

Press release: University improves its approach to dealing with course changes

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) stepped in after the UEA made significant changes to the content of a course – by introducing compulsory modules thus limiting students’ choice of optional modules – and not adequately informing prospective students who had received course offers about the changes.

UEA regarded the changes as ‘minor’ – in line with its contract terms at the time – and therefore did not consult existing students or inform offer holders immediately, as they would have done if they had considered the changes to be ‘substantial’. The CMA welcomes UEA’s undertaking which ensures that, in future, it will treat the addition of a compulsory module to a course as a ‘substantial change’.

UEA has also confirmed that it will make timely updates to its website of any substantial changes. This will ensure that anyone thinking about applying has access to up-to-date and accurate information.

Nisha Arora, CMA Senior Director, Consumer, said:

For most students, going to university is an expensive, once-in-a-lifetime event and they should enjoy the best possible experience. So it’s important that prospective students have accurate and up-to-date information when choosing their course and existing students are given timely information about any substantial changes that are made to their course. And any contract terms which deal with variation, for example to course content, must be fair.

The CMA welcomes UEA’s constructive approach and its commitment to revise its terms and conditions and comply with consumer protection law.

The CMA published [advice for higher education providers](#) on how to comply with consumer protection law in March 2015, as well as [guidance](#) on consumer rights for students.

Following that work, the CMA launched a compliance review and published the results in July 2016. The review revealed that awareness of consumer protection law obligations has increased since the CMA’s work began in this sector with many universities reporting improvements in their practices and terms. However, the CMA’s review also revealed examples of poor practice.

The CMA has now secured commitments from 6 universities since November 2015. Further information about the compliance review and the action taken to date

against universities, is on the [case page](#).

Notes for editors

1. The CMA is the UK's primary competition and consumer authority. It is an independent non-ministerial government department with responsibility for carrying out investigations into mergers, markets and the regulated industries and enforcing competition and consumer law. For CMA updates, follow us on Twitter [@CMAgovuk](#), [Flickr](#), [LinkedIn](#) and like our [Facebook](#) page.
2. UEA fully co-operated with the CMA's investigation and agreed a Part 8 undertaking with the CMA, which reflected the changes which it had made voluntarily to its terms and conditions.
3. The key pieces of consumer protection legislation relevant to this investigation were the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008, the Consumer Contracts (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013 and the Consumer Rights Act 2015, Part 2 and the Unfair Terms in Consumer Contracts Regulations 1999 (for contracts concluded prior 1 October 2015).
4. The above legislation is enforced through the courts. Ultimately, only a court can determine whether a particular term or practice infringes the law and no such finding has been made in this case.
5. UEA made changes to the content of Year 2 of its 4-year undergraduate American Literature with Creative Writing course. Prior to the changes being made, Year 2 of this course consisted entirely of optional modules. Year 2 was changed when UEA introduced 2 new compulsory modules which then reduced the number of optional modules that students could choose to take. UEA considered that these changes enhanced the course and were of benefit to students.
6. UEA of its own accord made concessions to existing students on the American Literature with Creative Writing course BA, for example, allowing them to pursue optional modules which were not in the new course profile.
7. Media enquiries should be directed to Simon Belgard (simon.belgard@cma.gsi.gov.uk, 020 3738 6472).

[Press release: Bats and churches to benefit thanks to National Lottery](#)

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has approved the development stage and initial funding of £3.8million for the 5 year "Bats in Churches" partnership project, bringing together wildlife and heritage conservation and church organisations to save bats and protect churches.

The ground-breaking project will:

- trial and perfect new techniques to enable bats and church congregations to live together
- build up professional expertise and volunteer skill to share the best solutions with hundreds more churches
- bring together church communities and bat enthusiasts to create a shared understanding and appreciation of England's historic places of worship and our rare flying mammals

Natural England's Chairman, Andrew Sells, said:

This is a splendid result for both congregations and bats, who have shared churches for centuries but not always happily. We've been working very hard for a number of years with our partners to find ways to help bats and people coexist peacefully in these beautiful, historic buildings. This funding will allow us to capitalise on that good work and find innovative new ways of resolving the conflict. It will provide a lasting legacy for these wonderful churches and the people and bats that rely on them.

