023)
- ◆ Phil Scarffe, Head of Student Welfare, De Montfort University (from 1 July 2023)
- ◆ Alice Speller, Chief Executive Officer, National Association of Disability Practitioners (NADP)

“Thank you very much for today's phone conversation. You were a great help and have provided a lot of clarity on the process.”



# Equality, diversity and inclusion

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As an ombuds service we have a deeply held commitment to fairness. Our values include equality and diversity and we are committed at all levels of our organisation to promoting this. We do this both through our work and as an employer. In 2023 our Diversity Steering Group, which includes Board members with relevant expertise and the Senior Leadership Team, continued to oversee our work in this area, and equality, diversity and inclusion was regularly discussed at meetings of the full Board.

## Casework and outreach

### Disabled students

In 2023 we had a particular focus on what we could learn from our casework about the experiences of disabled students. We looked at the complaints we received from disabled students to gain greater insight into the prevalence of different disabilities among students who complain to us, to get a clearer picture of what disabled students complain about, and to look at the outcomes of complaints from disabled students (see also [Themes section Complaints from disabled students](#)).

We continued to hold discussion groups with disabled students to understand their experiences in more depth. Students reflected a mixed picture of support in providers, with some telling us about positive experiences of reasonable adjustments, an inclusive curriculum and good support more widely, while others had experienced issues such as difficulty getting or being unable to get the adjustments they felt they needed. Many reported inconsistency, with some individual staff providing excellent support and others not appearing to understand their needs. Some had found it tiring having to explain their disability to multiple different people. Students with fluctuating conditions talked of the particular difficulties of explaining and evidencing them. Some students felt a sense of guilt about for example needing extensions or struggling with attendance.

We also gained insights from discussions with our Disability Experts Panel about a range of issues affecting disabled students.

We have been using these insights to inform our own practice and to share learning with the sector to contribute to improving the experiences of disabled students, including contributing to the Disabled Student Commitment Partner Group and engaging with providers.

## Mental health

The most prevalent disability reported by students who complained to us in 2023 was a mental health condition. More widely, many students who may not consider themselves to be disabled are experiencing difficulties with their mental health and wellbeing. We see in our casework the very significant impact mental health issues can have on a student and on their ability to engage with their studies and with the processes that are intended to support them. We also see some of the challenges for providers in supporting students' mental health, especially where overstretched NHS services may be unable to provide timely support for those who need it.

In 2023 we continued to contribute to work in the sector to address this important issue, in particular through participation in the [Higher Education Mental Health Implementation Taskforce](#).

## Students of different ethnicities and faiths

We continued to engage with the work of the Living Black at University Commission, including presenting at the Living Black at University Conference: Creating meaningful change. We held further discussion groups with students of different ethnicities to support our understanding of different students' experiences.

We ran a series of discussion groups with students of different faiths to learn more about their experiences. Students of Christian, Jewish and Muslim faiths all spoke of being able to find a welcoming community and a sense of belonging through student societies. However, it was concerning to hear of Jewish and Muslim students feeling the need to hide or minimise their faith identities and reporting concerns about their security, and the impact for some of the current Israel-Gaza conflict. We also met with the Union of Jewish Students, and engaged with the work of the Parliamentary Taskforce on Antisemitism in Higher Education.

# Our organisation

In 2023 we maintained a strong focus on diversity in our recruitment. We continued to take a more skills-based approach that relies less on candidates' previous opportunity and experience. We made use of recruitment software to reduce the risk of unconscious bias and support objectivity, for example through anonymising applications. We continue to monitor diversity in our organisation.

We also support diversity through offering flexible working arrangements, including part-time positions at all levels. Colleagues can work remotely for a high proportion of their working time, if they prefer and as their role allows, and have a lot of flexibility in their working hours. This can be particularly helpful for those who are managing disabilities or health conditions, or who have caring responsibilities.

We have a job evaluation framework and grading structure to set the appropriate pay grade for each role so that people doing the same or similar roles are paid on an equal basis. Around three-quarters of our staff are female, and the proportion in senior roles is similar. At 31 December 2023 we had a median gender pay gap in favour of men of 7.9%, compared with 5.6% in 2022. This figure varies over time due to the small size of the organisation. The Board and relevant committees monitor it annually.

It is important not only that we continue to improve the diversity of our workforce but that everyone who works for us feels valued, included and supported. In 2023 we continued to promote an inclusive working culture, for example encouraging openness about health conditions so that we can better support colleagues in their work.

We continued to promote awareness and increase understanding, and to celebrate diversity. Discussion of equality, diversity and inclusion is included in our induction programme for new staff. We marked several events and celebrations during the year including Pride Month and Black History Month, and regularly shared information about events and issues to raise awareness.

