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Dear accountable officer

Lifelong Learning Entitlement – our preparations and regulatory expectations for providers delivering modules and modular pathways

I am sure it has been a busy time for you over the last month as you welcomed new and returning students.

I am writing to you about a number of topics that may affect you as your institution is eligible to deliver modules from January 2027 when the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) launches. This includes a reminder of how we are preparing for the implementation of LLE, information and guidance to support your institution in meeting our conditions of registration alongside a checklist to support you in your preparations, and an invitation to join one of our roundtables.

I hope you find this information helpful as your institution prepares for the delivery of modules – either now or in the future.

Our regulatory approach for modules and modular pathways

Institutions preparing to offer modules eligible for LLE funding for the first time have told us they need to understand our regulatory expectations clearly. We know institutions have been worried about how we plan to regulate student outcomes for modules in particular.

Our recently published consultation on reforms to quality regulation sets out that student outcome indicators for modules will not be available and will therefore not form part of the first cycle of assessments from 2027 to 2030. We are consulting on a range of proposals that would enable us to assess modules as part of the second cycle of assessments from 2030.

We plan to develop outcome measures for modules, starting with a completion measure, which we would not expect to be available until 2028-29 at the earliest. We are collecting early views about the completion measure through our consultation and expect to engage with the sector and consult further on this. We will also consider whether we can develop other outcomes measures, including progression, that we could use from 2030. We will engage with the sector as we develop this

thinking. Ahead of introducing these measures, we are consulting on a change to condition B3 that will require all providers to deliver positive outcomes for students on modules.

We updated our LLE webpages earlier this year and confirmed that our existing conditions of registration, data requirements and risk-based approach to monitoring and intervention will continue to apply when the LLE is implemented. We also confirmed that, at this stage, we would not introduce separate thresholds for modules under condition B3.

The LLE will offer eligible students access to loan funding for modular study for the first time. We expect this may lead to an increase in modular learning pathways (whether LLE-fundable or not) at OfS-registered providers in response to increased demand. We therefore need to change how we regulate modules so institutions can make the most of the opportunities the LLE will offer, while protecting students and public funding. We also want to help institutions try new approaches, test demand and meet the needs of students who want more flexible ways to study. As more institutions offer modules, we expect to pay particular attention to these in our monitoring.

In Annex A, we explain how we are preparing for the introduction of the LLE, including how we are adapting or changing the way we regulate modules and modular pathways.

Provider check list and regulatory expectations

We have also developed a practical checklist of things your institution will need to consider alongside our regulatory expectations. This should help you prepare for the launch of LLE and delivery of modules and modular pathways.

We have included the details in Annex B, including resources that are available online.

Join one of our roundtables

Over the summer we talked to providers about their plans for delivering modules ahead of LLE implementation, including any opportunities and challenges they are facing. We also think it is important to understand any concerns you may have with our regulatory approach. We will continue to have conversations with universities and colleges that are preparing to deliver LLE-funded modules ahead of the January launch and beyond. If you, or a colleague, have not yet had the opportunity to attend and would like to join a future session with us, please let us know at LLE@officeforstudents.org.uk.

Next steps

We will continue to monitor how the sector responds to the LLE and we may alter our regulatory approach if we see risks develop. We will clearly communicate to providers any changes in our regulatory approach.

If you have not done so already, please send contact details for a nominated LLE lead at your provider to regulation@officeforstudents.org.uk. We will use this contact for targeted LLE communications.

If you have any questions, please email me at LLE@officeforstudents.org.uk

Yours sincerely

Jean Arnold
Deputy Director (Quality) Regulation

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Annex A – Detail on OfS regulatory approach for LLE-funded modules and modular pathways

Below is a summary of how our regulatory approach for modules and modular pathways will adapt or change.