The project will provide help and support to places of worship across England where large bat populations can sometimes have a negative impact on historic buildings and the communities who use them.

HLF's CEO, Ros Kerslake, said:

We welcome this unprecedented co-operation between church leaders and bat conservationists. It's a positive move forward and should provide a practical solution to what has become a national problem.

Bats in Churches' is being made possible thanks to National Lottery players' money. The legacy of our £3.8m investment will be a major step change in how this issue is approached in the future. Local communities who work hard to look after and use their churches, precious bat populations and historic church buildings are all set to benefit. The most immediate outcome is developing proposals for 100 churches in England to put in place solutions to protect resident bat populations whilst preventing further damage to the buildings.

The UK has internationally important populations of bats, which are at risk, because of decreases in woodland where some species hunt for insects, conversion of barns, loss of natural roosting sites and changes in farming practices. Due to significant historical declines in bat populations in the UK, all bats have been protected under British law since 1981. Churches can be important sanctuaries for bats for maternity roosts and hibernation.

Whilst small bat populations can occupy parts of a church without disturbance, in other cases bats can pose severe financial and social

problems for congregations. At a time when churches are increasingly becoming community hubs with a diversity of events and uses, bat droppings can restrict activities, damage historic artefacts, cause hygiene issues and put strain on the volunteers who look after these beautiful buildings. In rare cases large bat roosts have even caused churches to close.

Rt Hon Sir Tony Baldry, Chair of the Church Buildings Council, said:

This grant should help us better manage bats in churches. We are not opposed to bats, they are intriguing creatures and part of God's creation, but they can do enormous damage in churches. I am delighted that this innovative project can now go ahead.

The partnership includes Natural England, Church of England, Bat Conservation Trust, Historic England and the Churches Conservation Trust.

Julia Hanmer, Joint Chief Executive of the Bat Conservation Trust said:

Bats have suffered massive population declines and churches provide important safe spaces for nine species to shelter. We are delighted that with this funding from HLF, church communities and bat workers can together play a significant role in supporting these vulnerable and fascinating species, whilst at the same time protecting historic medieval church buildings and opening church doors to wider communities.

Deborah Lamb, Deputy Chief Executive of Historic England said:

We welcome every opportunity to help congregations that work hard to care for church buildings, providing public space for community activity and a wonderful treasury of historic monuments, brasses, woodwork and craftsmanship. This project will offer practical help to those coping with the additional challenge of living with bats and encourage volunteers who are interested in bats to discover more about local churches.

Crispin Truman OBE, Chief Executive of the Churches Conservation Trust said:

Our national collection of 350 churches is home not only to great architecture, history and exquisite medieval art, but also to important natural resources including precious species of bats. The relationship between the two has not always been harmonious so we are delighted this project which celebrates both, has been awarded funding from the Heritage Lottery. It will enable us to better protect churches and their inhabitants, as well as supporting the communities who care for historic churches so that both can thrive.

News story: Crime news: helpline and email change for National Crime Team

From:

First published:

8 February 2017

Call 0121 232 5500 and use new single email from 27 February 2017 for enquiries to our National Crime Team.

A new number of 0121 232 5500 must be used from 27 February 2017 when calling the National Crime Team(NCT) and the Criminal Applications Team(CAT).

NCT will also only have a new single email – see below.

When should we use the helpline?

The new single telephone number of 0121 232 5500 should be used for enquiries about criminal legal aid applications, hardship and complex means assessments. For example, defendants who are self-employed from 27 February 2017.

What are the opening hours?

9am to 5pm Monday-Friday – excluding bank holidays.

Why is this happening?

We're making this change because providers have asked us to make it simpler to contact us.

In the past, for complex means assessments providers have been asked to contact our teams in either the Nottingham or Liverpool offices.

The change will also allow us to manage calls more efficiently, which should improve our service.

New NCT email

From 27 February all emails for the attention of NCT should be sent to:

Nationalcrimeteam@legalaid.gsi.gov.uk

CAT emails

These should still be sent to the office dealing with the application.