We also pay attention to and monitor diversity on our Board. We reviewed and updated our Trustee recruitment materials from an EDI perspective. In our recruitment of new Trustees in 2023, including a new Chair, we proactively reached out to attract diverse candidates.



# Our people

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Our people are at the heart of our organisation, with shared values, a commitment to the work we do and a wide range of skills and life experiences. We work together as a strong and collaborative team to deliver the best service we can across all areas of our work.

We continued to grow our organisation, alongside a strong focus on efficiency, to enable us to manage effectively the ongoing increases in the number of complaints coming to us and other key aspects of our work. In our recruitment we maintained a strong focus on skills and continued to reach out to diverse candidates as part of our wider equality, diversity, and inclusion work.

Our Staff Liaison Committee again met regularly through the year. It continues to be a valuable forum for listening to and sharing information with team representatives.

“As a member of the Casework Support Team, I am often a first point of contact for students, some of whom have experienced or are experiencing difficult circumstances. A key part of my role is listening with empathy, and signposting to further support when needed. This year all case-handlers received additional training on how to respond to students in distress and how to identify and help students who may be vulnerable. My role can be challenging, but I’m proud to be part of an organisation where I can make a difference, and where kindness and wellbeing are seen as important.”

**Penny, Casework Administrator**

“The only constant in the technology industry is change. Like many organisations right now, we have had to adapt to the changing climate, with our focus to stay ahead of the security threats which are developing at an incredible pace. We can’t afford to be complacent, and I’m proud to say that my colleagues are aware and engaged and our IT department is working hard to support them, whether that is in the office or working remotely.”

**Chris, IT Infrastructure & Security Manager**

"I have enjoyed thinking out loud about the service we provide and how to take it to the next level. One of the ways we have been doing this in the Adjudication Team is through cross-team working. For me, this has meant more meetings, collaborative work, and friendships. Through this and taking initiative to seek out ways to learn, I have gained a deeper appreciation and value of my colleagues' work. As well as a more-rounded perspective of our process and ways to improve it. So, I am particularly looking forward to seeing how our ideas and various projects can further improve the experience of students and providers."

**Oyin, Assistant Adjudicator**

"I joined the OIA in 2020 to manage provider memberships and subscriptions. With increasing membership numbers, it is important to ensure that I'm working efficiently while continuing to meet the needs of our stakeholders. I was part of the system development group who introduced our new secure online portal MyOIA in January 2023. Among many enhanced functions, MyOIA enables providers to independently view and manage more of their membership information at the click of a button."

