

OfS student panel meeting

Thursday 23 January 2020

Time: 1300 – 1830

Location: Finlaison House, London

Attendees

Martha Longdon (Chair), Chad Allen, Georgia Bell, Rose Bennett, Sinead Brown, Ruth Carlson, Shraddha Chaudhary, Zahra Choudhry, Samuel Dedman, Shakira Martin, Sabrina Mundtazir, Lizzie Pace, Alice Richardson, Joshua Sanderson-Kirk

OfS: Cassie Agbehenu, Nicola Dandridge, Edward Davison, Benjamin Hunt, Natasha Slade

Board: Michael Barber, Kate Lander

Apologies

N/A

Item 1: Chair's Update

1. The chair welcomed the panel members and two board members, Michael Barber and Kate Lander.
2. The chair acknowledged that the meeting would be the final one of this cycle and the final meeting for eight panelists who had been on the panel for two years.
3. The chair expressed how much she has valued working with the departing panelists and the collective wish to keep in touch with outgoing members.
4. The chair advised that for those panel members staying on for a second year on the panel, there would be lots of opportunities to get involved over the spring and summer and the student engagement team would be in touch with these opportunities soon.
5. The chair thanked the panel for recent involvement in OfS's work, which had included:
 - Lizzie, Ruth and Sinead who have volunteered to write a blog
 - Lizzie who had attended an OfS event run by the OfS Health Policy team
 - Lizzie noted that it was interesting to see the agendas of several stakeholders come together on this topic and that she had enjoyed attending
 - Shakira who had attended the OfS Improving Student Lives Insight Event.
6. The chair noted a range of opportunities available to the student panel members over the coming weeks.

7. A question was raised about the extent to which panelists could get involved in opportunities once they were no longer panel members. The chair stated that the OfS would seek views on how those stepping down would like to be contacted and involved. The chair noted that although the meeting marked the final one for some panellists, there may still be opportunities available and that we would review this on a case by case basis. The chair confirmed that panel alumni would always be encouraged to stay in touch and involved.
8. The chair confirmed that the student panel meetings would be moving to an academic cycle for the 2020-21 year.
9. The chair noted that the OfS's Remuneration and Nominations committee had made the decision to confirm that there would always be student representation in its membership, either through the student representative on the board or from the student panel. In particular, the chair noted that this had been noted publicly and that it sent a strong signal about the importance of student engagement at the OfS.
10. The chair reflected on the November OfS board meeting and highlighted the success of the student engagement presentation, thanking the panel for their critical role in the development of the OfS's student engagement strategy.

Item 2: Approval of the minutes

11. The chair asked the panel if they had any comments on the minutes from the meeting of 24 October 2019.
12. Amendments to the wording of point 21.2, 23.1 and 34.1 were requested and the minutes were approved subject to those changes.

Item 3: Update – Horizon Scanning Panel meeting

13. Joshua Sanderson-Kirk and Lizzie Pace reflected on their attendance at the Horizon scanning meeting of 25 November 2019.
14. Both gave an overview of the purpose of the meeting, noting that horizon scanning tends to be hypothetical. Topics covered within these meetings included demographic changes in the UK, carbon emissions and climate change, artificial intelligence and the ethics of its use in higher education, subject trends and the migration patterns of international students.
15. It was noted that the diversity of educational experience could be increased on the Horizon Scanning panel, but the impact on students within each topic was increasingly of focus within the meetings. Michael Barber welcomed this feedback and asked that it was fed back to colleagues working on the horizon scanning panel.

Item 4: Update - Experience in the OfS Legal team

16. Joshua Sanderson-Kirk gave an update on a week he had spent working with the legal team at the OfS. Joshua gave an overview of the work which the team are involved in and gave some insight into the upcoming judicial review.
17. Joshua highlighted that although the legal team were fairly removed from students in their day-to-day work, he had felt that the team were working with the interest of students throughout their work. Josh thanked OfS staff involved.

Item 5: Board and student panel Q&A

18. Two board members, Kate Lander and Michael Barber gave some thoughts and reflections on their experience as OfS board members.
19. Kate Lander introduced herself and explained that she wanted to find out the priorities of the student panel.
20. Michael welcomed the contribution of the student panel, highlighting the various ways that the senior team engage with the student perspective alongside their work with the panel, for example through NSS, NUS, visits to universities and meeting students within a range of providers and contexts. Michael noted that the student panel brings further insight and has rightly challenged the OfS at times, as well as shaping the development of policy in advance of it reaching the board, as demonstrated through the student engagement strategy.
21. Michael particularly noted the increase in ambition in relation to access and participation as an example of the OfS's impact so far.
22. Panelists discussed a number of topics with the visiting board members. These included:
 - The ways in which panelists could be involved in the OfS's work after completing their terms
 - The importance of the OfS's join up with other parts of the education system and with employers
 - The priority that the OfS should place on understanding the experiences of students who take non-traditional routes into and through higher education
 - The importance of appreciating the full diversity of provision across the sector and the way in which some providers may experience different regulatory burden to others
 - The importance of information, advice and guidance, especially in relation to the promotion of degree apprenticeships.
23. Michael highlighted the impact that the student panel have had and thanked all panelists for their input over the past two years. Michael suggested setting up a student panel alumni network which would enable the OfS and student panel to remain connected.

