



INTERNATIONAL
OMBUDSMAN
INSTITUTE

HOW TO WRITE AN IOI BEST PRACTICE PAPER

COMPENDIUM & GUIDING FRAMEWORK
FOR INTERESTED AUTHORS

INTRODUCTION

As the only global Ombudsman organisation, the IOI is uniquely placed to promote best practice by drawing on the experience of its members. This is achieved in many ways, through training, conferences and workshops, comparative research and by putting Offices in touch with others who have excelled in a particular field.

One important way in which learning is shared is through the new publication series of **IOI Best Practice Papers**. These papers are developed by IOI member institutions, partner organizations and/or members from the academic community with a view to providing guidance material on key features and topics to support the development of the Ombudsman community. The papers are intended to be practical, rather than academic, and to be written in a straightforward way for maximum accessibility.

The Best Practice Papers (BPPs) draw on the experience of Ombudsman institutions and highlight ways of working which are likely to bring about successful results. They are published on the IOI website, where they are accessible to the wider public.

BBPs are usually not intended to be exhaustive. Best practices is continually developing as Ombudsman institutions adapt to new challenges and opportunities. It should be possible to update BBPs over time whenever new approaches, new findings and new practices come to light. Readers are therefore encouraged to suggest improvements, as this will guarantee, that the papers we publish remain relevant and are perceived as useful guidance material.

HOW TO WRITE AN IOI BEST PRACTICE PAPER

Selecting the topic

IOI membership includes institutions from all over the world. It represents a wide and diverse range of mandates and responsibilities as well as a large scope of challenges and different issues that Ombudsman institutions deal with on a daily basis.

If you have an interesting topic that you would like to elaborate on and share with the wider Ombudsman community as BPP, please feel free to approach the IOI General Secretariat (ioi@volksanw.gv.at) with your suggestion.

Topics for the IOI Best Practice Paper series should be of relevance for Ombudsman offices around the world; i.e. focus on issues, matters and challenges many and/or most of our members deal with on a regular basis. They can cover more general matters of interest to the Ombudsman community as a whole (in the past BPP have been published on topics such as “Developing and reforming Ombudsman institutions” and “Securing effective change”. However, they can also deal with more specific or discrete issues such as how the Ombudsman approaches issues around internal displacement.

The final decision on whether a proposed topic should be included in the IOI’s Best Practice Papers series is made by the IOI Board of Directors. Once the Secretariat receives suggestions for a topic, it will forward these proposals to the IOI Board of Directors for its consideration and approval.

Writing the paper

It is expected, that the office who proposes the topic for a BPP should also act as the **author** of the paper. However, it can be a joint initiative of more than one office or in cooperation with recognized experts from academia or with relevant partner and/or international organizations.

One possible way to proceed with the development of a paper – and a method that has already proven suitable with previous BPPs – is to conduct a survey amongst as broad a variety of Ombudsman institutions as possible. This way, the author(s) of the paper are able to **collect a large amount of data** and to get a broad range of experiences on how Ombudsman offices around the world are handling the respective matter. This input can then be incorporated in the paper and – as a result – ensure, that the experience of the wider Ombudsman community is reflected in the paper. This approach may also ensure that the paper has greater relevance and is perceived as useful guidance material by the wider Ombudsman community.

The IOI General Secretariat is of course at the authors’ disposal and can assist them in the data collection process if need be.

The paper can be written in any one of the IOI's three official languages; i.e. English, French or Spanish. However, if author(s) of the BPP are in the position of providing the paper in more than one of these languages, the IOI would highly appreciate this effort. **Translation** into the other official languages will be a priority but will also be subject to availability of human and/or financial resources.

Consultation process

An important feature of the IOI's Best Practice Papers series is to enable the exchange of experiences and shared learning among the wider Ombudsman community. The IOI therefore introduced a consultation process for each BPP, in order to draw on the experience of as many members as possible and to include a diverse range of input and feedback not only from Ombudsman offices but also from other stakeholders such as international organizations, partner associations or academia.

In every case, there will be an **initial consultation round** where the paper will be circulated among the members of the IOI Board of Directors for their consideration and feedback. The author(s) of the paper are then asked to include the input made by the Board, as appropriate and to provide the IOI General Secretariat with a revised version of the paper.

