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Immediate release



office of the
independent
adjudicator

Appointment of Chair

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) Board of Directors has appointed Dame Suzi Leather as Chair from 1 October 2016. Dame Suzi will succeed Ram Gidoomal CBE, whose term of office expires in the autumn.

The OIA Board oversees the strategic direction, performance and effectiveness of the OIA, sets the level of subscriptions paid by higher education providers and approves the rules and procedures for the operation of the OIA Scheme. The Chair and Board are not involved in the adjudication of cases.

Andrew Purkis, Deputy Chair of the Board, who led the recruitment, welcomed the appointment:

“Suzi Leather was a quite outstanding candidate in a very strong field. She combines rich experience in chairing important public sector and charitable organisations, with a sharp eye for strategy and detail, a proven commitment to higher education and the student experience, and strong values attuned to OIA's mission. I am confident that with Suzi as Chair and Judy Clements as Independent Adjudicator and Chief Executive we are in an excellent position to build further on the OIA's reputation for independence and quality.”

Dame Suzi is a former Chair of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority and of the Charity Commission.

Commenting on her appointment, she said:

“I am very pleased to be joining the OIA, especially at this time. The challenges for the higher education sector demand an OIA that can continue to serve students and providers and help to maintain, protect and advance our HE sector's worldwide reputation for quality.”

Judy Clements, the Independent Adjudicator and Chief Executive, said:

“As Independent Adjudicator and Chief Executive I warmly congratulate Dame Suzi Leather on her appointment as Chair of the OIA Board. I am very much looking forward to working with her as we take forward the important work of the OIA at a time of significant change and development in the higher education sector.”

ENDS

Notes to editors

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

1. The OIA is the designated operator of the Student Complaints Scheme for England and Wales. It is established as a Company Limited by Guarantee and is a registered charity.
2. The OIA is independent of government and is funded entirely by subscriptions. Its remit extends to all providers offering higher education courses which are designated for student support funding and providers with degree-awarding powers. Students at more than 600 providers in England and Wales can bring complaints to the OIA.
3. The OIA Board has 15 members. Nine, including the Chair, are independent Directors appointed by the Board. Six are nominated by sector representative bodies: Universities UK, GuildHE, the National Union of Students, the Association of Heads of University Administration, Universities Wales and the Committee of University Chairs.
4. The Chair is a Board appointment, by open competition. The recruitment panel was comprised five members of the OIA Board, Andrew Purkis (who chaired the panel), Carey Haslam, Peter Forbes, Mark Humphriss and Sorana Vieru, and the Chair of Breast Cancer Now, Lynne Berry.
5. The annual remuneration for the Chair is £7,500.

6. **Biography**

Dame Suzi Leather has a wide professional background having been Chair of the Charity Commission, the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, the School Food Trust, the School Meals Review Panel and the Council of Food Policy Advisers. She was the founder Deputy Chair of the UK Food Standards Agency and has also served on the Council and Ethics Committee of Exeter University.

In the health field she chaired the Exeter and District Community NHS Trust and the Ethics Committee of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. She has been a member the Human Tissue Authority, an observer member of the Human Genetics Commission and sat on the steering group of the UK Stem Cell Bank.

More widely, she was a member of Consumer Focus and the United Kingdom Accreditation Service. She is Vice President of Hospiscare, serves on the board of the General Medical Council and chairs the Lankelly Chase Foundation, a charity which works to bring about change that will transform the quality of life of people who face severe and multiple disadvantage. She is a lay chapter canon at Exeter Cathedral.