

fair telecoms campaign

news release 🧃



Results Day 15 August - Two expensive UCAS helplines

New rules announced for businesses

Last week the government announced a ban on use of expensive telephone numbers for customer enquiries to businesses (part of "New powers to protect consumers against rogue traders"). Although this particular regulation is limited in its scope, it establishes an important principle. (see <u>our release</u>).

Exploitation of students continues

'A' level students who are surprised by the results they receive on Thursday will be invited to contact **UCAS** on expensive telephone numbers.

UCAS offers two distinct services for this situation:

- Its main contact number 0871 468 0 468 enables those who need to vary their university application to do so. This is a "Premium Rate Services" number. A ten minute call from a BT landline costs £1.07, from a mobile this is up to £4.50.
- The special "Exam Results Helpline" 0808 100 8000 is for those who need to look more widely at their options. Although free to call from all landlines, calls to 080 numbers will not become free from mobiles for at least another 18 months. The typical charge for a 10-minute call would be £2.00, although it can be £4.00.
- E The 0871 number earns UCAS a subsidy of around 9p per minute, whilst costing callers more, as they incur additional charges due to these numbers not being included in call plans and call bundles.
- **UCAS** pays part of the cost of calls to the 080 number, however under current arrangements this is not enough to meet the cost of calls from mobiles, so callers again incur additional charges because the call is outside the terms of the bundle.

Ofcom, the **Cabinet Office** and the **fair telecoms campaign** have long been urging organisations like **UCAS** who need non-geographic numbers to use the 03 range - **HMRC** has recently switched to 03. On all mobiles and landlines, 03 numbers are included (with 01/02 numbers) in all call plans and bundles and so are effectively "free to call" for most callers.

Businesses that require a non-geographic number for a customer enquiry line will shortly have to switch to 03. Until such time as students have to enter a contract to become customers of **UCAS** it will be able to continue to operate in the same way as a "rogue trader". In this situation however, it is mostly putting the extra money into the hands of the telephone companies.

Update

(See our further release - A way to avoid the UCAS rip off 0871 number is found)



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