BirminghamCAT@legalaid.gsi.gov.uk

LiverpoolCAT@legalaid.gsi.gov.uk

NottinghamCAT@legalaid.gsi.gov.uk

News story: Manchester seminar: How can commissioners influence the success of policy making in the criminal justice system? (14 Mar 2017)

From:

First published:

8 February 2017

This seminar will discuss notable good and bad CJS policies and debate how commissioners can influence their design to ensure success,

14 March, 2017

featuring

Harvey Redgrave

Director of Strategy and Delivery, Crest Advisory

Please see the attached flyer for details and how to book.

PDF, 350KB, 1 page

If you use assistive technology (such as a screen reader) and need a version of this document in a more accessible format, please email academy@noms.gsi.gov.uk. Please tell us what format you need. It will help us if you say what assistive technology you use.

Press release: Expert advisory group appointed to the automatic enrolment review

The review will consider the success of automatic enrolment to date, and explore ways that the ground-breaking policy can be further developed. Three themes will be considered as part of this:

- coverage
- engagement
- contribution levels

The 3 chairs will be:

- Ruston Smith, Trustee Director at Peoples' Pension
- Jamie Jenkins, Head of Pensions Strategy at Standard Life
- Chris Curry, Director of the Pensions Policy Institute

Richard Harrington, Minister for Pensions, said:

Automatic enrolment has been a huge success but there is still significantly more work to do if we are to set the next generation on a path to a financially secure retirement.

This is why I am delighted to announce this expert advisory group who will work closely with government to look at what we can do to build on our success.

Ruston Smith, Trustee Director at Peoples' Pension leading on providing advice on the theme of engagement, said:

Auto enrolment has been a game changer – over 7.1 million people have been automatically enrolled into a workplace pension so that they have the opportunity to save.

I'm delighted to join the advisory group that will be providing advice, insight and challenge to DWP on the review of automatic enrolment, and to lead the group's work in how best to engage with current and future savers.

Simple and compelling engagement will be critical in helping people of all ages make the right choices for their future.

Jamie Jenkins, Head of Pensions Strategy at Standard Life, leading on providing advice on the theme of coverage, said:

Auto enrolment has enjoyed unparalleled success so far in helping millions more people start saving for their retirement. The behavioural nudge works.

As it approaches its fifth anniversary, it is a great time to review the coverage it provides. It is crucial that employers continue to play a pivotal role in its success, but that the review also looks at the savings needs of those individuals currently not benefitting.

It is a great privilege to take a leading role in this next stage of auto enrolment, and I look forward to working with the Department for Work and Pensions and the many stakeholders to explore the policy options available.

Chris Curry, Director at Pensions Policy Institute leading on providing advice on the theme of Contributions, said:

I am delighted to be asked to contribute to the review, and I am very much looking forward to helping the Department for Work and Pensions build on the successful introduction of automatic enrolment.

One of the greatest challenges that we face is in ensuring that individuals save enough to be able to enjoy their retirement, and it is very important that we collect strong and robust evidence on which to base any decisions concerning the appropriate long term contribution levels to workplace pensions.

The review will look to ensure that workplace pensions continue to meet the needs of individual savers, and employer, while remaining fair, affordable and sustainable for future generations. The department will publish a final report later this year.

[Terms of reference for the 2017 automatic enrolment review advisory group](#)
(PDF, 85.5KB, 2 pages)

How to respond to the review

Please send your views about the review by 22 March 2017 to:

2017automatic.enrolmentreview@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

or

AE 2017 Review Team
Private Pensions Directorate
Department for Work and Pensions
First floor, Caxton House
Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9NA

More about the membership

Ruston Smith

Ruston Smith has been Group Pensions Director at Tesco and CEO of Tesco Pension Investment. His other roles include Chair of the PLSA, Trustee Directorships at People's Pension and Standard Life and he is a Governor of the Pensions Policy Institute.

Jamie Jenkins

Jamie Jenkins is Head of Pensions Strategy at Standard Life. He was heavily involved in the work on the Retail Distribution Review and the resultant changes in sales practices across the industry. He previously led the Corporate Pensions Operation. He sits on a number of regulatory and trade body councils and advisory groups.

Chris Curry

Chris Curry is director of the Pensions Policy Institute. Prior to becoming director at the Pensions Policy Institute, Chris was Research Director between 2002 and 2013. He was previously Senior Economist at Association of British Insurers between 2000 and 2002 and an Economic Adviser at the Department for Work and Pensions between 1992 and 2000.

Media enquiries for this press release – 0203 267 5144

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