



office of the
independent
adjudicator

PN 917

PRESS NOTICE: OIA'S RESPONSE TO THE BROWNE REPORT

The OIA notes the publication of the Browne Report this morning, and will play a constructive role in any Government initiative to develop the regulatory basis of Higher Education.

The OIA is disappointed by Chapter 6 of the Report which is evidence-light, lacking in detail and devoid of analysis. In particular, no use is made of the OIA's Pathway Report 2010, the consultative review of the OIA Scheme. Students making complaints about University provision deserve better.

Chapter 6 seems to be based on a number of untested assumptions:

- (1) that the creation of a super quango for Higher Education is a cure-all, would be cost-effective, and involves no conflicts of interests;
- (2) that the only way to align regulation and complaints handling is to merge corporate bodies. This is in conflict with lessons learned from other sectors, e.g. legal services, where the Clementi principles have successfully separated regulation from complaints handling;
- (3) that actual and perceived independence can survive moving OIA operations into a super-quango, with no tradition of impartiality, where there is no clarity about corporate governance, publication policy or the integrity of key appointments.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

1. To arrange an interview with the Independent Adjudicator please contact Charlotte Corrish, Communications and Policy Manager, by emailing charlotte.corrish@oiahe.org.uk or on 0118 959 9813
2. The OIA is the designated operator of the Scheme for reviewing student complaints, established under the Higher Education Act 2004.
3. The Pathway Report was published on 11 February 2010. A copy can be downloaded from the OIA's website or by contacting Charlotte Corrish on the number above.