In some cases, there may be a **subsequent consultation round** where the revised paper will be circulated among the wider IOI membership and other stakeholders (i.e. Ombudsman offices, partner organizations, international organizations, academia etc.). Once again, input and feedback from this round will be considered by the author(s) of the paper when and where possible.

The revised and final version of the paper will then once again be forwarded to the IOI Board for its **final approval**.

The entire process of reflection and consultation will be handled by the Secretariat. The Secretariat will send out the paper in the different consultation rounds, receive and feedback forward it to the respective author(s) of the paper.

PUBLICATION

After the consultation process is completed, the final version of the BBP will be published on the IOI website (see: [PUBLICATIONS](#)) and disseminated via the IOI Newsletter and other communication channels available to the IOI.

As mentioned in the introduction, BPPs are usually not intended to be exhaustive. Each paper is accessible to the general public on the IOI website and readers are encouraged to comment on them and to suggest improvements.

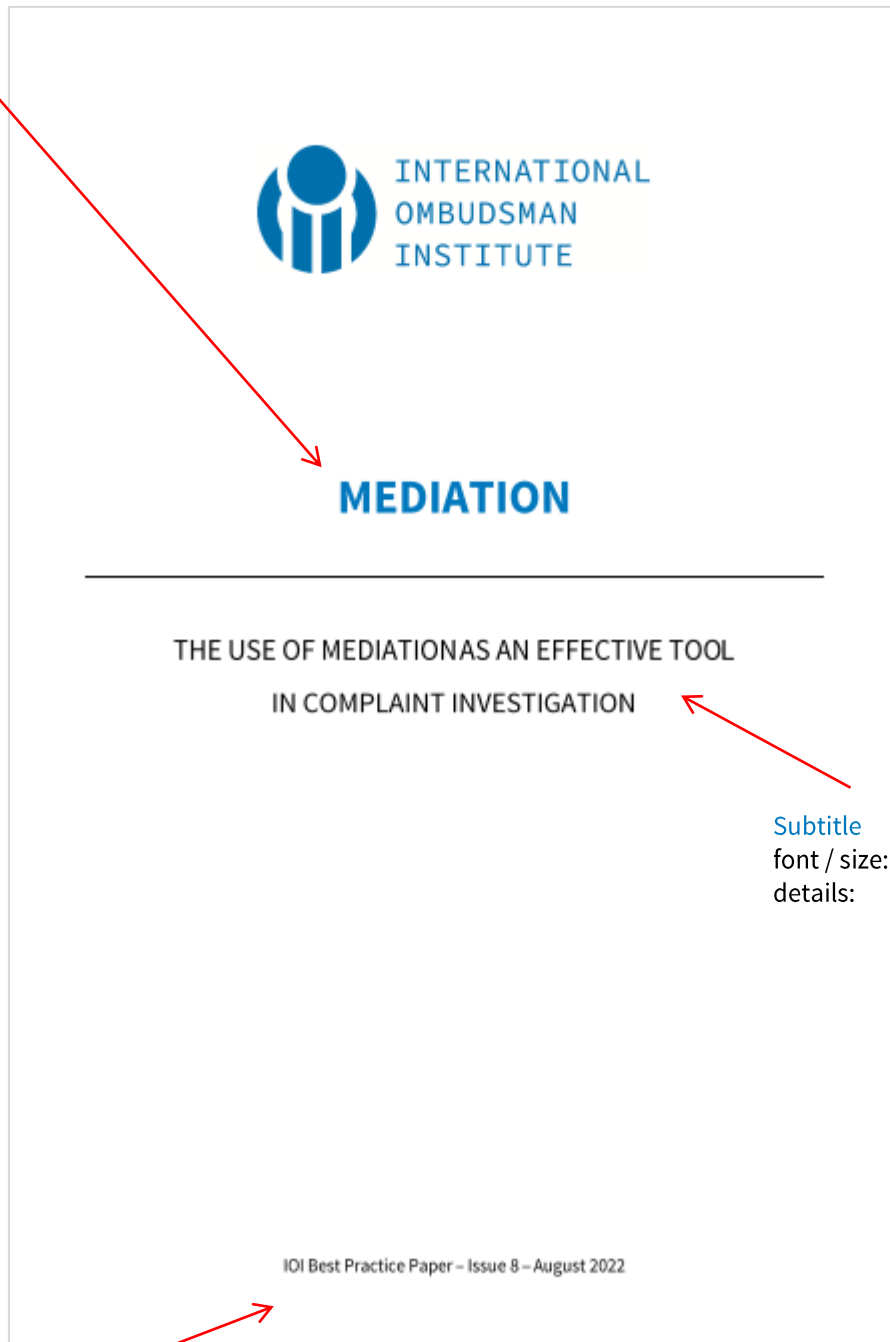
As Ombudsman institutions develop and adapt to new challenges and opportunities, so will best practices. It is therefore essential, that BBPs can be updated over time whenever new approaches and new practices come to light. Only then will their content remain relevant and serve as useful guidance material.

