



office of the  
independent  
adjudicator

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**STRICTLY EMBARGOED until 00:01 14 June 2012**

**PRESS NOTICE: OIA ANNUAL REPORT 2011**

Rob Behrens, Independent Adjudicator and Chief Executive of the OIA presented his Annual Report for 2011 at the OIA's Annual Open meeting in London on Thursday 14 June 2012.

Rob Behrens reported that the main features in 2011 were:

- The OIA received 1,605 complaints against universities in England and Wales. This represents a **20 per cent increase on the previous, record, year**. This is the sixth successive year of increase and is a significant rise, but still constitutes a very small proportion of the number of eligible enrolled students (approximately 0.07 per cent).
- During the year, the **OIA reviewed and closed more cases than at any time in its history (1,443), a 75 per cent increase on 2010 (825) and a reduction in unit costs of 35 per cent.**
- **16 per cent of Formal Decisions were either Justified (5 per cent) or Partly Justified (11 per cent) compared with 20 per cent in 2010. 56 per cent were found to be Not Justified (compared with 53 per cent in 2010).** The number of cases settled or resolved other than by Formal Decision **rose from 9 per cent to 11 per cent** reflecting the OIA's new emphasis on resolving complaints other than by Formal Decision.
- Whilst the distribution of complaints received broadly reflects the proportion of students studying those subjects, in **2011 law students were approximately three times more likely to bring a complaint to the OIA** than the average for students studying other subjects in England and Wales. Other subjects more likely to elicit student complaints included Medicine and Dentistry, Subjects allied to medicine (Nursing, Social Work and Health Visiting), Business Studies and Physical Sciences.
- Issues emerging from OIA Formal Decisions in 2011 included ambiguity around what constitutes Permissible Assistance in the writing of postgraduate theses and the related issue of the growth of Academic Misconduct including Plagiarism. **Complaints to the OIA about Academic Misconduct have doubled in percentage terms since 2008.** Lord Woolf addressed both of these issues in his important Inquiry into the LSE's relations with Libya.

- The publication of the Government's Higher Education White Paper (June 2011) confirmed the OIA's continued independence and its full participation in the move towards a more risk-based sector regulatory framework. It also saw an endorsement of OIA plans to increase the transparency of reporting case decisions by naming universities in published summaries of decisions and to publish an Annual Letter to each university detailing information on its complaints record. This process begins in 2012.
- The OIA received more than a hundred written submissions to its. Pathway 3 consultation exercise on the early resolution of complaints and more effective complaints-handling. We will be publishing a Report on this consultation in September 2012.
- The OIA received six new Judicial Review claims in 2011 and had two cases heard at the Court of Appeal.
- There were no instances of Non-Compliance to report during 2011.

**Rob Behrens commented:**

"The 2011 20 per cent increase in complaints on the previous, record, year reflects a well-established trend which is likely to be accentuated by the doubling and trebling of tuition fees scheduled (in England) for autumn 2012. This trend puts a premium on the OIA's work since 2010 to stream-line its decision-processes and ensure they are scaleable and robust enough to meet the further increases to come.

At the same time – and with limited resources – the OIA could not lose sight of the policy debate arising from the Government's Higher Education reform programme. We played a full part in this policy debate in search of an enabling regulatory framework and an enhanced student experience."

ENDS

**Notes to Editors**

1. The Annual Report 2011 and this Press Notice are **STRICTLY EMBARGOED** until 00:01 on 14 June 2012.
2. To arrange an advance briefing with the Independent Adjudicator please contact Charlotte Corrish, Policy and Communications Manager by emailing [charlotte.corrish@oiahe.org.uk](mailto:charlotte.corrish@oiahe.org.uk) or by phone on 0118 959 9813.
3. The OIA is the designated operator of the Scheme for reviewing student complaints in England and Wales, established under the Higher Education Act 2004.
4. The OIA has a wide remit to review student complaints about an 'act or omission' of HEIs 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](http://www.oiahe.org.uk).