

# Office for Students' student panel – Terms of Reference: Jan – Dec 2018

This document will be reviewed after 31 December 2018.

## Purpose

1. Meaningful student engagement is a top priority for the OfS and members of its panel. The student panel, established by the OfS, will ensure that students' views inform the OfS's decision-making processes. The student panel will therefore play a critical role in informing the OfS's strategy and activity, and in that way will help the OfS shape the higher education agenda for years to come.

## Membership

2. The panel will be selected through a fair and open recruitment process. The membership will include a broad and diverse range of future, current and former higher education students from different backgrounds, institutions and modes of study.
3. Panel members will be appointed for one year, with the possibility of re-appointment for a further year.
4. The current president of the NUS (Shakira Martin) is invited to join the panel, for the same term as other panellists.
5. For 2018, the panel will be chaired by Megan Dunn.

## Responsibilities of the panel

6. The panel is an important source of advice to the OfS board. The relationship to the OfS board is both proactive and responsive, with the panel able to decide its own priorities but also react to the priorities and requests of the OfS board. In order to fulfil its role, the panel's activity will include, but not be limited to, engagement in the following areas:

Insight and horizon scanning:

- 6.1 To help the OfS to understand fully, and take account of, the interests of students (short, medium, and long term) in its policy development and decisions.
- 6.2 To take a strategic view of the sector, in order to provide advice and perspectives which look beyond one's own experience of higher education.

#### Specific duties:

- 6.3 To receive reports of the OfS Board's meetings from the student representative on the board
- 6.4 To respond to relevant consultations as appropriate
- 6.5 To carry out research, as agreed with the OfS, and gather other intelligence and evidence to better understand student's access to, experience of, and progression from higher education
- 6.6 To advise the OfS in developing its student engagement strategy
- 6.7 To advocate, on behalf of students and the OfS, in the student interest
- 6.8 To provide timely reports to the OfS board, following panel meetings

## Duties of the OfS

- 7. The OfS commits to:
  - 7.1 Providing appropriate support and resource to the panel, including through training provision, to facilitate meaningful discussion and informed decision making;
  - 7.2 Ensuring the panel has access to appropriate resource in carrying out its duties (e.g. in commissioning research);
  - 7.3 Demonstrating to the panel how it is responding to its advice and recommendations;
  - 7.4 Providing advice and guidance to the panel, where appropriate. For example, in communications and engagement with the media, panellists will have access to professional support.

## Behaviours and values

- 8. The OfS and all panel members commit to:
  - 8.1 Professional and respectful conduct at all times;
  - 8.2 Robust and open discussion that results in taking shared responsibility for decisions reached;
  - 8.3 The declaration of any conflicts of interest whenever and wherever they arise
  - 8.4 Discretion and judiciousness in all public comment.

## Meetings

- 9. The panel meetings will be conducted as follows:
  - 9.1 The panel will meet at least four times a year
  - 9.2 The panel will be chaired by the permanent student representative on the OfS Board or designated alternative
  - 9.3 The Chair will be responsible for recording the decisions of panel meetings and activity
  - 9.4 The student representative on the OfS Board will report decisions and activity of the panel to the OfS Board
  - 9.5 The panel requires the presence of 6 members, including the chair, to be quorate

- 9.6 Decisions of the panel will normally be made by consensus, but in exceptional circumstances a vote may be taken. The Chair of the panel has the casting vote in the event of a tied ballot
- 9.7 Panel members would normally be present in person at meetings but may join meetings virtually by exception
- 9.8 Agendas will be approved by the Chair with an invitation to any panellist to submit matters for inclusion on the agenda
- 9.9 A formal minute will be taken of all panel meetings and will include reserved business, as appropriate
- 9.10 The minutes of each panel meeting will be checked by the Chair, before being shared with the panel and then passed to the student representative on the OfS board. Panel minutes will go to the OfS Board for noting and will be published as part of the OfS Board papers
- 9.11 The Chair has the authority to call an extraordinary meeting of the panel should circumstances require. Support of three panel members in addition to the Chair is required for the extraordinary meeting to be called
- 9.12 The panel and the OfS shall review the panel's terms of reference annually
- 9.13 The Chief executive of the OfS may attend all panel meetings as an observer