**Rachel, Membership & Data Integrity Co-ordinator**

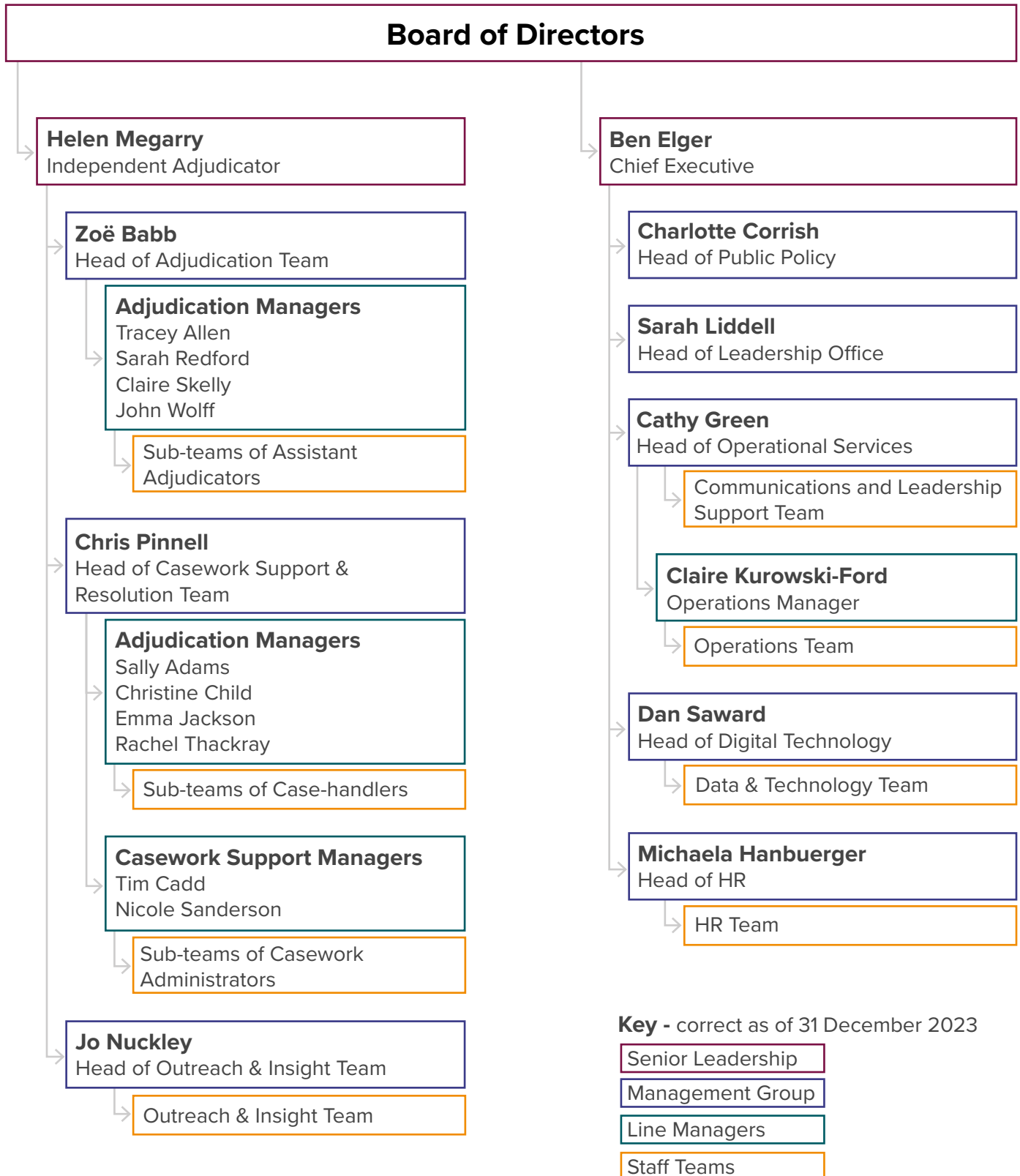
## Learning and development

We continued to offer learning and development opportunities in 2023, to build knowledge and skills as part of our commitment to continually improving what we do. This included internal knowledge-sharing sessions on a range of case-handling topics, and externally led sessions on having effective telephone and video calls, and on responding empathetically and effectively to students who are distressed. We also rolled out access to an online learning platform, to give colleagues access to a wide range of training relevant to their roles.

## The Rebecca Marsland Award

The Rebecca Marsland Award was created in 2019 in memory of our friend and colleague who sadly passed away. It is awarded each year as a celebration of an outstanding contribution to our work, an exceptional personal achievement or an act of kindness. We invite colleagues to make nominations and our Chief Executive and our Independent Adjudicator, together with a previous year's winner of the award, decide on a worthy winner. This year, the award was given to Laura, one of our Casework Administrators, who received nominations from colleagues across several teams. Laura's approachable, efficient and calm approach makes her an invaluable member of our Casework Support Team. Colleagues across the organisation were keen to recognise her, for always having the time to not only help but to go the extra mile.

# Our organisational structure



Key - correct as of 31 December 2023

- Senior Leadership
- Management Group
- Line Managers
- Staff Teams

# Our Board of Trustees/Directors

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The OIA is overseen by an independent Board of Directors.

The Board is made up of a majority of Independent Directors, including the Chair, appointed by fair and open competition on the basis of their skills and experience, and of Directors nominated by six representative bodies in higher education in England and Wales. These bodies may also appoint Alternate Directors, to attend Board meetings if their Nominated Director is not available.

Directors are normally appointed for a term of three years and serve up to two terms. No Director can serve for longer than nine consecutive years.

Board members are not involved in the review of individual complaints. The Board's responsibilities include:

- ◆ preserving the independence of the Scheme and the role of the Independent Adjudicator
- ◆ oversight of the performance and effectiveness of the Independent Adjudicator, the Chief Executive and the OIA Scheme
- ◆ setting the budget for the OIA and the level of subscriptions payable by providers each year
- ◆ approving the [Rules](#) of the Scheme.

During the year we progressed work towards our planned new governance arrangements, following a review completed by the Board in 2022. Under the new arrangements, all new Trustees would be appointed through an open recruitment process within a framework that sets out the skills, experience and perspectives required to achieve a balanced, independent and effective Board.

In 2023 we said goodbye to some long-serving Trustees including the Chair, Dame Suzi Leather and the Deputy Chair, Andy Mack. We thank them for their exceptional contribution to the Board and the OIA. We were pleased to welcome Sim Scavazza as our new Chair from 1 October 2023, and to appoint Martin Kirke as Deputy Chair from 1 July 2023.

