

Chief executive's report

1. This report summarises activities since the date of the last OfS shadow board meeting on 29 November 2017.

OfS strategy development

2. The last board meeting considered an early draft of the OfS Strategy 2018 – 2021. Since then, more work has been undertaken with the HEFCE and OFFA directors, and a further draft of the Strategy will be the subject of discussion at this board meeting [items 3.1 and 3.2].
3. The Strategy will inform the annual business plan for 2018/19. We are expecting the annual Guidance Letter from the Department for Education shortly, and this too will shape the business plan. The plan, together with the Guidance Letter, will be brought to the board for their information at the 26 March 2018 board meeting.

OfS programme of work

4. OfS's work programme over the last two months has largely fallen into three categories. First is everything related to 'Day 1 readiness' which includes the governance, statutory and operational requirements for OfS to start its operations on 1 April 2018 following the closure of HEFCE and OFFA. Some of this comprises work initially taken forward by DfE, HEFCE and OFFA, for which responsibility is now being transferred over to OfS. The second category of work anticipates OfS' existence post-April 2018. This includes the development of the new organisational design and the emerging corporate governance structures and systems. Also included in this category is the work which HEFCE and OFFA are currently leading and which will transfer over to OfS on 1 April 2018. An example of this is the TEF, which will become OfS' responsibility on 1 April 2018 and is being overseen by Yvonne Hawkins, currently Director of Universities and Colleges at HEFCE who will become the Director of Teaching Excellence and Student Experience for the OfS. The third category relates to OfS initiatives and policy positions, such as in relation to the creation of the OfS Student Panel or emerging OfS positions on VC pay and free speech, and events such as giving evidence to Select Committees which are conducted in OfS' name.
5. Ensuring coherence and clarity in terms of accountability and oversight is a priority. The DfE initially coordinated regular programme board meetings involving relevant stakeholders to provide overall oversight. That overall programme oversight is now being taken forward by OfS, through a programme board which I chair. The programme board is supported by a programme management function coordinated by Nolan Smith, current Director of Finance at HEFCE who will become the Director of Resources, Finance and Transformation for the OfS. That HEFCE-based programme management function ensures alignment with HEFCE's work on Day 1 readiness.
6. The development of the Regulatory Framework continues to be a priority, led by Susan Lapworth, current Director of Regulation and Assurance at HEFCE who will become Director of Competition and the Register for the OfS. The consultation closed

on 22 December 2017, and results are currently being analysed and the draft Framework formulated. This is the subject of the board's discussion at the board meeting [items 2.1 – 2.5].

7. Interviews for members of the Student Panel concluded in December, and 13 members have now been appointed as set out in Annexe A. The Panel will be chaired by Megan Dunn. The first introductory meeting will take place on 24 January 2018, where the Panel will approve terms of reference and determine how they can best support the OfS in ensuring engagement of students, past, present and future in the development and implementation of OfS' Strategy.
8. The Student Panel will oversee a piece of work commissioned by OfS to survey students for their views on value for money. This work will be directed by a consortium of student unions (led by the chief executives of the student unions at the University of East Anglia and Middlesex) and carried out by market research company Trendence. The results of their work will be presented at the OfS launch conference on 28 February 2018.
9. Since the last board meeting we have a new Secretary of State for Education and Minister of State for Universities and Science. Sir Michael Barber, OfS chair and I met with the Minister on 16 January 2018.
10. I gave evidence to the House of Commons Education Select Committee on 12 December 2017 on value for money in higher education, and the Public Accounts Committee on 15 January 2018 in connection with the NAO Follow-Up Report on Alternative Higher Education Providers.
11. Since the last board meeting, I have visited students and student unions at the universities of York, Bournemouth, Surrey, Falmouth, Exeter, the Open University and Sheffield Hallam.

Organisational design and staffing

12. The design of the new OfS staffing structure is being taken forward in two phases, reflecting the twin constraints of not yet leading the organisation and not yet having finalised either the Strategy or the annual business plan. Accordingly, it is proposed that the first phase of organisational design will focus primarily on ensuring that the OfS is ready to fulfil its obligations on 1 April 2018. Responsibility for this work is primarily being taken forward by the HEFCE directors, and by Chris Millward who started as the Director of Fair Access and Participation on 1 January 2018 (whilst also being seconded back to HEFCE on a part time basis until March 2018). Phase 1 will therefore see staff broadly transferring over to the OfS on 1 April 2018 on existing terms and conditions and in large part fulfilling the same roles as they are now, though with many working to provide additional support to the registration process on an interim basis.
13. Phase 2 comprises the transfer over to a new OfS structure, designed to support the new OfS strategy. New roles for a Director of Data, Foresight and Analysis, a Director of External Relations and Communications, and a Head of Legal Services have been identified, and recruitment campaigns are underway.
14. In terms of staff transfer, an independent HR consultant has been commissioned via Capita to assist with drawing up job descriptions and helping with job matching and general advice and support for staff. The plan is to front load as much of this work as

possible, with a view to being able to start the consultations with staff and with PCS, the recognised trade union, in April 2018 and move quickly thereafter.

