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LONDON SOUTH BANK STUDENTS' UNION

# ADVICE SERVICE

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**A GUIDE TO THE OIA**  
(THE OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT ADJUDICATOR)

# A Guide to the OIA (the Office of the Independent Adjudicator)

## *What is the OIA (Office of the Independent Adjudicator)?*

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) is an independent body that reviews individual complaints by students against higher education providers. They have no regulatory powers over the educational institutions and can therefore not punish or fine them. However, Universities are expected to comply with the decisions and recommendations of the OIA as failing to do so is considered bad practice.

## *How do I make a complaint to the OIA?*

Before you can submit a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA), you must have exhausted all internal complaints and/or appeals procedures at your University. A Completion of Procedures letter will be issued once your case has been wholly dealt with, detailing the final decision made by the University.

## *What are the time frames?*

In order to get OIA to review your case, they must receive your complaint within **12 months** of the date of issue of your Completion of Procedures letter; otherwise, it will be considered out of time. Furthermore, the case's incident must have taken place **within the last three years**.

Please note, you cannot commence any legal proceedings in the Civil Court concerning your case as long as the OIA is reviewing it. If you do, the OIA will stop its investigation into your matter.

## *What happens in the OIA complaint process?*

The OIA provides an independent review scheme. In other words, it considers whether the University has correctly applied its regulations and followed its procedures, and whether the outcome is reasonable under the circumstances.

Once all documents have been received, the OIA's case-handlers will complete their review within 90 days.

## *What are the possible outcomes?*

If the OIA decides that your complaint is Justified or Partly Justified, they make recommendations for the University to implement. This is likely to be one of the following:

- Reconsider your appeal/complaint;
- Review or change its procedures or regulations; or
- Review or change the way appeals and/or complaints are being dealt with.

The OIA may still make recommendations, even if a complaint is deemed Not Justified, but these may not have any impact on your University outcome.

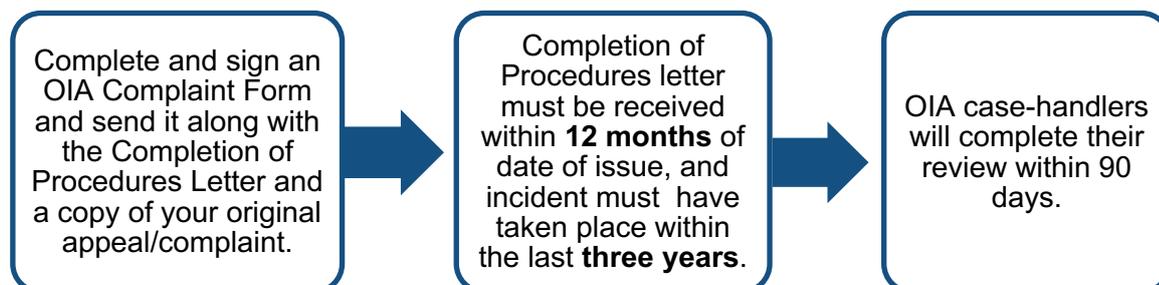
### Are you ready to request a review from the OIA?

- Have you completed the internal complaints/appeals procedures at London South Bank University?
- Have you received a Completion of Procedures Letter?
- Did the main issue complained about take place within the last three years?

### What types of complaints can the OIA look at?

- Academic appeals
- Extenuating circumstances
- Teaching and facilities
- Student accommodation
- Research supervision
- Welfare
- Discrimination - race, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation or religious belief
- Bullying and harassment
- Placements
- Maladministration
- Procedural irregularities
- Unfair practices
- Disciplinary matters, including plagiarism
- Fitness to practise processes

### Overview of the process



## FAQs

*I have not gone through all the stages of the procedure at LSBU; can I still make a complaint to the OIA?*

The OIA will only look at your complaint in exceptional circumstances. You need to present a very good argument and provide evidence as to why you have been unable to complete the process or get a Completion of Procedures letter from your University. We recommend that all students seek to settle their complaint with the University first before taking their case to the OIA.

*I have not received a Completion of Procedures letter, what do I do?*

The Completion of Procedures letter should be sent automatically within 28 days of a review outcome being made (unless the outcome was in your favour, in which case you would need to request one be sent to you). However, if you are no longer in possession of the document, or this was not sent to you, you should contact the University to request a duplicate copy. You can also book an appointment with the Students' Union Advice Service if you want some further support or guidance.

*I need help understanding how this process works, what can I do?*

The Students' Union's Advice Service offers free, professional and independent advice. If you are unhappy with the University's final decision on your case and need help taking it to the OIA, our advice workers can provide support.

Once a complaint has been submitted to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, questions should be directed to them:

<http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>

**E-mail:** [enquiries@oiahe.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@oiahe.org.uk)

**Telephone:** 0118 959 9813

*What if I am not happy with their decision?*

If you wish to make a complaint about the service you have received from the OIA, you can do so by emailing [servicecomplaints@oiahe.org.uk](mailto:servicecomplaints@oiahe.org.uk), addressing your complaint to the Head of Leadership Office, within two months of the case being completed.

Please note that their complaints team only deal with service-related issues; they are unable to comment on the actual handling of your case. Only in exceptional circumstances will a complaint about an OIA case's outcome be considered.

For further information, you can learn more about the OIA at their website: [www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk)