



Student panel update

Purpose

1. To update the board on the work of the student panel.

Recommendations/Decisions required by the board

2. The board is invited to note the updates in this paper.

Paper publication date

3. This report will be made available on the OfS website.

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Update

4. Four new student panel appointments have been made and announced for the start of the new academic year. These are:
 - a. Niel Lewis, an international student studying Law at the University of Greenwich, who was previously a Sabbatical Officer.
 - b. Rahul Mathasing, a systems engineering graduate and former Sabbatical Officer from Loughborough University.
 - c. Ezra Rose, a care experienced student currently studying at the University of Manchester.
 - d. Amy Stanning, a mature student completing a masters' degree in International and Military History at Lancaster University.

The panel recruitment exercise this year attracted applications from a wide range of future, current and former students. Both the initial promotional and shortlist stages of the recruitment achieved a diverse range of applicants across different characteristics and higher education experiences. See a [full summary of the current student panel membership](#).

5. The student panel met for the first time for the 2021-2022 cycle on 28 October. James Wharton joined for a discussion about his role and priorities as OfS Chair. James mentioned during the discussion the importance of the panel's purpose, which is to influence and shape the development of the OfS's policy.
6. There were then two substantive discussion sessions at the meeting. The first session explored the proposed OfS strategy currently out for public consultation. The student panel offered some of the following views for the OfS to consider:
 - a. if the strategy was successful then by the end of the strategic period, every student would know about the OfS
 - b. the strategy should include a commitment to support students to understand their consumer rights and what they are entitled to.
 - c. a key part of the strategy should be restoring the robustness of assessment, and that the OfS should maintain standards and take action where standards are not high enough.
 - d. mature students should be a focus for access and participation, particularly where care responsibilities will mean they need more flexible provision.
 - e. there is a tension between our goal on free speech and our goals on harassment and mental health, and the equality of opportunity side of the free speech goal should be articulated in a more robust way.
 - f. work on quality and standards and equality of opportunity needs to be aligned.
 - g. the strategy should include a focus on care experienced students.
7. The second session explored panellists' ideas for the refresh of the OfS's student engagement strategy. The first student engagement strategy was published in early 2020, prior to the

pandemic. It is being refreshed to align with the OfS's emerging corporate strategy and the changing context for students. Feedback included that:

- a. the OfS should continually develop a culture of student engagement, ensuring staff are excited to engage students and staff embed their views into policy development
 - b. the strategy should aim to raise awareness of the OfS and its notifications process amongst students.
 - c. research could be carried out as part of the strategy on barriers students face when engaging with the OfS's regulatory processes.
 - d. the OfS should aim to work in partnership with students in its policy development.
 - e. the OfS should aim to retain the knowledge of the student panel and find ways to engage previous student panellists once their term ends.
8. The student panel also met with Michelle Donelan, Minister for Further Education and Higher Education, on 4 November. The panel discussed their experiences of the return to campus and the government's proposals for a Lifelong Loan Entitlement.
 9. As this was the panel's first meeting of this cycle, an update will be provided to the next board on panellists' activities outside of formal panel meetings.