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**OIA Senior Leadership appointments**

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The Board of Directors has appointed Felicity Mitchell and Ben Elger to jointly lead the OIA as Independent Adjudicator and Chief Executive respectively. They will take up their posts on 1 April 2018.



Felicity joined the OIA in 2004. She became a Deputy Adjudicator in 2009. As Independent Adjudicator, Felicity will lead the OIA's case-handling policy and quality assurance, and its good practice work.



Ben joined the OIA in 2008 as Chief Operating Officer and Company Secretary. As Chief Executive, Ben will lead the OIA's work with Governments and sector bodies, and on organisational development.

Ben said: "I'm delighted to be appointed to this position. The OIA is a unique organisation with a vital part to play in the rapidly changing HE environment. It will be a great privilege to work with Felicity and OIA's exceptional staff and Board to continue to develop our independent role within the new regulatory system in the interests of students and the wider sector."

Felicity said: "The OIA is an organisation that I have been proud to be part of for many years. I am so pleased to be asked to lead it, with Ben, at this exciting time. We have much to do in this changing environment to ensure that all students with complaints have access to an effective, trusted and responsive service, and to use our learning and insight to develop and promote good practice in the sector."

Commenting on the appointments, Dame Suzi Leather, Chair of the Board of the OIA, said:

"The OIA's vision is that students are always treated fairly. This has never been more important than at this time of significant change in higher education. Felicity and Ben between them bring a unique combination of leadership, vision, skills and experience, with a great depth of knowledge of the ombuds and higher education sectors. I am delighted to announce their appointments and very much look forward to our continuing work together as we progress and further develop the OIA's work."

**ENDS**

### Notes to Editors

For further information please contact Sarah Liddell, Head of Leadership Office, [mediarelations@oiahe.org.uk](mailto:mediarelations@oiahe.org.uk), 0118 959 9813.

1. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) is the independent student complaints ombudsman for higher education in England and Wales. It is the designated operator of the student complaints' scheme under the Higher Education Act 2004.
2. The Independent Adjudicator is initially appointed for five years, with the possibility of an extension for a further three years.
3. The appointments were made by the OIA's Board following a review of the senior leadership structure led by the Board's Nominations and Remuneration Committee.
4. Biographies:

#### **Felicity Mitchell**

Felicity joined the OIA in 2004, and became a Deputy Adjudicator in 2009. She has oversight of the OIA's good practice and case-handling work, and of legal claims against the OIA, including judicial review. She also chairs the Good Practice Framework Steering Group. She has led work on the OIA's Rules, and on the OIA's approval as the Alternative Dispute Resolution body for higher education complaints and as a member of the Ombudsman Association.

Felicity was called to the Bar in 1992 and, after some years in private practice, moved to the ombudsman sector, working at the Banking Ombudsman and the Financial Ombudsman Service. She worked as a consultant for the OIA before its designation as the student complaints scheme in 2005.

#### **Ben Elger**

Ben joined the OIA as its first Chief Operating Officer in September 2008, combining the role with that of Company Secretary. He has responsibility for organisational planning, finance and people management. He has a key role in liaising with Governments and led the OIA's work on the Higher Education and Research Act 2017. Ben is a member of the UK Standing Committee and has been involved in groups relating to the Regulatory Partnership Group for Higher Education in England including the working group charged with 'mapping the Higher Education system'. He is also a member of the steering group for the Student Engagement Partnership (TSEP).

Before joining the OIA Ben spent 15 years working with students, for the last 10 years as Chief Executive of Reading University Students' Union, and before that at the Students' Unions at Winchester, King's College London and South Bank Universities and as National Secretary of NUS.