



office of the
independent
adjudicator

'for students in higher education'

OIA Complaint Form and guidance notes



Please read through the guidance notes before making your complaint. These are designed to assist you with completing our form with all the relevant information we require to deal with your complaint efficiently. We also recommend you look at our website before completing this form as it contains lots of useful information on the type of complaints we can review.

Once completed and signed, please send your form to:

enquiries@oiahe.org.uk

OR

OIA
Third Floor
Kings Reach
38-50 Kings Road
Reading RG1 3AA

If you need this information in another format (including Welsh) or require us to communicate with you in a particular way, due to a specific accessibility or disability need, please contact the Administration Manager on accessibility@oiahe.org.uk or 0118 959 9813

Introduction

Please complete all sections of the form clearly and legibly. If we are unable to read your form we may return it to you for clarification which could lead to a delay in us handling your complaint.

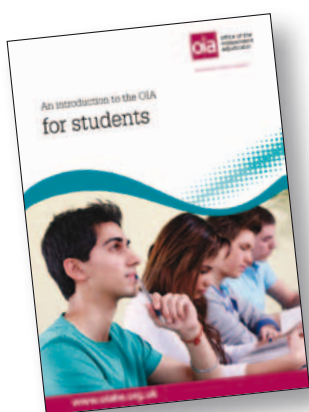
If you wish to add information or expand on your complaint, you can do so on a separate sheet of paper but it is helpful if you explain your complaint as concisely as possible. If we need further information, we will contact you.

For ease of reference, we use the word “university” throughout our complaint form and guidance notes to include all participating institutions. A list of all participating institutions can be found on our website **www.oiahe.org.uk**.



Please note that this form must be received in our office **within three months** of the date of the Completion of Procedures Letter issued by your university (see page 12 for information about Completion of Procedures Letters).

Please note that the Scheme run by the OIA is not a further appeal from your university. We are an independent review Scheme and our role is principally to consider whether the university has correctly applied its regulations and followed its procedures and whether the outcome is reasonable in the circumstances.



We suggest you read our 'Introduction to the OIA Scheme' leaflet and our website **www.oiahe.org.uk** before completing this form to see if we can deal with your complaint or are likely to be able to offer the outcome you desire.

Make sure that you **sign the declaration section of the form**. If you do not, the form will be returned to you which will lead to a delay in us dealing with your complaint. If we receive your completed and signed complaint form after the three month deadline we may consider your complaint to be out of time.

Guidance notes

Section 1

Your details

This section is for you to enter personal and contact details so that we can reach you.

Please enter a preferred name if the name you prefer to be known by is different from that which you were given at birth.

We will need at least one method of contacting you with written communication, either post or email, as we will need to write to you.

You can indicate if your preference is for contact by email by ticking the appropriate box. By ticking this preference, we ask you to please check your spam/junk folders regularly throughout the complaints process and allow up to 24 hours for emails to be received.

You will need to inform us of any changes in your contact details while your case is being reviewed by us. It is helpful to let us know in advance if you are going to be away, or unavailable while we are dealing with your complaint.

OIA Complaint Form

Section 1

Your details

Gender: Male ☐ Female ☐ Transgender ☐

Title: Mr ☐ Mrs ☐ Miss ☐ Ms ☐ Dr ☐ Other: _____

Surname/Family name: _____

First name(s)/Given name(s): _____

Preferred names(s): _____

Occupation: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____

Town: _____ **County:** _____

Country: _____ **Postcode:** _____

Landline: _____ **Mobile:** _____

Email address: _____

Your preferred method of communication: Post ☐ Email ☐ Don't mind ☐

If you decide you want someone to represent you, please fill in [Section 2](#).

If someone is complaining on your behalf (e.g. a relative or students' union adviser) please give us their details. Please see our guidance notes on page 6 for more information about using a representative. Please note that if we communicate with a representative, then we will not be able to communicate with you as well.

If you want to represent yourself then you can move on to [Section 3](#).

