

Student panel report

Issue

1. An update on the 18 April, 2018 student panel meeting and recent student panel activity.

Recommendations

2. The board is invited to:
 - a. Note the report, for information.
 - b. Consider any suggestions for future development and areas of activity.

Further information

3. Available from Nicola Dandridge: nicola.dandridge@officeforstudents.org.uk.

Member's interests

4. Ruth Carlson, student experience representative on the OfS board, sits on the student panel.

Background

5. The student panel were appointed in January, 2018. The membership and terms of reference can be found on the Office for Students' website. The panel had an initial introductory meeting on 24 January, 2018 and its first full meeting on 18 April, 2018. This paper updates the board on the panel's latest meeting and recent activity.

Update

6. Since the panel's first meeting many panellists have played an active role in the OfS and in the wider HE sector. The list below gives a sense of the nature of the panellists' contributions:
 - Many contributed to and participated in the OfS launch conference with Ruth Carlson, Ben Hunt, Shakira Martin and Megan Dunn speaking on the day.
 - Lizzie Pace, Luke Renwick and Xenia Levantis spoke at the OfS all-staff conference in March, shortly before the full launch of the OfS.
 - Chad Allen has taken up a role as an observer on the Research England Council.
 - Ruth Carlson has spoken at a recent WonkHE conference and published a blog on the OfS website.
 - Stuart Cannell gave evidence to the Education Select Committee's inquiry into value for money in higher education.
 - Megan Dunn has taken up a position on the Post-18 Funding Review's 'User' reference group.
7. The first full meeting of the student panel focussed on: developing understanding of the regulatory framework; the OfS's approach to value for money; information, advice and guidance; and student engagement (minutes in Annex A). The discussions from the meeting have informed further work on value for money and student engagement and will inform the OfS's work on information, advice and guidance once the incoming director for external relations takes up his post.
8. In order to ensure that panel members continue to influence areas that it identifies as priorities, the chair (Megan Dunn) decided to establish sub-groups who will work with OfS officials on an ongoing basis between panel meetings. Since the meeting, sub-groups focussing on the OfS's approach to value for money and student engagement have been established, with more likely to follow. These sub-groups will bring a student perspective to these areas which will inform recommendations to the board in future. It is also hoped that the establishment of the sub-groups of the panel will lead to panellists themselves taking greater ownership of their agenda at future meetings.
9. There is significant appetite from OfS officials, sector agencies and the sector press to work with panellists. This has created a challenge around the time requirements placed on panellists and the OfS will consider increasing the expected time commitment from the panellists for future years, in line with the development of the student engagement strategy.

Paper publication date

10. We expect to be able to publish this paper three weeks after the meeting.

Annex A: Minutes of 18 April, 2018 student panel meeting

OfS Student Panel Meeting - Minutes

Date: 24 April 2018

Time: 16.00 – 18.00

Location: Finlaison House, Furnival Street

Attendees:

Megan Dunn (chair), Ben Hunt, Chad Allen, Lizzie Pace, Xenia Levantis, Zahra Choudhry, Ruth Carlson, Shakira Martin, Shades Chaudhury, Sinead Brown, Alice Richardson, Stuart Cannell, Luke Renwick, Nicola Dandridge, Amanda Wilcox, Sarah Bruce, Edward Davison

Item 1: Chair's welcome

1. The chair thanked panel members for joining the meeting.
2. The chair thanked panellists for their varied contributions since the January welcome meeting, which ranged from speaking at the OfS all staff conference to giving evidence to the Education Select Committee.
3. The chair invited the OfS's chief executive to give a brief update to the panel. This included the full launch of the OfS on the 3 April and the resulting assumption of its regulatory responsibilities and the start of the registration process. The chief executive echoed the chair's thanks to the panellists for their involvement during the preceding months.

Item 2: Introduction to the OfS's Regulatory Framework

4. David Smy (OfS) was invited to give an overview of the OfS's regulatory framework to the panel.
5. Questions from panellists included: the way that complaints and whistleblowing would be used by the OfS; how access & participation plans would be monitored; how the interests of academic staff would be considered in the regulatory regime; and how fines would be handled.
6. David Smy offered to respond to any follow-up questions or suggestions that the panel might have.

Item 3: OfS's approach to value for money

7. Jim Dickinson (UEA students' union) and Ed Marsh (Middlesex University students' union) were invited to present the OfS commissioned research on value for money from the student perspective.
8. The panellists raised various questions and emphasised: the importance of drawing out the widening participation elements of this research more clearly and the need to consider how best to contextualise information about value for money so as not to

put off prospective students who could make decisions that reduce their opportunities.

9. The panel agreed to form a sub-group who would work with the lead OfS official, Jim Dickinson and Ed Marsh to develop a set of recommendations for the OfS board in May.

Item 4: OfS's approach to information and guidance

10. Edward Davison (OfS) was invited to lead an initial session on the panel's views on information and guidance.
11. The panel were invited to imagine what outstanding information, advice and guidance would look like for students at different stages of an educational pathway. The panel's feedback is captured in Annex A.

Item 5: OfS's approach to student engagement

12. Amanda Wilcox (OfS) was invited to lead a discussion with the panel centred on two questions that the board had asked the panel to consider:
 - Why should the OfS engage with students?
 - i. What should its priorities be over the next 18 months?
 - Should the OfS support providers to engage with their students?
 - i. What are the bounds of its remit within this space?
 - ii. How would it do this effectively?
13. The panel's discussion in relation to these discussions is summarised in annex B.
14. The panel agreed to form a sub-group to conduct further work with the lead OfS official, Amanda Wilcox, informing the development of a student engagement roadmap.

Item 6: Additional opportunities for panellists

15. The panel took this paper as read and the chair emphasised the panellists should get in touch with Edward Davison to receive more information about the opportunities listed in the paper.

Item 7: Feedback

16. The chair led feedback from the panellists without OfS officials present and then concluded the meeting.