

Queen Margaret University secures new training role

Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh (QMU) has secured contracts to provide Ombudsman staff with accredited training programmes. This training will be delivered to the Financial Ombudsman Service and the Legal Ombudsman for England and Wales.

QMU recently secured a four year contract to provide accredited training for the Financial Ombudsman Service in London which is the largest ombudsman organisation in the world. The team has delivered a new Masters course which was piloted with seventy ombudsman staff.

In partnership with Northumbria University Law School, QMU has also won a national tender to provide accredited training for the new Legal Ombudsman for England and Wales. This work saw 300 staff trained by the end of 2011.

These significant contracts come on the back of the University's growing reputation for providing high quality training for ombudsman organisations, complaint handlers, trading standards and other regulatory services. The move reflects QMU's drive to provide industry relevant courses to equip ombudsman staff to respond effectively to the high levels customer complaints about financial and legal services across the UK and Ireland.

Director of QMU's Consumer Insight Centre, Carol Brennan, is

leading this initiative for the University and is developing a centre of excellence for training, research, knowledge exchange and consultancy in ombudsman and complaint handling practice.

Carol said: "A rise in complaints about services is a reflection of the current economic climate with an increasing number of unresolved disputes being referred to ombudsmen. In the last couple of months, for example, the number of new payment protection insurance (PPI) cases being referred to the Financial Ombudsman Service has climbed steeply – from fewer than 1,000 a week to over 3000. This means they will soon be receiving their 300,000th PPI complaint."

Recently the Centre has enjoyed several other significant achievements – QMU is the first UK University to provide approved accredited training for the British and Irish Ombudsman Association (BIOA) offering 'The Professional Award in Ombudsman and Complaint Handling Practice' and 'The Professional Certificate in Ombudsman and Complaint Handling Practice'.

Carol explained: "Launched at QMU in 2009, these courses were a sell-out, reflecting a high level of enthusiasm for this project among BIOA's membership. Also, there is growing international interest in this type of training with course participants coming from as far as Bermuda and Ghana."

The Centre also delivered a new course for the Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland. Staff worked in partnership with the organisation to develop a bespoke course

which reflects the approach of the organisation and the fact that it deals with some of the country's most challenging complaints. Professor John McNeil, Scotland's Police Complaints Commissioner, has recently been appointed as Honorary Professor at QMU to advise the University on its future research and course development.

Carol Brennan concluded: "These significant achievements clearly demonstrate the quality of QMU's work in the increasingly important area of customer complaints. They also emphasise the University's commitment to improving service provision and ultimately quality of life."