Area of regulation	Detail
Risk-based approach to monitoring and intervention	To monitor modular provision, we will review data collected by Jisc, the Department for Education (DfE) and the Student Loans Company (SLC). We will also consider other relevant information, including reportable events and notifications. This may lead us to look more closely at a provider's activities. For example, if we have concerns about a module's quality, we would be likely to contact the provider to find out more. If this revealed serious concerns, we may investigate further, for example by carrying out a quality assessment and visiting the provider. If risks increase at an individual provider or across the sector, we may increase our monitoring in line with our existing approach. For example, we may do this if modular provision or student numbers grow faster than expected.
Reforms to quality regulation	We are consulting on changes to how we regulate quality. This includes how we can continue to regulate individual modules and pathways made up of modules effectively. The outcomes of the first stage of the consultation confirmed that the first cycle of Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) assessments will consider the quality of the courses that include funded modules. We will develop measures for modular study to include in the second cycle of TEF assessments, from 2030-31. We recently published our second stage consultation. It gives more detail on our proposals to gradually introduce assessments of modular and flexible study in future assessment cycles. We propose to develop measures of student outcomes for modular study, for use from the second assessment cycle onwards. These include a measure of module completion and the related minimum levels providers would need to meet under condition B3. Until these measures and minimum levels are in place, we propose a broad requirement for providers to deliver positive outcomes for students studying modules. This would help protect students in the event of materially poor outcomes.
How we will use data to inform our regulatory approach	We are working with Jisc, DfE and SLC to develop the data needed to better understand students studying modules, including those funded through the LLE. To support the regulation of modules and modular pathways, a comprehensive set of module-level data for students studying modular pathways will be collected from 2027-28 through the Jisc Student record and the

	DfE's Individualised Learner Record (ILR). We will use this data to develop a measure of module completion. If the data is good enough, we are likely to use this measure to help us monitor and assess quality from 2029-30. We also expect to explore the best ways to understand modular students' experiences and outcomes. We would consult on any future changes to student surveys. As the data becomes available, we expect to expand our publications and data resources to give a clearer picture of modular provision. The HESES 2026-27 return will be one of the first to include students studying modules that are eligible for LLE funding. You will not need to report these students separately. Continue to report modular provision covered by HESES as you have in previous years. We recently published guidance to help providers complete their HESES return. This includes guidance on how to determine the mode of study for students following modular pathways. The same approach will apply to Annual Financial Return (AFR) 2026. We will not require providers to report LLE-funded modular provision separately. They should return associated income and expenditure in line with existing guidance. We expect AFR27 to introduce more detailed financial reporting on LLE-fundable modular provision.
Funding	We expect to consult later this year on how we distribute the strategic priorities grant (SPG). The results will help shape how we take modules and modular pathways into account when calculating and allocating funding. They will also help shape how we collect and use data to make these funding decisions.

Annex B – OfS regulatory expectations for institutions delivering modules and modular pathways

Our conditions of registration protect the interests of students on modules and modular pathways, whether funded through the LLE or other sources. To support providers, we set out below regulatory expectations of OfS-registered providers that are delivering, or expecting to deliver, modules and modular pathways for areas where we think additional information and guidance is helpful.

Area of regulation	Provider checklist – what you need to do	OfS expectations	Resources
Ensuring a high-quality student experience and positive outcomes	• Ensure that modular provision complies with the OfS's established quality conditions	Registered providers must meet the OfS's established quality conditions, whether they are providing more traditional-length courses or shorter courses, including modules (and regardless of whether they are funded through the LLE or other sources). This means that providers must ensure that: • courses (including modules) have content that is up to date, provide an appropriate level of academic challenge, are coherent, effectively delivered, and support students to develop relevant skills (condition B1) • students have access to the resources and support needed to succeed (condition B2) • assessment is effective and enables students to demonstrate achievement (condition B4). We are proposing a change to condition B3 in our recently published quality consultation to make clear that providers should ensure positive outcomes for students studying modules. This principle would apply until we develop and introduce specific outcome	• Consultation outcomes – future approach to quality regulation • How we regulate quality and standards

		measures and minimum thresholds for modular study as described in our regulatory approach. We know how important it is for providers to deliver positive outcomes. This change aims to protect students from very poor outcomes and we would only expect to take compliance action in extreme circumstances and following engagement with a provider to understand any issues.	
Protecting public funding	• Put suitable checks in place to identify and reduce the risk of misusing public funding. Involve governing bodies in any decision to start offering modules or expand existing modular provision. • Consider entry requirements for modules and modular pathways and ensure that recruitment practices (including English language requirements and use of recruitment agents) are robust. • Make sure your systems can monitor students' attendance and performance on modules from the start of the course. Have plans for taking action when needed, such as supporting a student or withdrawing them from the course.	We know that an increase in modular provision will bring benefits to learners and providers. However, where students access student finance, providers need to have suitable controls in place to identify and reduce the risk of misusing public funding. Effective and robust information about students on modules is important to ensure that you can closely monitor data at all stages of the student journey from application to attendance and withdrawal. This makes sure that individuals who do not genuinely intend to study will not be able to access public funding. We expect you to closely oversee any domestic recruitment agents you use to prevent poor practices seen elsewhere in the sector (see report on subcontractual arrangements). These include selling courses to applicants using misleading information, such as claims that students will be 'paid to study'. We also expect you to make sure students understand their responsibilities for repaying student finance. Tell students when you use recruitment	• Subcontractual arrangements in higher education