Item 6: Market exit and student protection session

The panel were joined by Rob Stroud, Head of Student Protection and Market Exit and Katie Twomey, Student Protection and Market Exit Manager.

24. Rob Stroud and Katie Twomey gave an update on their work since the previous session in May 2019.
25. It was advised that a consultation on the new student protection guidance will be launched which will seek views on updated student protection plan guidance across the sector, based on the OfS's experience of implementation of plans to date.
26. The panel discussed a range of scenarios which would need to be considered within student protection plans to ensure students are supported across a range of situations such as course closure, campus closure and provider closure. During this discussion the panel highlighted that consideration should be given to:
 - student demographics affected
 - subjects which would be affected
 - resources needed to support students
 - financial support such as payment for travel costs and relocation costs
 - refunds or compensation
 - clear communication to guide and support students which acknowledges where students should seek support through various circumstances
 - an accessible student protection plan
 - support to transfer to a different provider with similar entry tariff
 - the potential for students being able to take their credits to another provider.
27. Rob Stroud and Katie Twomey reflected on the level of support that students have received in similar situations.

Item 7: Harassment and sexual misconduct in higher education

28. The panel were joined by Emma Douthwaite, Safeguarding and Welfare Manager and Clare Isham, Senior Officer.
29. Emma Douthwaite and Clare Isham gave an overview of the consultation aims and purposes.
30. Questions were raised by the panelists around the circumstances that the OfS can regulate and to what extent in relation to:
 - on campus, off campus and online
 - the Erasmus program
 - a campus based internationally
 - whether regulation applies to degree apprenticeships and placements
 - student and staff relationships in respect of PhD students who may work with staff at the provider

- whether the OfS could look at local specialists and understand what they are doing successfully, although it was noted that development and implementation of policies would be the role of the provider.
31. A question was raised around the balance between the responsibility of the institution and the police in cases of harassment and sexual misconduct. It was highlighted that there is a lack of clarity around the process and the current issues will be explored within the consultation.
32. The student panel read through the statement of expectations and highlighted a variety of issues such as:
- differing processes within providers and the level of support offered to students.
 - the need for clear and accessible communications to explain the pros and cons of each reporting system (provider and/or police).
 - the need for sufficient processes in place within providers was explored and to ensure that the support given matches the individual situation.
 - data protection and GDPR within providers.
33. The student panel discussed how the OfS could support behavior change in the sector which included:
- an idea which involved a campaign around harassment to solidify our position and highlight that we expect the sector to do more
 - support providers to work together with the OfS in a collaborative way to continue to improve their processes and support to students
 - building relationships with institutions to provide support in addressing these issues, so that they in turn can support students who are affected highlighting best practice to show what is working within the sector
 - consideration to the OfS notifications system and the possibility that this service could be used in a sensitive situation, and to think carefully about who may be reading notifications which could be received.

Item 8: Chief Executive's review of the year and forward look

34. The chief executive highlighted that this was the final meeting for some panellists (Chad, Sinead, Ruth, Shraddha, Zahra, Shakira, Lizzie and Alice) and noted their contribution over the last two years as founding members of the panel. The chief executive thanked the departing panellists for playing a critical role in kickstarting the OfS's approach to student engagement by informing and shaping the strategy which would be launched in February.
35. Nicola noted and discussed with the panel a number of developments since the last meeting. These included:
- The election of a new government with a strong majority
 - Updated advice to students in relation to EU exit
 - Litigation that the OfS has been handling

- The launch of a consultation setting out a proposed approach for the regulation of providers' approach to harassment and sexual misconduct
- The upcoming launch of a review of the admissions system and the panel's involvement in this
- Developments in relation to TEF
- Internal work in relation to equality diversity and inclusion, following the panel's previous challenges to the OfS on this topic
- The business planning process for the year ahead

36. Nicola noted that the panel had advised the OfS on a variety of areas throughout the year but in particular in relation to:

- Market exit and student protection
- Student engagement
- Funding in access and participation
- Student protection plans
- TEF
- Student information, advice and guidance and Discover Uni.

37. Nicola thanked the panel for their work in shaping our approach to significant issues. Nicola also noted the review of the panel's effectiveness that would be taking place and reiterated Martha's request for panellists to complete the survey to support the OfS to improve the panel.

38. Nicola wished those who were standing down the best of luck in the future and asked them to keep in touch.

Item 9: Feedback session

39. There was a feedback session which encouraged the panel members to reflect on their time over the past year and two years.

40. The chair of the panel thanked the panel for their contributions.