Minutes of the OfS board meeting – 28 April 2025

Location: 10 South Colonnade, London

Present members:	Sir David Behan (Chair) Arif Ahmed (Director for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom) John Blake (Director for Fair Access and Participation) Elizabeth Fagan Katja Hall Susan Lapworth (Chief Executive) Simon Levine Caleb Stevens
Attendee:	Patrick Curry, Director Higher Education, Quality and Education from the Department for Education
Zoe Forbes	Deputy Director Higher Education, Quality and Education from the Department for Education
Apologies:	Martin Coleman Michael Spence Verity Hancock
Officers:	Jean Arnold, Deputy Director of Quality Amanda Charters, Chief of Staff Josh Fleming, Director of Strategy and Delivery Katherine Jacob, Corporate Governance Senior Officer (clerk) Philippa Pickford, Director of Regulation Nolan Smith, Director of Resources and Finance David Smy, Deputy Director of Enabling Regulation

1. Board members and the Department for Education (DfE) representative were welcomed.

2. Apologies were received from Martin Coleman, Verity Hancock and Michael Spence.

3. The purpose of the meeting was for the board to:

    a. Note the operating budget for 2025-26.

    b. Discuss and agree the headline business plan for 2025-26.

    c. Provide feedback on the approach to monitoring and addressing financial sustainability in registered providers in 2025-26 and subsequent years.

    d. Discuss how performance in relation to the plan should be monitored throughout the year.

4. The business plan had been developed in in the context of budget conversations with the Department for Education (DfE). The significant uplift to the budget was welcomed, as it shows

the confidence of ministers in the OfS and the importance they place on a well-regulated higher education sector. Future budgets are likely to reflect the government’s policy to fund the costs of regulation from a regulated sector, rather than from taxpayers.

5. Determining the proposed plan involved making trade-offs, and budget limitations inevitably means some areas of activity are deprioritised. The proposals are designed to address most pressing areas of risk; a bigger budget would have been used to accelerate transformation within the OfS and to expand scalable areas of regulatory activity, especially on quality and financial sustainability.

6. Exempt from publication.

7. The board agreed the headline business plan for 2025-26.

8. In relation to the approach to monitoring and addressing providers’ financial sustainability, it was noted that while some providers are taking action, others are still thinking in the short term, and are assuming that financial support will at some stage be provided by the government. The OfS is being explicit to individual providers about its assessment of the risks they are facing, which will allow governing bodies to robustly challenge management and financial plans.

9. The board requested a quarterly report on progress against the delivery plans, related to the risk register. The quarterly reports should also track contingency measures over the year.