

OfS student panel meeting

22 June 2022

Time: 1400–1630

Location: Virtual

Present members: Martha Longdon (Chair)

Jo Barlow

Erk Gunce

Miranda Harmer

Maisha Islam

Molly Lawson

Rahul Mathasing

Nikhita Nachiappan

Ezra Rose

Amy Stanning

Lila Tamea

Aimear Wolstenholme

Attending: James Hare (Graduate Trainee, OfS)

Nicholas Holland (Competition and Registration Manager, OfS)

Benjamin Hunt (Student Engagement Manager, OfS)

Christie Jones (Student Engagement Officer, OfS)

Susan Lapworth (Interim Chief Executive, OfS)

Henry Stubbles (Senior Officer – Competition and Registration, OfS)

Apologies: Ramy Badrie

Niel Lewis

Francesco Masala

Bryony Toon

Item 1 – Chair’s welcome and update

1. The chair welcomed the student panel members and OfS staff to the meeting.
2. The chair thanked those who participated in recent events and workshops including:
 - a. Taking part in focus group sessions about our communication strategies for recruiting new student panel members.
 - b. Attending a workshop on the blended learning review.
 - c. Taking part in provider interviews for the blended learning review.
 - d. Helping with this year's student panel recruitment.
 - e. Sending written feedback on the OfS equality and diversity statement.
 - f. Taking part in a roundtable discussion on the National Student Survey (NSS) data and its dissemination for quality assurance, enhancement and regulatory purposes.

Item 2 – Discussion session: B conditions and essay mills

3. The chair invited the Competition and Registration Manager, Senior Officer – Competition and Registration, and Graduate Trainee to begin the session on the B conditions and essay mills.
4. The OfS staff members provided an overview of contract cheating and essay mills, and explained that this is a global issue with many companies offering these services in the UK alone.
5. The group then split into three breakout rooms for a discussion where panel members were asked:
 - a. What do you feel the awareness level is (for yourself and other students) of the risks of contract cheating, and how useful to students is the information that is available from existing sources that you are aware of?
 - b. Are there things that the OfS should be doing itself to make students more aware of the consequences of using contract cheating services? If so, what should its key messages be?
6. The panel fed back that:
 - a. Awareness is generally not high regarding the consequences of using these services. The focus from providers is on plagiarism, collusion, and academic integrity. It seemed like providers wanted to avoid the topic of essay mills so they don't encourage their use.
 - b. The advertising from contract cheating businesses is aggressive and currently is more influential than communications from providers.

- c. Students who use these services often do so because they feel they have no choice. It's important to look at why students find themselves in that position and communicate that students are victims of these services.
- d. The OfS could help raise awareness of these issues through outlining the consequences of using services, through a similar document to the OfS notifications guide, or supporting the development of clear ways to report these organisations.
- e. Questions were raised as to the role of providers in preventing what was now to be a crime. The OfS's requirements on providers in condition B2 to provide support students were noted in the presentation, but it was suggested that the OfS and the sector may not be best placed to combat essay mills directly using the new criminal powers.

7. The OfS staff members thanked the panel and left the meeting.

Item 3 – Chief executive's update

8. The chair welcomed the interim chief executive to the meeting to begin her update.

9. The interim chief executive began by saying thank you to the panel members who are stepping down for their work over the past academic cycle.

10. She then outlined her priorities going forward:

- a. Quality and standards:
 - i. Completing the review of blended learning.
 - ii. Implementation of updated B conditions of registration.
- b. Publishing the outcomes of B3 and Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) consultations.
- c. Equality of opportunity.
- d. Enabling regulation, including the monitoring financial sustainability.

11. Other updates included:

- a. Academy of Live and Recorded Arts (ALRA): The majority of students took up the opportunity to continue with their course at Rose Bruford College. The OfS has received positive feedback from students on how they've been supported.
- b. Ukraine: The OfS has distributed £4 million funded by the Department for Education to providers to support Ukrainian students in the UK.

12. Questions were answered regarding:

- a. The ALRA closure:
 - i. Whether there was an opportunity for ALRA students to feed back on the process/their experience?

- 1) The interim chief executive stated it would be positive for the panel to be included in ALRA feedback findings.
 - ii. Why some students didn't pick up the offer to transfer to Rose Bruford?
 - iii. The stability of the sector as a whole.
- b. The appointment for a student support champion and how that will impact the student panel's role?
- c. Key priorities around equality and equity?
- d. Is the OfS involved in the process for creating Sharia compliant loans?
- e. Are there any plans to monitor quality/measure impact of courses where providers have grown rapidly?

13. The chair thanked the interim chief executive for joining the meeting.

Item 4 – Approval of meeting minutes and amended terms and conditions

14. The panel approved sets of meeting minutes over the last panel cycle to be published on the OfS website.
15. The panel discussed a proposed amendment to the student panel terms and conditions. It was decided that a further clarification would be made and would be approved over email.

Item 5 – Closed session

16. OfS staff exited the meeting at this point to allow for a panel member closed session.