



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:
 - a. The updates in this paper.
 - b. The minutes from previous panel meetings which have been approved by the panel and will be published on the OfS website.

Paper publication date

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

For more information, please contact: Benjamin Hunt, Student Engagement Manager,
Benjamin.Hunt@officeforstudents.org.uk

Update

4. The student panel met on 26 July. There were three substantive discussion sessions on: consumer protection, the guidance and training for student contacts for the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), and the blended learning review.
5. The discussion on consumer protection focused on a research project on student complaints that the student panel could advise and shape. When discussing the barriers students face when making complaints, the panel fed back that there is:
 - a. A lack of awareness amongst students that they can make a complaint, or how to start the complaints process.
 - b. Anxiety and pressure from tutors to avoid seeming like a 'troublemaker' by making a complaint.
 - c. A lack of familiarity for students with providers' advice and support. For example, international students who may not know who to seek advice from.
 - d. A feeling that complaints systems in providers are sometimes complex and that can deter students from raising complaints.
 - e. A lack of knowledge regarding when a concern would be out of scope of a complaint system, such as where matters of academic judgment are involved.
6. The discussion on the TEF focused on plans for student engagement in relation to the TEF student submission. The panel fed back that:
 - a. If there were a large online event to engage students in relation to student submissions, considerations should include:
 - i. Technical functionality should allow for successful engagement.
 - ii. Students may need encouragement to speak up in a larger event.
 - iii. It may be more impactful to host a set of smaller events on a regional basis rather than a large one.
 - b. Offering regional writing workshops for student contacts responsible for their providers' student submission could be useful.
 - c. Having providers involved in sharing resources and facilitating events to support student contacts could offer a comfortable space to encourage students to participate.
 - d. Financial compensation for student contacts should be considered.
 - e. Non-financial benefits for student participation in the TEF student submission should be considered, such as formal recognition, certificates, or skill development that they can use as evidence on their CVs.

7. The discussion on the blended learning review focused on the emerging themes from the blended learning review. The panel fed back that the final report should consider both the positives and negatives of blended learning:
 - a. The panel felt that some positives of blended learning could be:
 - i. There were opportunities to have further external speakers, particularly within online provision where travel is not required.
 - ii. There seemed to be more tailored 'bite-sized' learning and innovation due to the increase in online provision.
 - iii. Providers were working to create online communities in addition to physical ones.
 - iv. Blended learning made provision more accessible for some students from underrepresented groups, such as disabled students.
 - b. The panel felt that some drawbacks of blended learning could be:
 - i. Students could have the wrong 'blend' for them, for example, having an in-person class, then an online class shortly after, which could be inaccessible.
 - ii. Online learning without an online community supported by staff could be isolating for students.
 - iii. Attendance during face-to-face provision had fallen after the pandemic, and this could make it difficult for students to find a community. The panel felt there should be further support from providers to help students engage with their course.
 - c. The panel felt a written reflection from the students who took part in the review should be included, and consideration given to whether there are any student groups whose views might not have been represented in the process.
8. Minutes from the July student panel meeting have been submitted to the board for information. These will be published on the OfS website.
9. The process for recruiting new student panel members was completed at the start of August. We have appointed eight new panel members:
 - a. Nkechi Adeboye
 - b. Molly Edwards
 - c. Thomas Freeston
 - d. Thibau Grumett
 - e. Anita Hashmi
 - f. Oscar Minto

- g. Misha Patel
 - h. Michael Steele
10. More information about the appointments can be found in the [news item](#) published on 6 September.
11. The new panel members recently attended a training day in London, which included:
- a. An overview of the OfS and the role and purpose of the student panel.
 - b. A Q&A session with former and second year panel members.
 - c. An opportunity to meet the chief executive and ask questions.
 - d. A policy discussion on the upcoming consultation on access and participation plans with the Director for Fair Access and Participation.
 - e. A presentation on 'Using your influence: the power of student representation and voice'.
 - f. Media training with the OfS Head of Media.
12. The next student panel meeting will take place on 27 October 2022.