



INTERNATIONAL  
OMBUDSMAN  
INSTITUTE

# HOW TO WRITE AN IOI BEST PRACTICE PAPER

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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 for such shared learning is through the 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.

## 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, please approach the IOI General Secretariat ([ioi@volksanwaltschaft.gv.at](mailto:ioi@volksanwaltschaft.gv.at)) with suggestions for BPP topics.

These topics 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, but also more

specific or concrete issues with which Ombudsman institutions have dealt frequently and for which they have thus acquired a certain expertise.

Once the Secretariat receives suggestions for a topic, it will forward these proposals to the IOI Board of Directors for its consideration and approval. 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.

## **Writing the paper**

It is expected, that the office who proposes the topic for a BPP should also act as the main **author** of the paper. However, it can also be a joint initiative of more than one office or in cooperation with recognized experts from academia or 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 of the IOI will be subject to the 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.

In an **initial consultation round** 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 a **subsequent consultation round** the revised paper will be circulated among the wider IOI membership. Once again, input and feedback from this round will be considered by the author(s) of the paper and incorporated when and where possible. If feedback from member institutions is comprehensive and can thus not be incorporated in the paper itself (especially in cases where the paper presents the specific experience of a certain member institution), it may be annexed to the paper, to ensure that information from the wider Ombudsman community is also reflected. The revised and final version of the paper will then once again be forwarded to the IOI Executive Committee 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, collect the feedback and input from members and forward it to the respective author(s) of the paper for inclusion in the paper (either directly or by way of an annex).

## PUBLICATION

After the consultation process is completed, the final version of the BPP will be published on the IOI website (see: [PUBLICATIONS](#)) showing the paper's title, as well as its publication date (i.e. month and year). It will also be disseminated via the IOI Newsletter and other communication channels available to the IOI.

BPPs are IOI publications, which are based on the expertise and experiences of our members. BPPs 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, such as specifically naming the author institution and inserting the logo of the institution at the beginning of the paper.

## EXPIRATION DATE AND POSSIBILITY TO UPDATE

BPPs are not intended to be exhaustive. Ombudsman institutions develop and adapt to new challenges and opportunities; so will best practices. It is therefore essential, that BPPs can be updated over time whenever new approaches and new practices emerge. Only then, will their content remain relevant and serve as useful guidance material.

At its Vienna meeting in May 2023, the IOI Board of Directors agreed that BPPs should have an expiry date of four (4) years. It is then in the responsibility of the Ombudsman institution that was the author of the original BPP, to review and update the paper. The General Secretariat will remind the author institutions of any expiry dates and invite them to update the respective BPP.

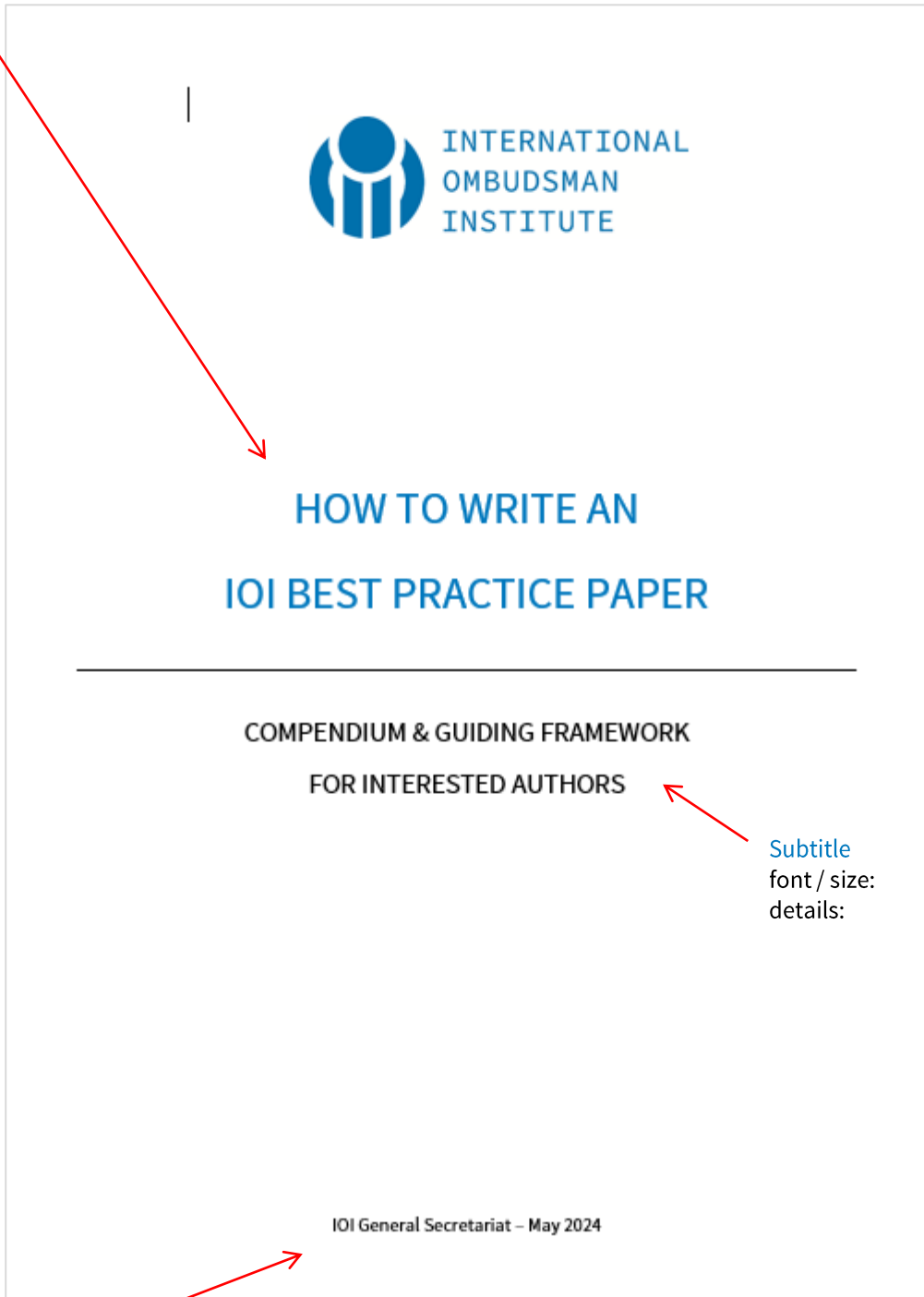
In case the author institution agrees to provide an updated version of the respective BPP, this updated version will need a final approval of the IOI Board of Directors before it is published on the IOI Website. It will not be submitted to the two consultation rounds established for new Best Practice Papers. In case comprehensive feedback from members was annexed to the paper, the respective institutions will be invited to update this annex as well. If they refrain from doing so, their input will not be included in the updated version of the BPP.

Should the author institution refrain from doing so, the paper will remain on the website with clear reference to its publication date to indicate that the content may no longer refer to the newest practice or approach in the matter. BPPs will be listed on the website chronologically, i.e. the most recent papers at the top of that list.

## 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: capitals / centred  
color: RGB 0-120-190



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

**Publication Date**  
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

2<sup>nd</sup> 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-solving<sup>1</sup>.

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 parties<sup>2</sup>.

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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.  
<sup>2</sup> 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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details: centred