

Reference: 1465623

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8 July 2022

Freedom of Information: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information about different definitions of "impartiality" put to Ofcom Board members and Chairpersons.

We received this request on 13 June 2022 and have considered it under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Your request

You asked:

'Are there any different interpretations/definitions of "impartiality" that have been put to Ofcom Board members or Chairpersons in the past three and a half years and, if so, what are they? Any information, other than what we already know publicly ..., to any Board member(s)/Chair that tells them what "impartiality" is and/or when or whether it is "due" (a word that gives a great deal of latitude to impartiality's interpretation) or more on what is appropriate circumstances/situation/context etc. in which it then is, or if not appropriate, isn't, due.'

Our response

I have investigated your request and can confirm there have been no alternative definitions or interpretations of due impartiality put to Ofcom Board members other than that set out in the Broadcasting Code, as follows:

"Meaning of 'due impartiality'"

'Due' is an important qualification to the concept of impartiality. Impartiality itself means not favouring one side over another. 'Due' means adequate or appropriate to the subject and nature of the programme. So 'due impartiality' does not mean an equal division of time has to be given to every view, or that every argument and every facet of every argument has to be represented. The approach to due impartiality may vary according to the nature of the subject, the type of programme and channel, the likely expectation of the audience as to

content, and the extent to which the content and approach is signalled to the audience. Context, as defined in [Section two: Harm and offence](#) of the Code, is important”.

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

Yours sincerely,

Gloria Akinyemi

If you are unhappy with the response you have received in relation to your request for information and/or consider that your request was refused without a reason valid under the law you may ask for an internal review. If you ask us for an internal review of our decision, it will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom.

The following outcomes are possible:

- the original decision is upheld; or
- the original decision is reversed or modified.

Timing

If you wish to exercise your right to an internal review **you should contact us within two months of the date of this letter**. There is no statutory deadline for responding to internal reviews and it will depend upon the complexity of the case. However, we aim to conclude all such reviews within 20 working days, and up to 40 working days in exceptional cases. We will keep you informed of the progress of any such review. If you wish to request an internal review, you should contact information.requests@ofcom.org.uk.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Further information about this, and the internal review process can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office [here](#). Alternatively, the Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office

Wycliffe House

Water Lane

Wilmslow

Cheshire

SK9 5AF