

OfS student panel meeting

6 April 2022

Time: 1400-1800

Location: Virtual and at the OfS London office

Present members:

- Martha Longdon (Chair)
- Jo Barlow
- Erk Gunce
- Miranda Harmer
- Maisha Islam
- Molly Lawson
- Francesco Masala
- Rahul Mathasing
- Nikhita Nachiappan
- Ezra Rose
- Amy Stanning
- Lila Tamea
- Bryony Toon
- Aimear Wolstenholme

Apologies:

- Ramy Badrie
- Niel Lewis

Attending:

- Helen Baird (SUMS Consultant) (Item 4)
- Ruth Buckingham (SUMS Consultant) (Item 4)
- Beth Cooper (Senior Officer-Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) (Item 4)
- Nicola Dandridge (Chief Executive Officer) (Item 2)
- Aaliyah Farr (Graduate Trainee) (Item 6)
- Verity Hancock (OfS board member) (Item 3)
- Sarah Howls (Head of Access and Participation) (Item 5)

Ben Hunt (Student Engagement Manager)
Christie Jones (Student Engagement Officer)
Susan Lapworth (Director of Regulation) (Item 2)

Item 1 – Chair’s welcome and update

1. The chair welcomed the student panel members and OfS staff to the meeting.
2. The chair thanked those who participated in recent events and workshops including:
 - a. Providing input on the student engagement strategy refreshed priorities.
 - b. Feedback on access and participation plans.
 - c. The parliamentary reception in London to launch the OfS strategy.

Item 2 – Chief executive’s update

3. The chair invited the chief executive to give her update to the panel. This included:
 - a. An introduction to the Director of Regulation, Susan Lapworth.
 - b. That the OfS strategy was launched, with focus areas on quality and access and participation.
 - c. That the refreshed student engagement priorities for 2022-23 had been published.
 - d. The outcomes of the reviewed approach to regulating the B conditions, aside from condition B3, had been published and would be operational from May.
 - e. The OfS’s support for students in Ukraine.
 - f. The progress of the blended learning review.
 - g. Information on the The Academy of Live and Recorded Arts (ALRA) college closure.
4. The chair thanked the chief executive on her commitment to and advocacy of the panel over four and a half years as this was her last panel meeting.

Item 3 – Board and student panel session

5. The chair welcomed Verity Hancock, board member, to the meeting.
6. Questions were answered. It was emphasised by the board member that the organisation should showcase where student voice has shaped the OfS’s work.

Item 4 – Statement of expectations

7. The chair welcomed Beth Cooper, Senior Officer, Ruth Buckingham, and Helen Baird to facilitate a session on the evaluation of the statement of expectations.

8. The senior officer outlined the OfS's statement of expectations on sexual misconduct and harassment. SUMS Consulting have been commissioned to independently evaluate the statement to understand its impact on providers and students.
9. It was explained that the evaluation will involve engagement with students and provider staff.
10. The aim of this session was to discuss the effectiveness of the statement of expectations as part of the evaluation.
11. Panellists were asked:
 - a. Q1: What are your views on the statement generally? Were you aware of it previously?
 - b. Q2: Is the statement enough, or should anything else be expected of providers?
 - c. Q3: Are students' experiences and outcomes in relation to all forms of harassment and sexual misconduct changing?
 - d. Q4: What would positive change in this area look like for students?
 - e. Q5: What topics should be explored in the evaluation?
12. Panellists fed back that:
 - a. Q1: They had heard about the statement because of the panel meeting, through sector media, or their provider. Panellists felt that the statement was comprehensive and accessible to read, but there were concerns that it could be a box ticking exercise for providers.
 - b. Q2: Along with the statement, providers should promote their institution-specific resources on tackling harassment and sexual misconduct through utilising student platforms.
 - c. Q2: Providers should institute mechanisms such as designated reporting officers and offer clear communication on the provider specific processes around reporting to students.
 - d. Q3: With the prevalence of social media, it is hard to say whether instances of harassment and sexual misconduct are increasing, or whether students feel safer and have more ways to speak out. In a connected, online environment, it is important for providers to respond rapidly and effectively.
 - e. Q4: Positive change could include publicising good practice and sharing anonymous student experiences of reporting. Panellists also noted that support needs to be there for students who are under investigation.
 - f. Q5: Topics for exploration in the evaluation could include student and staff awareness of the statement, communication tactics around the statement, complaint and investigation processes and support offered to students.

Item 5 – Discussion session 2: awarding gaps

13. The chair welcomed Sarah Howls, Head of Access and Participation, and Maisha Islam to the meeting. Maisha, a student panellist and Sarah, a staff member, facilitated a joint session on work to close awarding gaps.

14. Panellists were asked:

- a. Q1: What are some of the activities and interventions universities have taken to tackle awarding gaps?
- b. Q2: How can student's contribution be equitable and not over-burden particular student groups?
- c. Q3: Awarding gaps have been most understood in reference to ethnic disparities but are there other student groups that should have sector attention?

15. Panellists fed back that:

- a. Q1: Providers had instituted interventions to address awarding gaps such as:
 - i. creating groups where students and staff work together.
 - ii. establishing foundation years so that students who may not have had to the access to support their peers have.
 - iii. establishing learning networks to share inclusive teaching practice.

16. It was also reflected by panellists that:

- a. there is support provided to students when they are applying, but some providers do not deliver what they set out in terms of academic support.
- b. interventions and activities need to be intersectional to be effective on awarding gaps, acknowledging, and including each individual's unique experiences and backgrounds.
- c. Q2: Providers can do more to remove barriers for students getting involved in this work, such as alleviating overcomplicated application processes and offering extra-curricular initiatives.
- d. Q3: Some groups who may be overlooked but need to be considered in this work are care leavers and care experienced students, working-class white men, mature students and disabled students.

Item 6 – student panel research project

17. The chair invited Aaliyah Farr, Graduate Trainee and Ben Hunt, Student Engagement Manager to the meeting.

18. An annual student panel commissioned research project is a priority for the refreshed student engagement strategy 2022-23. Options for this were discussed with the student panel in line with the OfS's strategy.

19. Aaliyah provided an overview of the potential research areas.

20. The panel were asked how they might want to be involved in this work, and they fed back:

- a. Involvement could be tailored to individual panellists' interests and areas they'd like to develop in.
- b. It is important for the panel to be involved in the promotion of research.
- c. There could be updates at future panel meetings. Continuity planning is important as panellists step down and new members join.

Item 7 – Closed session

21. The student panel held a closed session for any feedback. The meeting ended at 1800.