Guidance notes

Section 2

Your representative (optional)

It is preferable for students to handle their own complaints. However, you may appoint a representative e.g. a students' union representative, friend or family member provided you give us written authority in this section. You may find this useful if you have difficulty dealing with large amounts of documentation.

You will need to ensure your representative knows all about your complaint, is willing to represent you, and can keep you fully informed, as we will only correspond with your representative once you have appointed them; we will not correspond with you as well.

Our procedures are informal and you should not need to have a legal representative. For this reason we will not normally recommend that a university should contribute towards your legal costs even if your complaint is found to be Justified.

If you change your representative while we are looking at your complaint you will need to inform us of this in writing.

If your representative is filling in the form for you, you will need to read through the entries and you must sign the declaration section of the form yourself. We cannot accept a form signed by someone else on your behalf.

OIA Complaint Form

Section 2

Your representative (optional)

Title: Mr ☐ Mrs ☐ Miss ☐ Ms ☐ Dr ☐ Other: _____

Surname/Family name: _____

First name(s)/Given name(s): _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Address: _____

Town: _____ **County:** _____

Country: _____ **Postcode:** _____

Landline: _____ **Mobile:** _____

Email address: _____

Guidance notes

Section 3

University and course information

Name of the university you are/were registered with and which awards the qualification you were studying for

Please enter the university you are/were registered with and are complaining about. (This will be the institution that will have issued you with the Completion of Procedures Letter).

University/college where you are/were attending classes (if different from above)

You may be attending a local college which is running a course leading to an award from a university. If the qualification you are studying for is awarded by the university rather than the college, then we can look at a complaint about what the university has done. You may be able to go through the university's internal complaints or appeals procedures. At the end of these procedures the university should issue you with a Completion of Procedures Letter.

We will only look at what the university has done regarding your complaint. For example, how it has handled your complaint or appeal. We will not look at what the college has done, as this would fall outside our remit.

Course you are/were registered on

Please enter the name of the course you are/were studying e.g. BA Law.

Type of course

Please tick the appropriate box to indicate the level at which you are studying your course. E.g. short course, undergraduate course, taught masters etc.

Are you registered full-time/part-time/other?

Please tick the appropriate box to indicate whether you are studying your course:

- full-time (attending the total number of modules assigned for a year's study),
- part-time (attending a number of the modules assigned for a year's study in one year and attending the rest the next year); and
- other (if your arrangement with the university does not fall under either of the previous categories).

OIA Complaint Form

Section 3

University and course information

Name of the university you are/were registered with and which awards the qualification you were studying for:

University/college where you are/were attending classes (if different from above):

Course you are/were registered on:

Type of course: Undergraduate ☐ Short course ☐ Foundation degree ☐
Diploma ☐ PhD ☐ Taught Masters ☐ Research Masters ☐

Other: _____

Are you registered: Full-time ☐ Part-time ☐ Other: _____

Guidance notes

Section 3 – continued

Beginning of course

Please enter the date that you started your course. This will be the beginning of the first term of your first year. (If you do not remember the exact day, you can enter the month and year. However, the exact day is more important if you are attending a short course.)

If you cannot remember this information please do not delay in sending in your form whilst you try to obtain it.

End of course

Please enter the date that you finished the course. This will be the end of the last term of your last year of studying.

If you are still a student, please enter the date it is expected you finish. If you withdrew or were withdrawn from your course, then please enter the date of withdrawal. (Note: as above, if you are not sure of the exact day, enter the month and year. The exact day is more important for short courses.)

What are the tuition fees that you pay for your course per year?

Please enter the amount in pounds. If your fees changed each year at university, then please enter the amount for each year in the space provided.

How are you categorised by your university for fee purposes?

Home student: Please tick this if you pay the tuition fees at the level set by the university for British citizens.

EU student: Please tick this box if you pay the tuition fees at the level set by the university for non-British European Union citizens.

Non-EU students: Please tick this box if you pay the tuition fees at the level set by the university for international students from outside the European Union.

If your complaint is about how the university has categorised you for fee purposes, please indicate how the university categorised you, even if you disagree with that categorisation.

Are you receiving assistance towards the payment of your fees?

