October 2026

Chair's report

Board's primary role in relation to this paper:

☐ A. Set strategy

☐ B. Set risk appetite

☐ C. Oversee performance

☒ D. Understand context

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update on the activities of the OfS Chair since the previous Board meeting.

Decisions requested

2. The Board is invited to note the contents of the paper.

Paper publication

3. To be published externally along with the Board papers (subject to appropriate redactions).

For further information, please contact Edward Peck, chair@officeforstudents.org.uk.

Key activities

4. Board committees have continued to meet, with reports provided to this meeting. I am pleased that Kirstin Baker has agreed to become Chair of the Quality Assessment Committee (QAC) when Simon Levine steps down from the Board in December. We continue to refresh the membership of QAC with new independent members. As the Public Affairs Committee is currently operating in an interim phase, we have also interviewed for longer term appointments from December. I will say more about these appointments at the Board meeting. I am also pleased to welcome Lewis Wilson to the Student Interest Board, as the new National Union of Students (NUS) England Vice President Higher Education for 2026 to 2028.

Meetings and engagements

5. Since the arrival of our new Chief Executives, I have scaled back the numbers of institutional visits that I undertake.

6. Nonetheless, on 21 July 2026, I was pleased, alongside Polly Payne and Ruth Hannant, to attend a dinner at Hartpury University [exempt from publication].

7. On 25 August 2026, I attended a meeting with the Chair and Vice-Chancellor from the University of Sussex with the Chief Executives. We had a constructive discussion about the Sussex lessons learned report, and I was grateful for their suggestions both on the report, and on the future relationship between the OfS and Sussex.

8. On 9 and 10 September 2026, I attended Nottingham Trent University for the annual Universities UK (UUK) conference. Ruth and Polly's speech emphasised the hugely important contribution the higher education sector makes for students and wider society. They also spoke to the changes we are making following the Sussex lessons learned report and emphasised the importance of the OfS highlighting and tackling the small pockets of poor quality provision we continue to see. In conversations I had with vice-chancellors and chief executives of sector agencies, the response to both the report and the speech were entirely positive.

9. I am aware that non-executive Board members continue to participate in provider visits as the opportunity arises. This has included a visit to Open University in July 2026 and forthcoming visits are planned to Ming-Ai Association, Bournemouth University, University of Winchester and South Gloucestershire and Stroud College in the autumn.