

## **Privacy notice: the collection of personal information from references and providers making submissions to the Specialist Panel to be considered a world-leading specialist provider.**

The UK General Data Protection Regulations (UK GDPR) requires that clear and transparent information is provided to individuals about the use(s) that will be made of their personal information.

To fulfil this obligation, we are employing a layered approach to privacy notices where a short form overview is provided at the point at which personal data is collected, with a link then provided to a full detailed privacy notice.

### **Full privacy notice**

#### **1. Introduction**

The Office for Students (OfS) is the regulator of the higher education sector in England and has certain statutory functions set out in the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA). You can find more information about the OfS and the work that we do on our website: [www.officeforstudents.org.uk](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk).

The OfS is committed to protecting your personal information and being clear about what information we hold about you and how we use it. This privacy notice tells you what to expect when the OfS collects personal information.

The OfS is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Our registration number is ZA309955 and you can check our entry details on the ICO's website: <https://ico.org.uk/about-the-ico/what-we-do/register-of-fee-payers/>.

#### **2. Data controller and Data Protection Officer**

The OfS is the 'data controller' of any personal information collected within scope of this privacy notice. Our location and contact details are below:

Office for Students  
Nicholson House  
Lime Kiln Close  
Bristol  
BS34 8SR

Tel: 0117 931 7317

Email: [dp@officeforstudents.org.uk](mailto:dp@officeforstudents.org.uk)

Our Data Protection Officer (DPO) is the first point of contact for people whose information is processed. You can contact the DPO using the details above. Please note that this mailbox is monitored by other members of the data protection team.

### **3. What personal information we will hold and use**

Providers are being asked to make a submission to be considered a world-leading specialist provider. The personal information that we will collect and use as part of this collection is set out below:

- the title, name, position, phone number and email address of the contact for the submission
- the title, name, organisation, position and email address of referees.

### **4. Our purpose for using the information**

We can only use personal information where we have a specific purpose or purposes for doing so. The OfS distributes teaching funding annually to a small group of world-leading (primarily small) specialist providers to recognise their higher costs, distinctive nature and the public value that they bring to the wider higher education sector in England.

We are currently reviewing the approach we take to funding world-leading specialist providers and are asking eligible providers to make a submission to the Specialist Panel to determine whether they are a world-leading specialist provider. As part of that submission, we are asking each eligible provider to provide contact details of the person making the submission (the lead contact) and to submit up to two references who will provide a view on the extent to which the provider meets the criteria to be world-leading.<sup>1</sup>

The approach to funding world-leading specialist providers relates to the OfS's powers under the HERA in relation to financial support for registered higher education providers (section 39). We have also had regard to our general duties under section 2 of HERA, the statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State in January 2021, the condition of grant letter applied by the Secretary of State in March 2021, and the public sector equality duty.

To achieve the above aims, the specific uses that will be made of the lead contact's and referees' personal information are listed below:

- We are collecting personal information of the lead contact for the submission so that we may contact them for any queries in relation to the application.
- We are collecting referees' personal information so the Specialist Panel may contact the referee to clarify any details provided in the reference regarding the extent to which the provider meets the criteria to be world-leading in its specialism.
- We will use Board Papers Secure Transmission System Diligent to store providers' submissions and referee information and to securely share this information with the Specialist Provider Panel, to enable them to undertake their work to consider whether providers are world-leading specialist providers.

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/world-leading-specialist-provider-funding-outcomes-of-consultation-and-invitation-to-submit/](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/world-leading-specialist-provider-funding-outcomes-of-consultation-and-invitation-to-submit/).

If we want to use the lead contact or referees' personal information for a reason other than those purposes set out above, we will tell the lead contact and referees before we start that use and provide further information about the new purpose(s).

## **5. Legal basis for using personal information**

Under data protection legislation, we require a legal basis to be able to process the lead contact or referees' personal information for the purposes set out above.

In this case, the legal basis is:

**Article 6(1)(e) Public task:** the processing is necessary to perform a task in the public interest or for our official functions, and the task or function has a clear basis in law.