15. An off-site meeting for all HEFCE and OFFA staff will be held on 14 March 2018, which Sir Michael Barber will attend, where we will start the process of involving staff in the new OfS strategy and discussing OfS values and new ways of working.
16. A two-day training session for all the Directors and OfS staff was held at the LSE in January, covering the theory and practice of regulation.

Communications

17. Communications since the New Year has inevitably been dominated by press coverage of the board appointments. But notwithstanding that furore, strong and positive messages have been communicated regarding the appointments to the Student Panel and the Regulatory Framework consultation, as well as the OfS response to the Committee of University Chairs' draft remuneration code in [The Guardian](#) and [Times Higher Education](#).
18. In the run up to April we will be proactively communicating positive messages about the OfS' mission and vision, through broadcast, print, and online media, as well as through our new corporate Twitter channel which launches in the week of 22 January. We will be seeking high profile coverage of the publication of the regulatory framework and already have some interesting pieces in the pipeline, including a slot on BBC Breakfast and a feature in the Evening Standard.
19. The new OfS brand has been launched, together with the temporary OfS website (www.officeforstudents.org.uk). The full website will come into operation on 1 April 2018.

Corporate Governance

20. OfS board member, Kate Lander, has agreed to chair the OfS Risk and Audit Committee and will be joined by board member Gurpreet Dehal on the Committee. Other members are being sought, and terms of reference and approach are currently being developed.
21. It has been agreed that a Provider Risk Committee should also be established, to be chaired by OfS Deputy Chair Martin Coleman, to act on behalf of the OfS board in relation to delegated decisions regarding the Register.
22. At its November meeting, the shadow OfS board considered its approach to corporate governance for the period January to March 2018. Following the meeting some minor amendments were made to the proposed approach, all of which were agreed unanimously by shadow board members via email prior to 1 January 2018. This approach is now being implemented, including the roles and responsibilities of the board, compliance with legal requirements and a scheme of delegation. The scheme of delegation will require updating to reflect the OfS becoming fully operational from 1 April 2018. The board will be asked to consider this in March.

Forward look

23. The OfS launch conference will take place on 28 February 2018 at the QEII conference centre in central London. The Regulatory Framework will be published on that date, and a session at the conference will be devoted to it. All board members are encouraged to attend the conference if they can.
24. The next OfS board meeting will take place on 26 March 2018, and is likely to cover items relating to 18/19 funding provider funding decisions, approval of guidance on Degree Awarding Powers and University Title, free speech, joint OfS/UKRI working, the DfE Guidance Letter to the OfS and the OfS 2018/19 business plan.
25. Looking to the future, OfS board members are invited to advise whether they would find some planned visits to providers useful, to familiarise them with the range, depth and diversity of the English higher education sector. Likewise, they might find it helpful to visit the OfS Bristol office - after April - to meet some of the staff. This could be combined with a board meeting taking place in Bristol. If these would be helpful, a programme of visits can be arranged.

Annexe A

The OfS student panel has the following thirteen members:

- Alice Richardson, 6th Form student from the North West of England
- Benjamin Hunt, President of King's College London Students' Union 2016–17
- Chad Allen, a PHD student at the University of Cambridge, and former President of the Cambridge University Graduate Union
- Lizzie Pace, a part-time mature student at Birkbeck, University of London, and a former soldier in the British Army
- Luke Renwick, President of Sheffield Hallam Students' Union
- Megan Dunn, Senior Policy Adviser at the Equality Challenge Unit and President of the Nation Union of Students in 2015–16
- Ruth Carlson, Civil Engineering student at the University of Surrey. Ruth has also joined the Board of the Office for Students on an interim basis
- Shakira Martin, President of the National Union of Students
- Shraddha Chaudhary, international student, and President, Director and Chair of the Trustee Board at University of Exeter Students' Guild
- Sinead Brown, GCSE student from London
- Stuart Cannell, a part-time postgraduate student at Manchester Metropolitan University and a Student Reviewer for the Quality Assurance Agency
- Xenia Levantis, President of Norwich University of the Arts Students' Union
- Zahra Choudhry, Vice President of Education at University of West London Students' Union