



## **\*\*\* PRESS RELEASE \*\*\***

### **2006 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT ADJUDICATOR FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**

- Applications to the OIA rose by 11% to 588
- 381 cases were closed in 2006 and about 1000 decisions have been issued since the start of the OIA
- The greatest number of complaints come from students studying subjects allied to medicine, business and administrative studies and law; the fewest from veterinary and agriculture students
- 66% of student complainants were aged over 24
- 39% of them were postgraduates
- 27% of the complaints were found to be justified to some extent (or were settled before the OIA made a decision).
- All universities accepted the recommendations made by the OIA
- 50% of complainants who disclosed disabilities suffered from dyslexia
- Workshops helped to develop and share good practice in complaints handling in universities

#### **Examples of decisions:**

A student on a one-year graduate course complained that the course finished 6 months late and that only 5% of the tuition promised was given. He had had to take out an additional student loan to cover the extension and felt that he had not acquired the skills promised by the course. The OIA decided that he should be refunded 75% of the tuition fees and given other compensation totalling £4500.

A student was expelled from the university and her credits deleted because she had plagiarised. She complained on the ground that it was a first offence and that it amounted to a very small part of her thesis. Her complaint was found justified because the university should have taken into account the extent of the plagiarism and should have had a range of penalties proportionate to the offence; there was also a procedural irregularity in that the panel hearing her appeal did not meet in person as required but acted by email on a circulation of papers and without receiving all of the student's submissions. The OIA decided that her appeal should be reheard and that the university should review its rules.

---

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator was designated in 2004 by the Secretary of State for Education as the scheme tasked with resolving student complaints under the Higher Education Act 2004. The scheme is free to students and all English and Welsh universities (146) are obliged to accept it. Students must first exhaust the internal procedures of the university and the OIA does not take on complaints which have already been subject to court proceedings; it does not take on issues about admission to universities or academic judgment. Its remedies include compensation, the opportunity to re-take examinations and recommendations for improvements in university procedures.