



Press notice: 939

For immediate release: Tuesday 1 September 2015

The OIA welcomes new members

Consumer Rights Act 2015 extends the reach of the OIA.

Most students starting or returning to higher education studies this term will be able to bring complaints to the OIA. This means that, if their concerns cannot be resolved by their provider, they can ask the independent student ombudsman, the OIA, to review the complaint. New legislation (the Consumer Rights Act 2015), brings more students into the OIA Scheme from today (1 September).

“No matter where a student chooses to study he or she needs to be confident that, if things do go wrong, there is a clear, independent and transparent process to raise issues and if necessary complain formally. The OIA has always argued that all higher education students should have the same right to seek independent redress if issues can't be resolved locally” said Rob Behrens, Independent Adjudicator and Chief Executive of the OIA.

The new law applies to many further education colleges, alternative providers, sixth form colleges and providers of school-based teaching training programmes. The OIA has worked with the new members over the last few months as they prepare to join the Scheme. “Part of the OIA’s work is to share good practice across organisations, so that people can learn from others’ experience in preventing and resolving student complaints”, said Rob Behrens. “I extend a warm welcome to our new members. The additional perspectives they bring, covering as they do a wide range of students, courses and structures, are invaluable to improving understanding of complaints.”

ENDS

For further information please contact jane.clarkson@oiahe.org.uk

Notes to Editors

1. The OIA provides an independent ombudsman scheme for students in higher education in England and Wales.
2. The OIA Scheme is free to students, and has been designed to be accessible to all students, without the need for legal representation.
3. Since 2004 the OIA has reviewed more than 13,000 complaints.



4. Under the Consumer Rights Act 2015, from 1 September 2015 membership of the OIA Scheme is extended to include providers offering higher education courses that are designated for student support funding, and providers with degree awarding powers. This encompasses many alternative providers, FE colleges delivering HE courses and School Centred Initial Teacher Training providers. All students on higher education courses within these providers will have recourse to the OIA Scheme, not just those on courses which have been designated for student support funding.
5. As students need to follow internal processes at their provider before they can come to the OIA we do not expect to see complaints until later in the year.