BBPs are IOI publications which are based on the expertise and experiences of our members. BBPs are therefore the **property of the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI)** and cannot be reproduced in any manner whatsoever without consent of the IOI. However, if author(s) of the paper want to be explicitly credited, the IOI is of course open to discussing different arrangements in specific cases.

Annex: Style sheet

The following font details and paragraph settings apply for the layout of IOI Best Practice Papers.

Title
font / size: Source Sans Pro / 26
details: bold / capitals / centred
color: RGB 0-120-190



Subtitle
font / size: Source Sans Pro / 16
details: centred / capitals

Numbering
font / size: Source Sans Pro / 11
details: centred

Sub-headings

font / size: Source Sans Pro / 14
details: bold / justification
spacing before paragraph 30pt
spacing after paragraph 12pt

Headings

font / size: Source Sans Pro / 16
details: bold / capitals / justification
color: RGB 0-120-190

2nd Sub-headings

font / size: Source Sans Pro / 11
details: capitals / justification
spacing before paragraph 18pt
spacing after paragraph 12pt

Text

font / size: Source Sans Pro / 11
details: justification
paragraph style:
line spacing 1,5
spacing before paragraph 0pt
spacing after paragraph 12pt

THE CHARACTERISTICS AND METHODOLOGY OF MEDIATION

Characteristics of mediation

Mediation is an alternative dispute resolution mechanism. Mediation enables the parties, via the mediator - a neutral person - to express all their interests relating to the dispute, thus resolving the dispute in a relatively swift and optimal manner in the course of one or a few sessions. Mediation is therefore a process aimed at attaining a compromise between the disputants, not on the basis of their opinions and arguments, but on the basis of interests and problem-solving¹.

The following is a review of the principle characteristics of mediation:

(1) VOLITION

Mediation is a voluntary procedure throughout - starting with the consent of the parties to mediate and ending with their actual participation in the mediation sessions. The parties are thus full partners in finding a solution and have control over every stage of the process.

The mediators must inform the parties that they are permitted to pull out of the mediation process at any stage and return to the regular complaint investigation procedure.

(2) CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVILEGE

The **duty of confidentiality** applying to the mediation process is a fundamental element of the procedure. Its aim is to ensure open and honest dialogue between the parties and to secure a shield of protection around the documents presented in the course of the procedure, the information shared in both joint sessions and private meetings and the communications of the parties².

Confidentiality of the process can be attained in the following ways:

) On the level of the relations between the parties themselves - The parties must sign a confidentiality clause in the agreement to participate in the mediation. A confidentiality clause

¹ Michal Alberstein, Theory of Mediation, p. 181, footnotes 2,3.
Stephen B. Goldberg, Frank E. A. Sander, Nancy H. Rogers and Sara R. Cole, *Dispute Resolution: Negotiation, Mediation, and other Processes* (Aspen Law and Business Publisher, 1999), 303.
Carrie J. Menkel-Meadow, Lela Poter Love, Andrea Kupfer Schneider and Jean R. Sternlight, *Dispute Resolution: Beyond the Adversarial Model* (Aspen Publishers, 2005), 266.
² The principles of confidentiality and privilege in the mediation process are viewed differently by different Ombuds institutions

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Footnotes

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