Please tick the appropriate box/boxes to indicate what type of financial help you are receiving, if any, for your studies e.g grant/bursary/student loan/parental contribution/employer/other.

Current Academic Status

Please indicate if you are still a student or you have completed your course or withdrawn.

OIA Complaint Form

Section 3 – continued

Beginning of course:

<input type="checkbox"/> D	<input type="checkbox"/> D	<input type="checkbox"/> M	<input type="checkbox"/> M	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> Y
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End of course:

<input type="checkbox"/> D	<input type="checkbox"/> D	<input type="checkbox"/> M	<input type="checkbox"/> M	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> Y
----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------

How much are the tuition fees that you pay per year for this course? £ _____

How are you categorised by your university for fee purposes?

Home student ☐ EU student ☐ Non-EU student ☐

Are you receiving assistance towards the payment of your fees by:

Grant ☐ Bursary ☐ Student loan ☐ Parental contribution/self funded ☐
Employer ☐ Other: _____

Current Academic Status: Student ☐ Completed course ☐ Withdrawn from course ☐

Guidance notes

Section 4

Completion of Procedures Letter

Before you can complain to the OIA, you must complete the university's internal complaints or appeals procedures. This is so that we can be sure the university has had an opportunity to deal with your complaint or appeal before we look at it. When the university has made a Decision on your complaint it should issue you with a Completion of Procedures Letter. Your completed complaint form must reach us within three months of the date of that letter. If you are submitting a complaint after this time please give reasons for the delay and provide any supporting evidence (for example, if you were ill or incapacitated during the period, you should provide medical evidence).

The Completion of Procedures Letter will be clearly titled and give a deadline for complaining to the OIA. If you are unsure about whether the letter you have received is a Completion of Procedures Letter please see our website for more information. If you have not received a Completion of Procedures Letter see our online Complaints Wizard for more information on what to do next.

If we do not receive your Completion of Procedures Letter or reasons for not having a Completion of Procedures Letter we may close your complaint.

In **exceptional** circumstances, we may look at a complaint where the internal complaints or appeals procedures have not been completed. For example, if we were satisfied that the university was unreasonably refusing to progress your complaint, or to issue a Completion of Procedures Letter, we might consider it appropriate to accept your complaint.

Please note, we can only look at complaints which you have raised with the university and which have already completed the university's internal complaints procedure. If aspects of your complaint have not been looked at by the university they are likely to be outside the remit of our review and may not be considered.

Please see our website for more information on Completion of Procedures Letters: www.oiahe.org.uk/uni/cop.aspx

OIA Complaint Form

Section 4

Completion of Procedures Letter

Before you can complain to the OIA, you must complete the university's internal complaints or appeals procedures. Once you have done so, the university should issue you with a Completion of Procedures Letter.

Have you received a Completion of Procedures Letter from the university?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, what is the date on your Completion of Procedures Letter?

D	D	M	M	Y	Y	Y	Y
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

If no, please explain why you do not have one:

Are you sending your OIA Complaint Form within the three month deadline given in your Completion of Procedures Letter?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If no, please explain why you were unable to meet the deadline:

If you have missed your deadline and are submitting reasons, you will have to include evidence with your submission.

If your form is submitted after the three month deadline we will consider why you submitted your form late and advise you whether or not we will accept your complaint for review.

Guidance notes

Section 5

Your complaint

We have broken down the information we need into five questions to help you to summarise the key points of your complaint. If you require further space please continue on a separate sheet of paper.

Please remember that the OIA is a review body. This means we will consider how the university dealt with your complaints/appeal and its final Decision. The focus of our review will be what happened before the Completion of Procedures Letter was issued.

To help us understand your complaint and deal with it efficiently please tell us:

- **What was your original complaint/appeal to the university?**

Please give a brief summary of the main issues which you raised in your complaint or appeal to the university.

It would be helpful if you could also give a brief summary of the key events with dates and try to list the events chronologically.

- **What was the university's final Decision?**

Briefly set out what the university decided.

