



Dear Responsible Officer

This letter is to draw to your attention two regulatory matters: the first relating to complaints in Higher Education Qualifications and the second a forthcoming consultation on restriction of priority qualifications.

Notification of upcoming consultation on the Restricted Priority Qualifications Policy

Qualifications Wales is developing its policy on the restriction of priority qualifications. As stated under Section 14 of the Qualifications Wales Act 2015 (the Act), Qualifications Wales may restrict a priority qualification where there is a need to avoid inconsistency between different forms of the same qualification or to enable Qualifications Wales to make a choice between different awarding bodies or between different forms of the qualification.

The purpose of the Restricted Qualifications Policy (the Policy) is to provide guidance to awarding bodies and other interested parties on the rationale for the restriction of priority qualifications and the process for the restriction of qualifications. The Policy is in accordance with the powers provided under Part 4 of the Act for the restriction of qualifications.

Qualifications Wales will be consulting on the Policy with awarding bodies within the next few weeks. A formal consultation will be available on the Qualifications Wales website for a four week period. An email will be sent to Responsible Officers when the consultation goes live.

We will welcome all contributions to this consultation.

Complaints in Higher Education (HE) Qualifications

We would like to confirm the arrangements for handling complaints from students studying Higher Education (HE) courses in Wales and how this interacts with your responsibility for handling complaints as an awarding body. The flow diagram setting out the process follows that outlined in Ofqual letter RO44/ 2015.

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From 1 September 2015, changes to legislation¹ has extended membership of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) Scheme², to providers that provide one or more HE courses designated to receive student support funding and providers with degree awarding powers. These changes may mean that students studying some courses that lead to Qualifications Wales regulated qualifications may now also have a right of complaint to the OIA.

The OIA's current list of what constitutes a relevant HE course for the purposes of the OIA Scheme, for students studying at providers which joined the OIA Scheme by virtue of the amended legislation is available here: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/glossary.aspx#hecouse>.

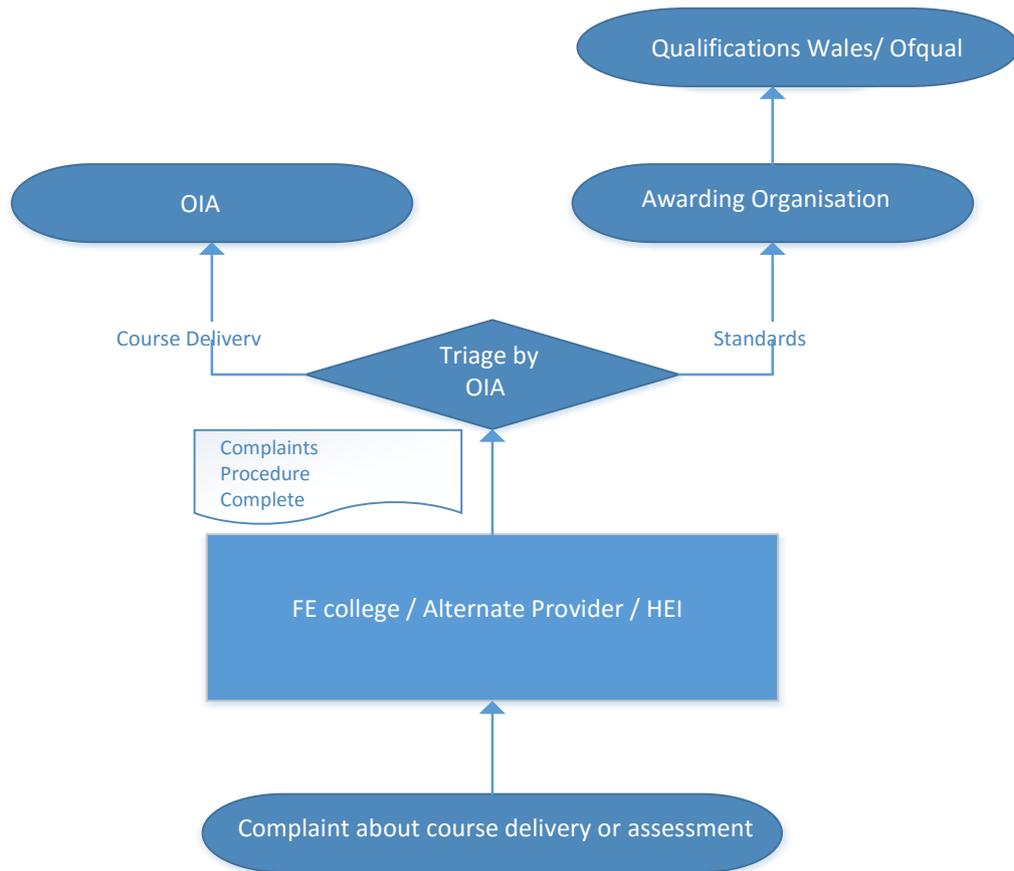
Awarding bodies that award regulated qualifications, remain responsible for complying with the Standard Conditions of Recognition including Condition D4 'Responding to enquiries and complaints procedures'.

Institutions which provide relevant HE courses (which lead to the award of Qualifications Wales regulated qualifications)³, and which are members of the OIA Scheme, will handle complaints from students on those courses according to the following stages:

1. Complaints will initially be handled internally by providers, following published procedures.
2. Escalation to the OIA following the completion of internal procedures.
3. OIA triage review to ascertain the appropriate route for consideration. (Awarding bodies may wish to share complaints contact details with the OIA to facilitate this process). Generally complaints about the student experience and centre delivery will be handled through the OIA, and complaints regarding design, delivery of assessment, moderation and awarding of the qualification will be handled by the awarding bodies with recourse to Qualifications Wales.
4. Awarding bodies to review referred complaints in line with existing procedures.
5. Escalation of complaints to Qualifications Wales if the matter falls within the remit of our published policies.

¹ The definition of 'qualifying institution' is set out in the Higher Education Act 2004 and has been amended through Section 89 of the Consumer Rights Act 2015: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/15/section/89/enacted>

² Full details of the OIA scheme are available at: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk>



We will keep these arrangements under review with the OIA and with awarding bodies.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact

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Yours sincerely

Philip Blaker

Chief Executive