# Trustees/Directors

The Trustees/Directors of the charitable company, who served throughout 2023 unless otherwise stated, were as follows:

## Independent Trustees/Directors

### Chair

Dame Suzi Leather (to 30 September 2023)

Sim Scavazza (from 1 October 2023)

### Deputy Chair

Andy Mack (to 30 June 2023)

Martin Kirke (Deputy Chair from 1 July 2023)

Adesewa Adebisi

Andrew Chandler

Dr Wendy Finlay

Nicola Flint (from 1 July 2023)

Jonathan Rees

Sophie Williams

## Nominated and Alternate Trustees/Directors

### Nominated by the Association of Heads of University Administration

Dave Hall (to 30 June 2023) - Nominated Director

Vacant (from 1 July 2023; no appointment made due to governance review)

### Nominated by the Committee of University Chairs

Vacant (no appointment made due to governance review)

### Nominated by GuildHE

Jon Renyard - Nominated Director

### Nominated by the National Union of Students

Orla Tarn - Nominated Director

Chloe Field - Alternate Director

### Nominated by Universities UK

Professor Alistair Fitt - Nominated Director

### Nominated by Universities Wales

William Callaway - Nominated Director

Dr Kevin Mundy - Alternate Director

# Our strategy and Operating Report

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Our charitable purpose is to advance education for public benefit through the independent review of student complaints in England and Wales and by using learning from complaints to help improve policies and practices.

Our strategy identifies four key priorities through which we fulfil our purpose:

- ◆ to review student complaints independently, fairly and effectively
- ◆ to share learning from complaints with higher education providers, student representative bodies, students and others, to help improve policies and practices and the student experience
- ◆ to work effectively with others and influence policy and practice in the wider regulatory framework for higher education and in the ombuds sector
- ◆ to continually develop our organisation so that we can do our work well.

Our [Operating Report for 2023](#) reports progress against our [Operating Plan 2023](#). It sets out what we have done during the year to advance each of our strategic priorities. It includes information on our performance against our key performance indicators, progress in ongoing areas of work, and new initiatives.

# Subscriptions

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Our subscription model is designed to reflect the diversity of our membership and, to a lesser extent, the number of complaints about a provider, through a core subscription fee and a case-related element.

All providers pay a core subscription. For most providers this is based on student numbers (see Core subscription fee rates below for more information).

Core subscription levels are reviewed annually. There has been an upward trend over several years in the number of complaints coming to us, including the significant increase in 2023, and with the many pressures in the sector we expect this will continue. While we have made efficiency gains and to some extent we have been able to absorb increases in recent years, our costs remain strongly linked to the size of our caseload. At the same time we are acutely aware of the significant financial challenges facing the higher education sector. Our Board carefully considered the resource needed to deal with our caseload whilst being mindful of the financial pressures in the sector, and agreed an increase in core subscription fee rates for 2023 of 9.0% for all types of provider.

Some providers also pay a case-related element of the subscription. “Points” are allocated to each complaint we receive, and each subscription band has a points threshold. The case-related element is payable when the number of points allocated to complaints received about the provider in the previous year exceeds the band’s points threshold. The number of points above the threshold determines the fee. The points allocated to a case are based on whether it is not eligible for us to review, or is settled or withdrawn before it goes to full review, or is fully reviewed. This maintains the vital principle that there should be no link between the outcome of eligible cases and the amount of any fee paid.

In 2023 we completed our review of the case-related element of subscriptions, to make sure that it continues to operate as fairly as possible for all providers. Feedback from providers suggested that the arrangements were broadly operating fairly but that there was a need to recognise the general increase in the volume of complaints. In light of this our Board agreed to raise the points threshold for each band (increasing the number of points that can be incurred before case fees are payable) by 10% for cases received from 2024. The Board also agreed a small increase in the per point fee from £240 to £250. Both changes will affect case fees payable in 2025.

More details of our [subscriptions arrangements](#) can be found on our website.