## **6. Who we share the personal information with and why**

We will not routinely pass the lead contact or referees' personal information to any other organisation except where required to do so as part of our functions or by law.

We will not disclose the lead contact or the referees' personal information to any other organisation other than those listed except where required to do so as part of our functions or by law.

A contractual agreement is in place with a third party, Dilligent Boardbooks Ltd to securely share submissions and referee information with the Specialist Provider Panel and that it is only used for the purposes described above.

## **7. How long we hold the personal information**

We are only able to retain a copy of the lead contact and referees' personal information as long as it is still needed for the purpose(s) for which it was collected.

We will review the personal information we hold about the lead contact and referees' after 12 months to assess whether it is still necessary to retain it.

After that point, the lead contact and referees' personal information will be confidentially and securely disposed of. If we need to keep the lead contact and referees' personal information for longer than the retention period above, we will inform them and explain the reasons for this.

## **8. Where the personal information will be stored**

The lead contact and referees' personal information will be stored on servers in the UK and will not be transferred outside that territory unless required by a court order.

For third party/cloud storage with Dilligent Boardpacks Ltd your personal information will be stored on servers in Germany, within the European Economic Area.

## **9. How we protect the personal information**

The OfS has a number of security measures in place to protect the lead contact and referees' personal information, including:

- Accredited to the Cyber Essentials PLUS standard for cybersecurity

- All staff are required to undertake training in data protection and information security on joining the OfS
- Formal information security policies that must be read and understood by all staff
- Personal information is only available to those members of staff who require access as part of their role.

The lead contact and referees' can read more information on our approach to information security on our website: [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/ofs-privacy/information-security/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/ofs-privacy/information-security/).

## **10. The lead contact and referees' rights over their personal information**

Once the lead contact and referees' personal information has been collected, they have certain rights in relation to that personal information that may be exercised. The lead contact and referee has the right to request:

- A copy of the personal information held about them
- Inaccurate personal information held about them is corrected
- The lead contact or referees' personal information to be deleted
- Processing of the lead contact or referees' personal information is restricted
- A copy of the lead contact or referees' information in a format that allows easy transfer ('data portability')
- That the lead contact or referee is not subject to automated decision making or profiling (if these take place).

All these rights have certain limitations depending on the request and the purpose for which we are holding the referees' personal information. Further information can be found about these rights and our processes for handling such requests at: [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/privacy/individual-rights-under-the-general-data-protection-regulation/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/privacy/individual-rights-under-the-general-data-protection-regulation/).

## **11. Use of cookies on OfS website**

Cookies are text files placed on your computer to collect standard internet log information and visitor behaviour information. This information is used to track visitor use of the website and to complete statistical reports on website activity. For further information about our cookies visit: [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/cookies/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/cookies/) or for further general information visit: [www.aboutcookies.org](http://www.aboutcookies.org) or [www.allaboutcookies.org](http://www.allaboutcookies.org).

Our contractor, Diligent Boardpacks Ltd, uses cookies and other device identifying technologies to provide online services, to understand how online services are used and for advertising purposes. This is explained in Diligent's Privacy Policy (<https://www.diligent.com/privacy/>) and within Diligent's cookie policy (<https://diligent.com/cookie-policy>).

## **12. Complaints about the use of personal information**

If lead contacts or referees are unhappy with the way in which their personal information has been handled by the OfS, please contact us via our Data Protection Officer (details in section 2) and we will try to resolve your issue informally.

If lead contacts or referees remain dissatisfied, they can complain to the data protection supervisory authority. In the UK, this is the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and they can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office

Wycliffe House

Water Lane

Wilmslow

Cheshire

SK9 5AF

Tel: 0303 123 1113

Email: [casework@ico.org.uk](mailto:casework@ico.org.uk)

## **13. Changes to this notice**

We keep our privacy notices under regular review and we will inform lead contacts and referees of any changes to this notice by placing an update on our website.

Updated in April 2022 to reflect the use of a third party, Diligent Boardpacks Ltd, which will hold submissions from providers including referee information.