
Higher Education Student Complaints:

OIA publishes 2016 Annual Statements

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) has today (23 May) published its Annual Statements (formerly known as Annual Letters) to higher education providers for the calendar year ended 31 December 2016. For the first time, these are published in an online format.

The Annual Statements include data on the number of complaints received by the OIA and the outcomes of complaints considered by the OIA, together with high-level data on providers' engagement with the OIA, in 2016. They also include data (where available) on:

- the number of complaints received by the OIA with a Completion of Procedures ('COP') Letter dated 2015; and
- the proportion of COP Letters issued in 2015 which resulted in complaints to the OIA. (The OIA was not able to include this information in the 2015 Annual Letters because the time limit for bringing a complaint to the OIA changed during 2015 from three months to 12 months.)

The OIA is committed to openness and transparency, and the information in the Annual Statements is used by many providers to inform the development of their complaints and appeals processes.

Judy Clements OBE, Independent Adjudicator and Chief Executive commented:

“Our Annual Statements improve the transparency of our Scheme, and increase public scrutiny of complaints handling in higher education providers, and students' confidence in those processes. We hope that providers find the new format of Annual Statements useful and easy to navigate and we will continue to develop them in future years.”

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Notes to Editors

1. The [Annual Statements for 2016](#) are available online.
2. The purpose of the Annual Statements is to:
 - Increase the transparency of the OIA Scheme;
 - Increase public scrutiny of complaints handling records in higher education providers;
 - Increase students' confidence in complaints handling processes; and
 - Allow providers to look at their own record alongside that of similar providers.
3. The information in the Annual Statements must be considered in context. They provide useful information about complaints and appeals that have reached the end of internal processes at higher education providers and been escalated to the OIA. They do not set out the overall number of complaints and appeals that are made by students to their providers, many of which are likely to be resolved through the internal processes.
4. The data on Completion of Procedures ('COP') Letters issued should also be viewed with some caution. The fact that a COP Letter has been issued does not necessarily mean that the student is dissatisfied with the outcome. The OIA's [Guidance on COP Letters](#) says that providers should issue a COP Letter when a complaint (or appeal) has been upheld, if the student asks for one. Equally, a very low number of COP Letters in comparison to other providers in the same OIA subscription band might indicate that a provider is not following the OIA's Guidance on COP Letters correctly.
5. When reviewing the data in the Annual Statements it is therefore difficult to compare 'like with like'. The OIA cannot accept responsibility for any inferences or conclusions derived from the data published in the Annual Statements by third parties.
6. The OIA has wide discretion to review student complaints about an 'act or omission' by HE providers in England and Wales. It does not review academic judgment or admissions issues. The Scheme Rules and all details related to OIA operations can be found at www.oiahe.org.uk.
7. For further information please contact mediarelations@oiahe.org.uk.