

Schedule 5

OIA Annual Activity Report for Period 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024

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

No. enquiries received (total)	No. disputes received (domestic)	No. disputes received (Cross-border)	No. disputes received (total)	No. disputes accepted (continued to case) (domestic)	No. disputes accepted (Continued to case) (cross-border)	No. disputes accepted (total)
4978	2186	1457	3643	1829	1257	3086

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

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

Types of disputes:

	Domestic	Cross-border	Grand Total
Service Issues	906	271	1177
Academic Appeal	1028	632	1660
Financial	152	115	267
Equality law / Human rights	51	4	55
Welfare / Non-course service issues	100	20	120
Disciplinary matters (academic)	73	76	149
Disciplinary matters (non-academic)	107	24	131
Fitness to practise	53	4	57
Other	13	5	18

On our Complaint Form we ask students to answer the following question: *"when you applied for your course, were you: Resident in the UK; or Resident outside the UK. If you are unsure, please explain your circumstances."* If students do not complete this question, we

write to them asking them to do so. However, students who have withdrawn their complaint or whose complaint we have ruled not eligible, may not respond. For the purposes of this report we have included the "not specified" in the "domestic" column.

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

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

Detailed information on the trends and common themes that we see in the complaints we review is provided in our annual report - [OIA Annual Report 2023 \(oiahe.org.uk\)](https://oiahe.org.uk). This includes specific sections on trends in complaints and themes in our casework.

In 2023/24 most of our complaints relate to either academic appeals or service issues.

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

We continue to develop new and update existing elements of the Good Practice Framework ([Good Practice Framework - OIAHE](https://oiahe.org.uk)). Following consultation with the sector, we issued a revised version of the [Good Practice Framework - Delivering learning opportunities with others \(oiahe.org.uk\)](https://oiahe.org.uk) in February 2024.

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

- October 2023: Complaints relating to disciplinary matters (non-academic)
- January 2024: Complaints relating to accommodation
- March 2024: Complaints relating to placements
- June 2024: Complaints from postgraduate students

All with the focus on our vision of fairness for students across the higher education sector.

During 2023/24, we upgraded our website platform to further improve functionality and accessibility. We focused the changes on the website infrastructure rather than how the website looks to users but it now includes:

- A new 'Learning from our casework' section under our Resources and publications. This brings together learning and observations from our casework, making it easier for external stakeholders to find.
- An improved search function for providers that are members of our Scheme.
- Improved 'calls to action', making it clearer for students and providers when they need to do something and how.

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

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

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

Total no. of disputes rejected	582
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Reason	No. rejected	Percentage of rejected
a) the consumer has not attempted to contact the trader first	450	77%
b) the dispute was frivolous or vexatious	10	2%
c) the dispute had been previously considered by another ADR body or the court	7	1%
d) the value fell below the monetary value	0	0%
e) the consumer did not submit the disputes within the time period specified	32	5%
f) dealing with the dispute would have impaired the operation of the ADR body	7	1%
g) other (enquired too early, not yet complained to trader, trader not member, advice call etc...	76	13%

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

We are pleased to note a slight decrease (from 18% to 15%) in the number of complaints that we received but which were not eligible.

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

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

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

Reasons for discontinuation: N/A

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

	Domestic	Cross-border	Total
Average time taken to resolve disputes (from receipt of complaint)	70	69	70
Average time taken to resolve disputes (from 'complete complaint file')	18	17	18

We continue to work towards reducing the overall time taken to resolve disputes across our scheme. During this year, we are pleased to have been able to reduce the average time taken to resolve cases from the time of receipt to an average of 70 days (compared to 123 days in 2022/23). We take an adaptable and proportionate approach to our reviews, using our processes flexibly and trying to resolve cases at the earliest opportunity. Our commitment to providing a timely service and reducing the timescale to resolve disputes is an ongoing organisational priority.

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

Percentage of provider compliance: 99.4%

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

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

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

ombuds and higher education sectors. We have adopted the Ombudsman Association Casework Competency Framework.

In 2024 we came into our next strategic planning cycle. Our strategic review will look again across all strategic areas of our work at how we can maximise our positive impact, to the benefit of students and the sector.