

Office for
Students



Working in partnership to improve international student integration and experience

Call for evidence

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Contents

Summary	2
Who should respond	2
How to respond	2
About this call for evidence	3
Background	3
Objectives of this call for evidence	3
Call for evidence and standards of evidence	3
How we will treat your response	4

Summary

1. Through a call for evidence, we are seeking to identify effective practice in supporting international students' integration into UK higher education. We will then share this with the higher education sector, supporting delivery of the Department of Education's international education strategy.
2. We are seeking submissions from higher education providers and organisations on one or more of the identified themes relating to the international student experience:
 - work to prevent and address harassment and sexual misconduct
 - how responding to the coronavirus pandemic has shaped practice in supporting international students to adapt to and integrate with UK higher education
 - work to ensure the accessibility and effectiveness of wellbeing and support services (such as student services, mental health provision, etc.).
3. We are also interested in how submissions may relate to one or more of the cross-cutting themes identified below:
 - advancing equality of opportunity for students with one or more protected characteristic
 - partnership with international students
 - intervention that may also benefit home (UK-domiciled) students.
4. One of the key aims of the call is to increase the evidence available to government, policy makers, funders, and higher education providers and their staff and students on what does and doesn't work in the field of international student support.

Who should respond

5. We welcome responses from anyone involved in the delivery, design and oversight of work to support the international student experience in English higher education.
6. We are particularly (but not only) interested in hearing from higher education teaching staff, professional services staff and leaders in higher education. We welcome views from all types and sizes of provider, and across all subjects. We would also like to hear from students and students' unions.

How to respond

7. Please submit your response by **Monday 16 May 2022** by completing the online form at <https://survey.officeforstudents.org.uk/s/international-students-call-for-evidence>.
8. If you have any enquiries about the exercise, require this document in an alternative format, or need assistance with the online form, please contact EDI@officeforstudents.org.uk.

About this call for evidence

Background

9. The social and political landscape for international students has changed significantly following the UK's exit from the EU and in response to the impact of the coronavirus. The higher education sector has also begun to consider how it might approach international relationships and priorities in the years ahead.
10. The government's international education strategy, originally published in March 2019 and updated in February 2021,¹ provides the strategic direction for the sector's response to these opportunities. The strategy focuses on growing educational imports and international partnerships through 'promoting the breadth and diversity of [...] UK education'. This involves providing a welcoming environment for international students and developing an increasingly competitive offer. This project is intended to support delivery of this strategy.
11. The work we have already undertaken has included formative stakeholder engagement (in partnership with the UK Council for International Student Affairs) and an evidence review to identify existing information and gaps on practice in supporting the international student experience. The need to address these gaps and deepen our understanding of successful interventions has informed our identification of themes for this call for evidence.

Objectives of this call for evidence

12. Through this work we are seeking to:
 - identify innovative and sector-leading practice in ensuring international students can integrate and receive a fulfilling experience in the UK
 - disseminate information on this effective practice across the sector
 - identify gaps where further work would benefit the international student experience.

Call for evidence and standards of evidence

13. We are seeking submissions from providers and organisations that relate to one or more of the identified themes relating to the international student experience:
 - work to prevent and address harassment and sexual misconduct
 - how responding to the coronavirus pandemic has shaped practice in supporting international students adapt and integrate to UK higher education
 - work to ensure the accessibility and effectiveness of wellbeing and support services (such as student services, mental health provision, etc.).

¹ Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-education-strategy-2021-update>.

14. We are also interested in how submissions may relate to one or more of the cross-cutting themes identified below:
- advancing equality of opportunity for students with one or more protected characteristic²
 - partnership with international students
 - intervention that may also benefit home (UK-domiciled) students.
15. ‘Sector-leading’ practice is defined as practice that has a positive and sustainable impact on international students, could be practically adopted by other institutions, or both. ‘Innovative’ practice would be either a new way of tackling an identified issue impacting international students, or a more effective way of tackling an identified issue for international students. We favour evaluations that use the Office for Students’ (OfS’s) Type 2 and Type 3 evaluation approaches.³
16. Submissions will be screened on the followed criteria:
- a. The activity described has taken place since the launch of the government’s international education strategy (1 April 2019).
 - b. If submissions are related to the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, the work should have been implemented since 1 March 2020.
 - c. The submission is focused on understanding the experience of international students and, where appropriate, specific nationalities, learners with protected characteristics, or both.
 - d. The submission relates to one of the three key themes identified in the call for evidence.
17. We will favour submissions that align with the OfS’s standards of evidence and provide quantitative or qualitative evidence of impact of the intervention or activity. To enable an accurate assessment of the identified evidence and utility of the findings, we need information on the activity being evaluated, the learners taking part, and the methodological approach taken. This enables an accurate assessment of the strength of the evidence and the robustness of the results. The template available at <https://survey.officeforstudents.org.uk/s/international-students-call-for-evidence> is intended to capture all relevant information, and those submitting are asked to complete it.