- **Why is the final Decision of the university unsatisfactory?**

Set out the reasons why you are not satisfied with the university's Decision.

- **How have you been affected by the university's Decision?**

We will use this information when considering a remedy if your complaint is found Partly Justified or Justified. It will not affect our Decision about whether your complaint is Justified or not.

- **What do you want done about your complaint?**

Please see our Introduction to the OIA Scheme leaflet and website for information on the type of remedies we offer.

If a number of people were involved in your complaint please provide a list of their names and roles e.g. Dr Smith: Tutor, Professor Jones: Lecturer. Please ensure that the names of any other individuals not involved in the complaint, for example the names of other students, are redacted (removed) from any supporting documentation you send us.

Court action

Please tell us if you have started any Court or Tribunal proceedings relevant to your complaint. Please send us copies of the claim form, defence and any relevant orders relating to the Court or Tribunal proceedings.

You must tell us if you decide to commence any proceedings once our review has started as this may affect our ability to review your complaint.

OIA Complaint Form

Section 5

Your complaint

What was your original complaint/appeal to the university?

Please give a **brief summary** of the relevant issues which you raised in your complaint or appeal to the university.

It would be helpful if you could also give a brief summary of the key events with dates and try to describe the events chronologically.

OIA Complaint Form

What was the university's final Decision?

Briefly set out what the university decided.

Why is the final Decision of the university unsatisfactory?

Set out the reasons why you are not satisfied with the university's Decision.

OIA Complaint Form

How have you been affected by the university's Decision?

We will use this information when considering a remedy if your complaint is found Partly Justified or Justified. It will not affect our Decision about whether your complaint is Justified or not.

What do you want done about your complaint?

Please see our Introduction to the OIA Scheme leaflet and website for information on the type of remedies we offer.

Has there been any Court or Tribunal action relating to your complaint (or is any planned)?

Yes* ☐ No ☐

* If YES, please enclose copies of relevant paperwork. Please note if you start Court or Tribunal action you must inform us immediately.

Guidance notes

Section 6

Declaration

Please read carefully the declaration and then date and sign the form in the relevant boxes. **If you are completing the form electronically please type your name in the signature box.**

By signing the form you are confirming that you are the student making the complaint, that you agree to the conditions in the declaration and that you believe the facts stated in the application to be true. We recommend you also read our Rules before signing this section. You need to sign the form even if you have appointed a representative.

OIA Complaint Form

Section 6

Declaration

I WOULD LIKE THE OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT ADJUDICATOR FOR HIGHER EDUCATION TO CONSIDER MY COMPLAINT. I UNDERSTAND THAT:

- The OIA will need to decide whether my complaint is eligible under the Rules.
- The OIA will send the university a copy of this form and of the information and evidence I provide.
- The OIA will need to handle personal details about me, which could include sensitive information (for example, relating to health matters), in order to deal with my complaint effectively.
- The OIA may need to exchange information about my complaint with the university and with other persons and organisations (for example, to collect relevant information about my complaint or when the OIA considers that the recipient has a relevant right or interest in such information).
- The OIA may publish a summary of my complaint and any decision reached where the OIA considers it to be in the public interest to do so but you will always respect my privacy and keep my personal information confidential save as necessary to deal with any complaint set out above.
- The Scheme is informal. The OIA review process is generally conducted in writing and by telephone and it is not generally necessary to conduct hearings or meet people to discuss the complaint.
- The OIA may record telephone conversations between us for training and service quality reasons.
- I must inform you immediately if any part of my complaint is being dealt with in the courts or by another body.
- I will inform you if I object to information about me being given to a third party who is appointed by the OIA to carry out research into student satisfaction about complaints. I understand this would only occur after the conclusion of my complaint.

I confirm that I am the student making the complaint, I agree to the above and confirm that I believe the facts stated in this application are true.

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

(Even if you have appointed a representative)

Guidance notes

Section 7

Documents to be enclosed

Please do not send original documents. We recommend that you send copies of all documents and keep the originals for your records.

