

NSO Statement of Commitments to Higher Education Providers

This Statement:

- sets out the National Student Ombudsman's (NSO) commitments to higher education providers (providers) within our jurisdiction¹ about how the NSO will engage with them when carrying out our functions
- replaces any pre-existing arrangements that might exist with other jurisdictions of the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

The NSO will:

1. **Give providers clear and timely information** when we contact them in relation to a complaint.

This includes providing relevant background, explaining what information, documents, access and/or other assistance the provider is expected to provide, and specifying any related timeframe/s.

2. **Consider carefully** whether and when to act informally or formally, including whether and when to use coercive powers. The NSO will seek to resolve complaints at the lowest appropriate level, with a preference for informal processes.

¹ The National Student Ombudsman jurisdiction covers higher education providers registered with the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA).

- 3. Set appropriate timeframes for requests or requirements** of providers, having regard to the urgency and complexity of the matter and the scope and complexity of the request/requirement.
 - We will consider requests from providers for additional time to respond to our requests/requirements, having regard to urgency, scope and complexity, the reason/s additional time is needed, and the provider's timeliness in past matters.
 - If we do not agree to allow additional time, we will explain our reasons.
- 4. Safely collect, store, archive and destroy** any information and data shared with us.
- 5. Notify providers** after finalising a complaint unless we have decided not to take any action.
- 6. Act fairly** by:
 - explaining the grounds for our findings, comments, suggestions and recommendations and inviting the affected provider/s to respond (including identifying any apparent errors of fact or mistakes of law) before we finalise our position
 - seeking a provider's formal response/s to findings and recommendations in our published reports.
- 7. Publish reports, issues papers, fact sheets and other guidance and education materials** on our website to inform best practice for providers and the sector.
- 8. Give providers guidance about best practice approaches** to resolve problems they identify.
- 9. When performing our functions, give providers insights** about their administration, and recommendations, suggestions and comments to improve their administration.
- 10. Give providers current, correct details for key points of contact** within the NSO.
- 11. Be responsive to feedback and opportunities to support continuous improvement.**