		agents and how much of their tuition fee you pay to the agent. If you are concerned that a student's English language skills are below the expected standard, you should take steps to support them or withdraw them from the course. These expectations reflect problems we have previously found with recruitment practices, attendance monitoring, English language testing and academic misconduct, particularly where providers have used domestic recruitment agents. We have also seen more cases of people using fraudulent English language and Level 3 qualifications to enter higher education. We will monitor risks as described above to identify and respond to any new concerns.	
Consumer protection including information, advice and guidance	• Make sure that key information is clear and comprehensive so that students on modules can understand their options, compare opportunities and make informed choices throughout their learner journey. This includes marketing materials and websites. • Review your terms and conditions, other contracts and documents to make sure they take account of students studying modules. These students are likely to study for shorter periods and more flexibly than students on full-time courses.	Modules and modular pathways aim to give learners more flexibility. This may give them more choices about how their course is structured, how they study, how they fund their studies and how they move on to further study. We expect you to review your consumer protection arrangements to ensure that you remain compliant with consumer protection law and your obligations under current ongoing condition C1. We also expect you to make sure that you understand and comply with your obligations under consumer protection law, including by reviewing relevant guidance issued by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). As you adapt your courses to support students studying modules, you may want to get independent legal	• Condition C1: Guidance on consumer protection law (paragraphs 365 to 368)

		advice, where appropriate, to make sure your arrangements still comply with the law. All students, including those studying modules, should be able to easily find and understand how to raise a concern, make a complaint or request a refund. This includes understanding any criteria they must meet to use these processes. You may also need to check that your contracts are still clear and transparent for students studying modules. This includes terms covering enrolment and registration, course changes, module availability and other changes to what you offer.	
Access and participation and equality of opportunity	• Consider how different student groups may engage with modules and modular pathways, and whether and where relevant, consider if modular provision may particularly support some student groups to engage with higher education. • If you have an approved access and participation plan (APP), ensure it continues to apply to all eligible students, including those brought into scope by LLE changes, and consider any additional equality of opportunity risks they may face. • Where your APP includes financial support, make sure all eligible students, including modular learners, are aware of and can access that support. Details on	LLE legislation has widened both the range of students who are 'qualifying persons' and has made more courses 'qualifying'. Your access and participation plan should cover all eligible 'qualifying persons' on 'qualifying courses' and you should consider how these changes affect your plan. You should consider whether the new students who are covered experience different or additional risks to equality of opportunity. Where you have included commitments to delivering financial support for students in your plan, we expect you to take all reasonable steps to ensure that all eligible students have clear information about the support they are entitled to, and to deliver this support to them. If you want to make changes to your approved access and participation plan you may need to submit a variation request depending on the nature and scale	• Experiences and risk among commuter students in higher education: Summary report • Explorations: Student experiences of accommodation – Research report - Office for Students • Equality Act 2010 • Public Sector Equality Duty | EHRC

	how to request a change to your APP are available on our website. • Make reasonable adjustments where required, so that disabled students can access, engage with, and succeed in their studies on an equal basis.	of what is changing. Our published guidance sets out our expectations in more detail.	
Fees and fee limits	• Take steps that mean you and your governing body are aware of the fee limits that will apply for 2027-28 and to provide relevant fee information to current and prospective students.	The LLE introduces credit-based tuition fee limits. This will work across all higher-level courses, including modules, funded by the LLE, regardless of whether students study them on a full-time, part-time or accelerated basis. The fee limit will depend on how much study the course involves, not how many academic years it takes to complete. As set out in our letter of 10 July 2026, you do not need to submit an Annual Fee Information return this year setting out your fees for 2027-28.	• Fee limits