

Guide to the Office for Students Register and registration

What is a registered higher education provider?

A registered higher education provider is one that is on the Office for Students (OfS) Register of English higher education.

To get on the Register, a provider must:

1. Apply.
2. Demonstrate that it meets a set of requirements ('initial conditions of registration') relating to teaching quality, student protection, student support, financial sustainability, sound governance and management, and more.

All registered providers are regulated by the OfS.

What is the OfS Register?

The Register is a list of all higher education providers in England who are regulated by the OfS.

It is published at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/the-register/the-ofs-register/

What being a registered higher education provider means

To register, a higher education provider must demonstrate to us that it meets threshold requirements relating to teaching quality, student protection, student support, financial sustainability, sound governance and management, and more.

In some cases, it may be required to take action to improve access and participation for underrepresented groups.

Students can be confident that a registered higher education provider meets these baseline requirements, and that we are monitoring it as its regulator.

However, registered provider status is not a quality kitemark or an award.

See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/regulation/conditions-of-registration/ for full details.

What happens if a provider no longer meets the requirements?

Should a registered provider be at risk of falling below any of these thresholds, we will intervene to protect students' interests.

This might mean, for example, putting it under greater regulatory scrutiny ('enhanced monitoring'), asking it to meet extra requirements ('specific conditions') or working directly with staff to make changes. In some cases, where it no longer meets a condition of registration, we might impose a sanction, such as a fine or deregistration.

Why do higher education providers register with OfS?

Registering enables providers to do certain things. For example:

- access public grants such as government funding for teaching or research

- access student support funding (in other words, its students can get government-backed loans from the Student Loan Company)
- apply for or maintain a licence to recruit international students
- apply for the right to award its own degrees
- apply for the right to call itself a university.

Some types of registration enable the provider's students to access higher tuition fee loans than others. To earn that right, they must show us that they are improving access and support for students from underrepresented groups.

See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/regulation/what-can-registered-providers-do/ for full details of the benefits that providers get through registration.

Do all higher education providers have to register with OfS?

No. Registration is voluntary and organisations/companies may provide higher education courses without registering.

However, those who do not register cannot access any of the benefits of registration listed above. They are not regulated by the OfS so we cannot say whether they are meeting our thresholds for quality and support, and their students cannot get government loans.

If a specific higher education provider is not on the Register:

At the moment, if a provider is not on the Register, this means either:

- it has applied but its application has not yet been assessed

or

- it has not applied.

We are receiving hundreds of applications for registration. We expect to make the majority of decisions by September.

The registrations announced today are just the start and you should not yet draw any conclusions about a provider based on it not being registered. If potential students are thinking about where to study, we recommend checking registration status later, but before they make their final decision.

We are prioritising applications depending on when the provider recruits its students, because some start recruiting earlier in the year than others. This is so that providers can give accurate information to applicants about tuition fees and whether they will be eligible for loans.

What is an access and participation plan?

Access and participation plans set out how higher education providers will improve equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups.

Anyone may write an access and participation plan, but if providers want to charge higher tuition fees, their plans must be approved by the OfS Director for Fair Access and Participation. If they do not have this approval, they may not charge fees above the basic fee (£6,000-£6,165 per year depending on their Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) rating – see www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-students/teaching-excellence-and-student-outcomes-framework/ for more information about the TEF).