

The House of Lords Industry and Regulators Committee report into the work of the OfS

Board's primary role in relation to this paper:

- A. Set strategy
- B. Set risk appetite
- C. Oversee performance
- D. Understand context

Purpose

1. This item on the board's agenda provides an early opportunity for the board to discuss the recommendations contained in the House of Lords Industry and Regulators Committee's report into the work of the OfS. The board is invited to discuss the content of the report and provide a steer about the development of the OfS's response.

Background

2. The Industry and Regulators Committee published its report on the work of the OfS on 13 September. The board can find the full report¹ on the Parliament website. A summary² of the conclusions and recommendations is available at the end of the report (page 87 of the pdf document).

¹ See <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/517/industry-and-regulators-committee/news/197379/office-for-students-underperforming-amid-looming-crisis-in-higher-education/>

² See https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5803/ldselect/ldindreg/246/24612.htm#_idTextAnchor195

3. During its inquiry the committee held 14 oral evidence sessions³ between March and May, including with the OfS chair and chief executive on 9 May. The inquiry received over 60 pieces of written evidence.⁴ The OfS submitted detailed written evidence⁵ and a supplementary letter.⁶
4. The publication of the report was widely covered in the sector and national press. A summary of the coverage is at Annex A.
5. We published a statement from the OfS chair⁷ on the day the report was published, and a few days later a longer blog⁸ by the chief executive in a well-read sector-facing publication.
6. Within the OfS, we published a blog from the chief executive for staff, and have discussed the report with staff, including at an all-staff briefing.
7. The government, via the Department for Education, is required to respond formally to the committee's report within two months of publication, by 13 November. We expect to produce an independent response in parallel and to the same timeline.

Paper publication

8. To be published externally along with the board papers.

³ See <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/7347/the-work-of-the-office-for-students/publications/oral-evidence/>

⁴ See <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/7347/the-work-of-the-office-for-students/publications/written-evidence/>

⁵ See <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/119198/html/>

⁶ See <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/121734/html/>

⁷ See <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/press-and-media/ofs-responds-to-house-of-lords-industry-and-regulators-committee-inquiry/>

⁸ See <https://www.researchprofessionalnews.com/rr-news-uk-views-of-the-uk-2023-9-learning-lessons/>

Annex A: Summary of media coverage

There has been widespread coverage of the Industry and Regulators Committee report in sector and national press:

- In the sector press, Lord Hollick, chair of the Committee, presented the report findings on [Wonkhe](#).⁹ [Times Higher Education](#),¹⁰ [FE Week](#),¹¹ [Wonkhe](#),¹² [Research Professional's 8am Playbook](#),¹³ [FE News](#),¹⁴ [Research Professional](#)¹⁵ and [BUILA](#)¹⁶ all had coverage.
- The [BBC](#),¹⁷ [The Times](#),¹⁸ [Forbes](#),¹⁹ [Daily Mail](#),²⁰ [Evening Standard](#),²¹ [PA News](#),²² [Byline Times](#),²³ [Web Times](#)²⁴ covered the story nationally. The story was also picked up on news bulletins for BBC Radio 2 and BBC Radio 4, and a range of local BBC stations. It was also

⁹ See <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/the-looming-higher-education-crisis-means-the-office-for-students-needs-to-improve/>

¹⁰ See <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/peers-criticise-ofs-nonchalance-looming-crisis-finances>

¹¹ See <https://feweek.co.uk/office-for-students-slammed-for-lack-of-political-independence/>

¹² See <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/everything-in-the-industry-and-regulators-committee-ofs-report/>

¹³ See <http://www.researchprofessional.com/>

¹⁴ See <https://www.fenews.co.uk/education/office-for-students-underperforming-amid-looming-crisis-in-higher-education-says-lords-committee/>

¹⁵ See <http://www.researchprofessional.com/>

¹⁶ See <https://www.buila.ac.uk/news/2023/report-calls-on-uk-to-review-higher-education-funding>

¹⁷ See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-66786377>

¹⁸ See <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/09/13/british-chinese-academic-research-collaborations-quadruple/>

¹⁹ See <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nickmorrison/2023/09/12/student-watchdog-accused-of-sleepwalking-into-looming-financial-crisis/>

²⁰ See <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12510947/The-watchdog-students-underperforming-faces-looming-crisis-report-warns.html>

²¹ See <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/students-government-office-for-students-university-and-college-union-department-for-education-b1106622.html>

²² See <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/government-office-for-students-university-and-college-union-department-for-education-b2410285.html>

²³ See <https://bylinetimes.com/2023/09/13/lords-report-slams-office-for-students-as-a-potential-smoke-screen-for-post-brexit-culture-wars/>

²⁴ See <https://webtimes.uk/report-calls-on-uk-to-review-higher-education-funding/>

picked up internationally in the New Telegraph,²⁵ English News²⁶ and University World News.

- The report was discussed on the Wonkhe podcast.²⁷
- The QAA chief executive's comments on the report's findings regarding a designated quality body were discussed in Research Professional's 8am Playbook,²⁸ Research Professional,²⁹ Wonkhe³⁰ and Times Higher.³¹
- Wonkhe published further discussion of the report, including concerns about calls for reduced regulation following its publication.

²⁵ See <https://newtelegraphng.com/report-uk-varsities-reliant-on-overseas-students/>

²⁶ See <https://english.news.cn/20230914/b9204ad8489e4eb1977d18932aa818f4/c.html>

²⁷ See https://wonkhe.com/blogs/podcast-regulation-quality-care-experienced-students/?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Wonkhe%20Daily%20-%20Friday%2015%20September&utm_content=Wonkhe%20Daily%20-%20Friday%2015%20September+CID_246f77421841ce206bb4015f6527ccdc&utm_source=Email%20marketing%20software&utm_term=This%20week%20on%20the%20podcast%20a%20Lords%20committee

²⁸ See <http://www.researchprofessional.com/>

²⁹ See <http://www.researchprofessional.com/>

³⁰ See <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/quality-assurance-needs-to-extend-beyond-the-baseline/>

³¹ See <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/quality-shouldnt-be-judged-absence-information-says-qa>