

Reference: 01822554

Information Requests  
[information.requests@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:information.requests@ofcom.org.uk)

13 June 2024

## Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information about complaints and sanctions relating to impartiality obligations in broadcasting.

We received this request on 17 May 2024 and we have considered your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("the FOI Act").

### Background

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By way of background, Ofcom assesses every complaint it receives. Based on an initial assessment of the complaint and a consideration of the related content, Ofcom will consider whether there may have been a breach of the Broadcasting Code (the 'Code') or other Ofcom codes or licence conditions. In cases where Ofcom considers there may have been a breach, it will launch an investigation. The possible outcomes of an investigation are that we judge an issue is in breach, resolved or not in breach of our rules.

The volume of complaints received may be a consideration in assessing general audience reactions, but it is not determinative as to whether Ofcom will proceed to investigate any given case. Rather, it is the particular issues which have been raised by the complainant(s) which are of primary concern in Ofcom's assessment of a programme.

[Ofcom's Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin](#) (the 'Bulletin'), published every fortnight on our website, includes decisions about the complaints we have considered. The Bulletin covers a range of cases, including those which Ofcom has escalated for full investigation, and those which, after careful assessment, Ofcom has decided not to pursue because they did not raise issues warranting investigation. The Bulletin can be accessed on our website.

Ofcom may, following due process, impose a sanction if it considers that a broadcaster has seriously, deliberately, repeatedly or recklessly breached the Code. The imposition of a sanction against a broadcaster is a serious matter. Cases where Ofcom has applied a statutory sanction is made available on [our website](#).

In addition, Ofcom's Annual Reports include statistics on broadcasting complaints, cases and sanctions for the period 1 April in one year to 31 March the following year, including total broadcasting investigations recording breaches of the Code (or other Ofcom codes). You can find the full [Annual Reports](#) on our website.

### Your request and our response

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*I am looking to find out about Ofcom's television policy.*

*1. The number of complaints relating to adherence to impartiality rules received by Ofcom in each calendar month since January 2019, with a breakdown of the stations and programmes which these were in relation to.*

We have searched our records and have found the following details, which we have provided in the attached Excel document. Included within these results are complaints in relation to due impartiality ([Section 5](#) of the Code) and impartiality during elections and referendums ([Section 6](#) of the Code).

The tab labelled Q1 shows the details of each complaint received by Ofcom regarding due impartiality/bias since January 2019, including programme, service, date received and transmission date.

*2. The number of complaints relating to adherence to impartiality rules received by Ofcom in each calendar month since January 2019 which were ultimately upheld, with a breakdown of the stations and programmes which these were in relation to.*

The tab labelled Q2 shows the complaints received by Ofcom regarding due impartiality/bias since January 2019 which were investigated and upheld. This table includes details on the programme, service, bulletin issue and transmission or accessed date.

*3. A schedule of all sanctions enacted by Ofcom since 1 January 2019 relating to a television station's adherence to impartiality rules. This schedule should include the name of the violating party, the date of violation, the date of decision, details of the sanction enforced and details of any appeal procedure which took place.*

The tab labelled Q3 shows the sanctions published by Ofcom since 1 January 2019 regarding a TV service's adherence to due impartiality rules. This tab includes the publication date, service, licensee and a link to the published sanction decision where you can find further information.

I hope this information is helpful. If you have any further queries, then please send them to [information.requests@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:information.requests@ofcom.org.uk) – quoting the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely,

## Information Requests

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### Request an internal review

If you are unhappy with the response you have received to your request for information, or think that your request was refused without a reason valid under the law, you may ask for an internal review. If you do, it will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom. We will either uphold the original decision, or reverse or modify it.

If you would like to ask us to carry out an internal review, you should get in touch within two months of the date of this letter. There is no statutory deadline for us to complete our internal review, and the time it takes will depend on the complexity of the request. But we will try to complete the review within 20 working days (or no more than 40 working days in exceptional cases) and keep you informed of our progress.

Please email the Information Requests team ([information.requests@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:information.requests@ofcom.org.uk)) to request an internal review.

### Taking it further

If you are unhappy with the outcome of our internal review, then you have the right to [complain to the Information Commissioner's Office](#).