How we will treat your response

18. The responses to this call for evidence will inform our recommendations and identify case studies, which we will feature in our final report.

² Protected characteristics are defined in the Equality Act 2010 as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

³ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/evaluation/standards-of-evidence-and-evaluation-self-assessment-tool/ for details.

19. We will be seeking to appoint an external organisation to evaluate submissions. This means submissions will be shared with this organisation.
20. You do not have to supply personal information (name and contact details) to submit a response to this call for evidence. With your consent, either the OfS or our external evaluator may wish to contact you to find out more about your response. If you are happy to be contacted, please tick the relevant boxes at the start of the submission template.
21. The OfS is committed to protecting your personal information and being clear about what information we hold about you and how we use it. This is explained in the privacy notice below.
22. A contractual agreement will be in place with the external evaluator to ensure the protection of your personal information you give to us and to ensure it is only used for the reasons described below in the Privacy Notice
23. The OfS will process any personal data received in accordance with all applicable data protection laws (for more information see our privacy pages on our website).⁴
24. We will summarise the responses to this call for evidence in our final report. This may include a list of the providers and organisations that respond, but not personal data such as individuals' names, email addresses or other contact details.
25. If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please tell us, but be aware that we cannot guarantee confidentiality in all circumstances. We will not regard an automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system as a confidentiality request.
26. We may need to disclose or publish information that you provide in the performance of our functions, or disclose it to other organisations for the purposes of their functions. Information (including personal data) may also need to be disclosed in accordance with UK legislation (such as the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Data Protection Act 2018 and Environmental Information Regulations 2004).
27. Notification of any matters that may be of regulatory interest to us should not be submitted through this call for evidence. Further information about notifications is available on our website.⁵

Privacy notice

The responses to this call for evidence will inform our recommendations and identify case studies, which we will feature in our final report. Either the OfS or our external evaluator may wish to contact you to find out more about your response.

You do not have to supply personal information (name and contact details) to submit a response to this call for evidence. If you are happy to be contacted, please tick the relevant

⁴ Available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/ofs-privacy/.

⁵ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-students/ofs-and-students/notifications/.

boxes at the start of the submission template. Here is a summary of how the personal information you submit will be held and used:

- With your consent, your personal information (your name, organisation name, role, email address and telephone number) will be used to contact you for further information about your response and to create a case study for the review report.
- The data controller of the personal information you submit will be Office for Students. The data processor will be the third party appointed to evaluate submissions.
- The legal basis for processing your personal information is your consent, which you have given to us. You can withdraw your consent at any time by emailing the project team at EDI@officeforstudents.org.uk. Once consent is withdrawn, we will destroy all relevant personal information unless we are relying on a different legal basis to justify keeping your personal information. If this is the case, we will tell you in writing. However, withdrawing your consent does not affect the lawfulness of processing based on consent before you withdrew consent.
- It will be stored on secure servers within the United Kingdom.
- Responses are collected via SmartSurvey. Information collected through SmartSurvey is stored on secure servers in the UK or EU and does not leave Europe at any point.⁶
- It will be shared with our external evaluator as part of the evaluation of submissions so that they can contact you if necessary for case studies or follow up questions
- It will be retained for six months after the end of the call for evidence, then securely disposed of.
- You have certain rights in relation to your personal information, which are set out at <https://ico.org.uk/your-data-matters/>
- You may contact our Data Protection Officer (dp@officeforstudents.org.uk) with any queries or concerns you have about the use of your personal information.
- You may also wish to read the full privacy notice, available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/ofs-privacy/privacy-notice/.

⁶ See the SmartSurvey privacy notice at <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/privacy-policy>.



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www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/