**CORE SUBSCRIPTION FEE RATES FOR 2023**  
(pro-rated for providers joining the OIA Scheme part way through the year)

Student numbers	Band	Core Subscription Fee (£)	Core Subscription Fee (£) (HE in FE providers only)
Up to and including 200 students	AA	519	363
201 to 500 students	A	1,072	750
501 to 1,500 students	B	2,163	1,514
1,501 to 6,000 students	C	11,630	8,141
6,001 to 12,000 students	D	23,075	16,153
12,001 to 20,000 students	E	38,355	26,849
20,001 to 30,000 students	F	57,977	40,584
30,001 to 50,000 students	G	68,898	48,229
50,001 to 100,000 students	H	84,784	59,349
More than 100,000 students	I	130,265	91,186

**CORE SUBSCRIPTION FEE RATES FOR 2024**  
(pro-rated for providers joining the OIA Scheme part way through the year)

Student numbers	Band	Core Subscription Fee (£)	Core Subscription Fee (£) (HE in FE providers only)
Up to and including 200 students	AA	566	396
201 to 500 students	A	1,168	818
501 to 1,500 students	B	2,358	1,650
1,501 to 6,000 students	C	12,677	8,874
6,001 to 12,000 students	D	25,152	17,607
12,001 to 20,000 students	E	41,807	29,265
20,001 to 30,000 students	F	63,195	44,237
30,001 to 50,000 students	G	75,099	52,570
50,001 to 100,000 students	H	92,415	64,690
More than 100,000 students	I	141,989	99,393

The core subscription fee for 2023 for the following providers was £303 (£330 in 2024):

- ◆ Providers of School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITTs)
- ◆ Providers that are brought into membership of our Scheme because their designated HE provision is franchised from another provider, and (if they are based in England) they are not on the OfS Register
- ◆ Providers in England that are not on the OfS Register but are providing a course leading to an award of another member of our Scheme that is in England.



# Statement of financial activities

## For the year ended 31 December 2023

	Unrestricted funds		Total 2023	Unrestricted funds		Total 2022
	General Reserve	Pension Reserve		General Reserve	Pension Reserve	
	£	£		£	£	
<b>Income</b>						
<i>Income from investments</i>	112,862	-	112,862	14,324	-	14,324
<i>Income from charitable activities</i>						
Subscriptions	7,232,600	-	7,232,600	6,606,971	-	6,606,971
<i>Other income</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total income</b>	<b>7,345,462</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>7,345,462</b>	<b>6,621,295</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>6,621,295</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>						
<i>Charitable activities</i>	7,198,964	(4,786,966)	2,411,998	6,539,986	29,169	6,569,155
<b>Total resources expended</b>	<b>7,198,964</b>	<b>(4,786,966)</b>	<b>2,411,998</b>	<b>6,539,986</b>	<b>29,169</b>	<b>6,569,155</b>
<b>Net income/(expenditure)</b>	<b>146,498</b>	<b>4,786,966</b>	<b>4,933,464</b>	<b>81,309</b>	<b>(29,169)</b>	<b>52,140</b>
<b>Net movement in funds for the year</b>	<b>146,498</b>	<b>4,786,966</b>	<b>4,933,464</b>	<b>81,309</b>	<b>(29,169)</b>	<b>52,140</b>
Total funds at 1 January 2023	2,303,371	(4,786,966)	(2,483,595)	2,222,062	(4,757,797)	(2,535,735)
<b>Total funds at 31 December 2023</b>	<b>2,449,869</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,449,869</b>	<b>2,303,371</b>	<b>(4,786,966)</b>	<b>(2,483,595)</b>

The amounts derive from continuing activities. All gains and losses recognised in the year are included in the statement of financial activities.

# Balance sheet at 31 December 2023

	2023		2022	
	£	£	£	£
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>				
Tangible assets		83,100		132,898
Intangible assets		255,335		331,245
		<u>338,435</u>		<u>464,143</u>
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>				
Debtors	213,301		253,646	
Cash at bank and in hand	6,429,532		4,225,737	
	<u>6,642,833</u>		<u>4,479,383</u>	
<b>LIABILITIES:</b>				
Amounts falling due within one year	(4,506,965)		(2,555,125)	
	<u></u>		<u></u>	
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>		2,135,868		1,924,258
		<u>2,474,303</u>		<u>2,388,401</u>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>				
<b>LIABILITIES:</b>				
Amounts falling due after one year		(24,434)		(85,030)
		<u>2,449,869</u>		<u>2,303,371</u>
<b>NET ASSETS EXCLUDING PENSION PROVISION</b>				
Pension provision		-		(4,786,966)
		<u>2,449,869</u>		<u>(2,483,595)</u>
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS/(LIABILITIES)</b>		<u><u>2,449,869</u></u>		<u><u>(2,483,595)</u></u>
<b>FUNDS</b>				
<b>Unrestricted Funds</b>				
General Reserves		2,449,869		2,303,371
Pension Reserve		-		(4,786,966)
		<u>2,449,869</u>		<u>(2,483,595)</u>

These constitute summarised financial statements and do not include the financial information and disclosures required in a full set of financial statements.

The full set of audited [financial statements](#) can be found on our website.

2023

# Annual Report

## Office of the Independent Adjudicator

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Registered charity number: 1141289

