OfS student panel meeting

27 January 2022

Time: 1400-1800

Location: Virtual

Present members:	Martha Longdon (Chair)
	Ramy Badrie
	Jo Barlow
	Erk Gunce
	Miranda Harmer
	Maisha Islam
	Molly Lawson
	Niel Lewis
	Francesco Masala
	Rahul Mathasing
	Nikhita Nachiappan
	Ezra Rose
	Amy Stanning
	Lila Tamea
	Bryony Toon
	Aimear Wolstenholme
Attending:	Laurence Atkins (Senior Officer, OfS)
	John Blake (Director of Fair Access and Participation, OfS) (Item 6)
	Nicola Dandridge (Chief Executive, OfS)
	Ed Davison (Head of the Chief Executive's Office, OfS) (Item 4)
	Ranjeet Dhinsa (Senior Officer, OfS) (Item 5)
	Sienna Emanuel (Graduate Trainee, OfS) (Item 5)
	Katja Hall (OfS board member)
	Benjamin Hunt (Student Engagement Manager, OfS)
	Christie Jones (Student Engagement Officer, OfS)
	Charlie May (Personal Assistant, OfS) (Item 4)

Lee Smith (TEF Manager, OfS) (Item 5)

Mike Spooner (Chief Executive's Unit Officer, OfS) (Item 5)

Item 1 – Chair's Welcome

1. The chair welcomed student panel members and OfS staff to the meeting. She thanked those who participated in a workshop since the last meeting regarding the statement of expectations.

Item 2 – Chief executive's update

2. The chair invited the chief executive to give her update to the panel. The update included:

    a. That quality and standards consultations were commenced in January, which included three substantial consultations on: the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF), student outcomes and data indicators.

    b. That the OfS strategy would launch in March, dependent on consultation outcomes.

    c. That John Blake had been appointed Director of Fair Access and Participation.

3. The chief executive thanked the student panel for their substantive input into the development of the TEF consultation.

4. Questions were answered regarding:

    a. A freedom of speech investigation.

    b. Updates on the OfS's activity in relation to freedom of speech.

    c. Concerns around providers using suspensions for students who may get worse educational outcomes to meet their quality metrics.

Item 3 – Board and student panel session

5. The chair welcomed board member Katja Hall, board member to the meeting.

6. Katja Hall answered questions regarding blended learning provision, whether the OfS would be involved in the provision of T levels, clarity around complaints and the impact of the pandemic on postgraduate research students.

Item 4 – Blended learning

7. The chair welcomed Ed Davison, Head of the Chief Executive's Office, Mike Spooner, Chief Executive Unit Officer, Laurence Atkins, Senior Officer, and Charlie May, Personal Assistant to the meeting.

8. It was explained that the OfS would be conducting a review to understand how some providers are approaching blended learning. As part of this, academic experts would be commissioned as part of an assessment panel. A student poll would also be run as part of the review.

9. It was stated that it was important blended learning was looked at. The OfS has received several notifications and public enquiries, both positive and negative, around blended learning.

10. Panellists were asked:

    a. What does good-quality blended learning look like?

    b. What does poor-quality blended learning look like?

11. Panellists reflected that:

    a. Good-quality blended learning included:

        i. a focus on community.

        ii. having effective student engagement and voice mechanisms.

        iii. online resources should be accessible and available outside the lecture room.

        iv. flexible access to IT support, for both students and staff.

        v. innovative usage of technology, including live streaming.

    b. Poor-quality blended learning included:

        i. poor communication and signposting.

        ii. not being mindful of equality, diversity, and inclusion considerations.

        iii. students not being supported by staff to engage with provision.

        iv. having no opportunities for 1-2-1 contact or discussion.

        v. a lack of timetabling coordination with other modules and lessons.

        vi. academic staff not being trained in online delivery and being expected to make interactive materials.

12. Panellists were then asked to reflect on key areas that the review should focus on. Topics were split into areas around the B conditions, which are:

    a. Effectiveness of online provision (B1, a high-quality academic experience).

    b. Resources and support (B2, students receive 'resources and support' and there is 'effective engagement'.

    c. Effective, reliable and valid assessment (B4, students are assessed effectively).

13. Panellists fed back that:

    a. The role of postgraduate researchers (PGRs) in delivering learning provision should be considered.

b.   Providers should engage with students to understand what they want from a course.

c.   Whether community would be assessed under the quality conditions.

14. Key questions that the panel thought should be highlighted in each theme were:

a.   B1:

i.   how are staff trained in providers?

ii.   what systems are in place to support underrepresented students?

iii.   whether blended learning had affected the attainment gap?

iv.   whether a provider had ensured continuous student engagement.

v.   whether the amount of contact hours for a student had changed in the last few years.

vi.   whether steps had been taken to ensure the accessibility of online and physical learning spaces.

b.   B2:

i.   whether a provider had made sure IT support was sufficient for students.

ii.   whether online and in-person learning supplied a joined-up experience for students.

iii.   whether a provider had supplied equal access to all students to online and in person provision.

iv.   whether a provider had ensured staff were trained to basic IT levels.

c.   B4

i.   there have been safety net policies for two years, how will there be consistency of assessment now that those policies may not apply?

ii.   how are individual barriers and challenges, for example, parenthood or employment responsibilities, recognised in assessment policies and procedures?

15. Facilitators thanked panellists for their contributions.

Item 5 – Teaching Excellence Framework: proposed student submission

16. The chair welcomed Ranjeet Dhinsa, Senior Officer, Sienna Emanuel, Graduate Trainee and Lee Smith, TEF Manager.

17. It was explained that a student contact had been proposed as part of the TEF process.

18. Panellists were asked about the student submission proposals. Feedback included:

    a.   The submission could be burdensome for students. Where necessary, a representative from a students' union could be TEF contact to make it less burdensome. The submission could also be divided between multiple students.

    b.   That the OfS would have to support students in the submission to avoid undue influence from providers.

    c.   That support and training would be needed for students taking up this role.

    d.   That underrepresented students should be encouraged to lead student submissions.

19. Facilitators thanked the panel for their contributions.

Item 6 – Access and participation priorities

20. The chair introduced John Blake, Director of Access and Participation.

21. Aspirations for the OfS's access and participation approach were discussed, which included:

    a.   Expanding school-university partnerships.

    b.   Making sure that access and participation and quality and standards were complimentary.

    c.   Promoting evaluation.

22. Panellist feedback included:

    a.   Making sure there is a joined-up approach to access and participation across a provider.

    b.   Whether Muslim student finance could be prioritised.

    c.   That more work could be done to collaborate with social services in addition to school partnerships.

    d.   That students from care-experienced backgrounds, with higher dropout rates, should also be included.

Item 7 - Closed session

23. The student panel held a closed session for any feedback. The meeting ended at 1800.