Please enclose copies of:

- The Completion of Procedures Letter issued by the university
- A copy of your original complaint/appeal to the university (if you have it)
- Any other documents relevant to your complaint

You should send us any relevant information you refer to (for example letters or emails) as well as a copy of your Completion of Procedures Letter. It is helpful for us to have a copy of the complaint or appeal you submitted to the university if you have it. However, if you have not kept a copy of the complaint, appeal or any other relevant information, do not delay sending us your form while you obtain this information from the university.

If your complaint is about something that the university has said or done, and there is no documentary evidence to support your claim, it is very difficult for the case-handler to come to a conclusion about what has happened.

OIA Complaint Form

Section 7

Documents to be enclosed

Please do not send original documents. We recommend that you send copies of all documents and keep the originals for your records.

- ☐ Copy of the Completion of Procedures Letter from the university
- ☐ Copy of original complaint/appeal (if you have it)
- ☐ Any other documents relevant to your complaint

Please keep a copy of this form and please return the completed form together with supporting documentation to:

enquiries@oiahe.org.uk

OR

OIA

Third Floor

Kings Reach

38-50 Kings Road

Reading RG1 3AA

If you require an adjustment to the way we communicate with you due to a specific accessibility or disability need, please contact the Administration Manager on: **accessibility@oiahe.org.uk** or **0118 959 9813**.

Guidance notes

Section 8

Monitoring questionnaire (optional)

This section is optional. When we receive your complaint this section will be removed and used for statistical purposes only. This document is not dealt with as part of your complaint and will not be seen by either the case-handler or the approver handling your complaint.

If you need this information in another format (including Welsh) or require us to communicate with you in a particular way, due to a specific accessibility or disability need, please contact the Administration Manager on accessibility@oiahe.org.uk or 0118 959 9813

Equal opportunities monitoring form

Section 8

This form will be kept separate from your complaint and we will treat this information as highly confidential.

The OIA is committed to making our independent Scheme for the review of student complaints as accessible as possible, irrespective of age, race, colour, disability, ethnic origin, gender identity, marital or partnership status, nationality, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. To help us monitor the equality and fairness of the Scheme, please provide the information below.

The information you provide will be used for statistical purposes only and will not be used as part of your complaint. We are asking for this information to demonstrate our commitment to equality of treatment in our Scheme. This is solely to monitor the diversity of the OIA's complainants.

This form will be separated from your OIA Complaint Form upon receipt.

1. What is your ethnic group?

Choose one section from (a) to (e) then tick the appropriate box to indicate your cultural background.

(a) White

- ☐ English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
☐ Irish
☐ Any other White background

(b) Mixed

- ☐ White and Black Caribbean
☐ White and Black African
☐ White and Asian
☐ Any other Mixed background

(c) Asian or Asian British

- ☐ Indian
☐ Pakistani
☐ Bangladeshi
☐ Chinese
☐ Any other Asian background

(d) Black or Black British

- ☐ Caribbean
☐ African
☐ Any other Black background

(e) Other ethnic group

- ☐ Any other (please specify) _____

Please turn over

Equal opportunities monitoring form

2. What is your nationality?

3. Please indicate whether you are

☐ Male ☐ Female Transgender ☐

4. What is your age group?

☐ 16-25 ☐ 26-35 ☐ 36-45 ☐ 46-55 ☐ 56-65 ☐ Over 65

5. Are you considered a disabled person within the meaning of the Disability Discrimination Act or do you have a long term health condition or a learning difficulty?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes please select:

- ☐ Deaf or a serious hearing impairment
- ☐ Blind or a serious visual impairment uncorrected by glasses
- ☐ A specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or AD(H)D
- ☐ A social/communication impairment such as Asperger's syndrome/other autistic spectrum disorder
- ☐ A long standing illness or health condition such as cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease or epilepsy
- ☐ A mental health condition, such as depression, schizophrenia or anxiety disorder
- ☐ A physical impairment or mobility issues, such as difficulty using arms or using a wheelchair or crutches
- ☐ A disability, impairment or medical condition that is not listed above
- ☐ Two or more impairments and/or disability medical conditions