

## OfS student panel meeting

28 October 2021

Time: 1400-1800

Location: Virtual

Present members: Martha Longdon (Chair)

Jo Barlow

Erk Gunce

Miranda Harmer

Maisha Islam

Molly Lawson

Niel Lewis

Francesco Masala

Rahul Mathasing

Nikhita Nachiappan

Ezra Rose

Amy Stanning

Aimear Wolstenholme

Attending: Nicola Dandridge (Chief Executive, OfS) (Item 2, Item 3)  
Benjamin Hunt (Student Engagement Manager, OfS)

Josh Fleming (Head of Strategy and Evaluation, OfS) (Item 4)

Stanley Rudkin (Analyst, OfS) (Item 4)

Natasha Bassett (Student Engagement Officer)

James Wharton (Chair, OfS) (Item 3)

Apologies: Ramy Badrie

Bryony Toon

## **Item 1 – Chair’s Welcome**

1. The chair welcomed student panel members and OfS staff to the meeting. She particularly welcomed new panel members to the meeting Niel Lewis, Rahul Mathasing, Ezra Rose and Amy Stanning.

## **Item 2 – Chief executive’s update**

2. The chief executive updated the panel. This included:
  - a. The ongoing development of the OfS’s strategy for 2022-25. The chief executive highlighted two emerging pillars of the strategy: quality and standards and equality of opportunity.
  - b. Quality and standards consultations, specifically those regarding the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) and condition B3.
  - c. Blended learning, specifically that providers should consider the needs of students when making decisions about learning provision. It was noted that blended learning was something the OfS was keen to look at further.
  - d. That the skills bill is progressing through parliament.
  - e. That there was upcoming industrial action. It was noted that the OfS would create a student facing resource to support students. Nicola asked for the panel’s view on factors that could be included. Panel members feedback included:
    - i. that it is not staff only who are balloting for strike action, but some postgraduate students.
    - ii. that the OfS should be clear with students what our role is in relation to the strikes.
    - iii. that awareness of complaints procedures is low amongst students.
    - iv. that the OfS’s communications should highlight what rights students have and where to seek redress.
3. It was noted that it was Natasha Bassett’s last meeting. The panel thanked her for her work over the last two years supporting the panel.

## **Item 3 – Board and student panel session**

4. The chair introduced James Wharton, chair of the OfS.
5. The chair of the OfS outlined the role of the panel as helping the OfS to understand the student voice. He also outlined that the OfS’s role was to regulate at the sector level, not at the individual level, and noted that the panel plays an important strategic role in this.
6. A panel member raised the issue around the lack of alternative funding for Muslim students. The chair of the OfS stated that funding is outside of the OfS’s remit, although there is a role for the OfS to play in access and participation. It was noted that this was an important issue.

7. It was stated that it was helpful to hear what the student panel cares about and would like to schedule a longer discussion with them.

#### **Item 4 – 2022-25 strategy**

8. Martha Longdon introduced Josh Fleming, Head of Strategy and Evaluation, and Stanley Rudkin, analyst. They gave an overview of the development of the OfS's strategy.
9. The panel discussed key questions around:
  - a. What would the world look like if the proposed strategy were implemented successfully?
  - b. Which elements of the proposed strategy do you think the OfS is most and least likely to achieve?
  - c. Do you think the proposed strategy will lead to any unintended consequences for students?
10. Feedback from panel members included:
  - a. The OfS would be successful if students were more aware of the OfS, if there was confidence in the robustness of assessment, and if the OfS acted where quality and standards were not high enough.
  - b. Mature students should be considered as part of access and participation policy.
  - c. The OfS should reflect on how geography intersects with choice of subject and quality issues.
  - d. There may be some tensions between goals on freedom of speech, harassment and student mental health.
  - e. There should be a shared view on what students should receive when they apply to university.
  - f. The strategy should reflect care-experienced students.
  - g. Alternative finance for Muslim students should be a focus for the access and participation goal.
  - h. Enhanced student choice is achievable if the OfS continues to widen the audience for Discover Uni and partner with other organisations providing information, advice and guidance.
  - i. That 'rigorous' assessment may be more appropriate language to use than 'robust' assessment.
11. Martha Longdon thanked the staff facilitating the session, who left the meeting.

#### **Item 5 – refreshing the student engagement strategy**

12. Martha Longdon handed over to Ben Hunt, Student Engagement Manager, to facilitate a session on refreshing the student engagement strategy.

13. Four potential initiatives for the refresh of the student engagement strategy were highlighted. The panel were asked to discuss which should be prioritised. These initiatives included:
- a. A review of how students engage with the OfS through notifications and complaints.
  - b. Embedding further student views into policy development.
  - c. To support and fund the panel to commission research on an annual basis.
  - d. Expanding the student voice at the OfS by having a standing group of 100 students alongside the student panel.
14. The goals of the proposed OfS 2022-25 strategy were highlighted. The panel were asked how the student engagement strategy could align with the overall OfS strategy. Panel members said that the student engagement strategy should prioritise:
- a. Developing a culture of student engagement across the OfS.
  - b. Raising awareness of the OfS, notifications and complaints procedures amongst students.
  - c. On the proposal for 100 students, the panel stated that this group would need to represent the student population. The panel said that the group of 100 students could complete surveys to give an overview of their view, which then could be discussed in more detail by the student panel.
  - d. The panel said that OfS staff should strive for co-production, but with this, consider the logistics and context of each project.
  - e. To consider how the OfS retains knowledge from student panel members and incorporate their expertise.

## **Item 6 – review 2021-22 terms of reference**

15. Minor updates to the terms of reference were discussed for 2021-22. It was agreed these would be dealt with outside of the meeting.

## **Item 7 – Closed session**

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