

Undergraduate Students: Your Consumer Rights

Make sure you have the complete picture

Choosing the right course and university is an important decision: you're investing a lot of time and money and it can be difficult to change if you're dissatisfied.

Knowing your rights under consumer law will help you get the information you need when choosing a course and university, and help to protect you if things go wrong.

What should you check when choosing a university and course?

Universities must give you the information you need to make your decision. This includes:

- the course's content, structure and length, the location of study and the award given on successfully completing the course
- total cost of the course, including tuition fees and any necessary additional costs such as field trips, lab equipment or studio/bench fees
- the university's terms and conditions, including rules and regulations and policies relating to student conduct. These must be accessible and clear

Before, or at the latest when you get an offer, universities must tell you about any changes to the information since you applied, and give you 'pre-contract information'. The pre-contract information should cover:

- course information and costs, arrangements for making payments to the university and their complaints-handling process
- any right you have to cancel should you change your mind

What should you expect when you get to university?

Once you start, the university's terms and conditions apply. These must:

- strike a fair balance between the rights and obligations of the university and the student
- not give the university wide discretion to change a course's cost or content.

What can you do if things go wrong?

You can complain to your university. Their complaints process must:

- be fair, transparent and easily accessible to students
- set out the process to make a complaint, how it will be dealt with and how you can escalate your concerns
- be clear about who deals with complaints, especially if courses are provided jointly with another institution.

If you are not happy with how your university handles a complaint, you may be able to refer it to an independent complaint scheme such as the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for England and Wales, or the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. You can find details here: <http://bit.ly/HEadvice>

Universities which do not meet their obligations may be in breach of consumer law



Why is this important?

All institutions which provide undergraduate courses, including universities and FE colleges, must comply with consumer law. Consumer law may apply to other types of courses too.

Knowing your rights can help you avoid problems and resolve them if things go wrong.

If you have a problem, consider speaking to the staff delivering the course, those who deal with student problems or the student advice office or student's union.

You can also get advice from the Citizens Advice consumer helpline on **03454 04 05 06**.

In Northern Ireland, Consumerline on **0300 123 6262**

For more information on your consumer rights go to <http://bit.ly/HEadvice>

These materials do not constitute legal advice and should not be relied upon as such. Additional sector-specific regulatory obligations may well apply.