

Report from the Public Affairs Committee

Board's primary role in relation to this paper:

- ☐ A. Set strategy
- ☐ B. Set risk appetite
- ☒ C. Oversee performance
- ☐ D. Understand context

Purpose

1. The board is informed of the work of the Public Affairs Committee by receiving a report on the outcomes from each meeting. This report summarises the Public Affairs Committee ('the committee') meeting held on 20 May 2026.

Recommendations

2. The board is invited to receive the report of the committee.

Purpose of the committee

3. The purpose of establishing the committee is to provide expert advice and assurance to the OfS in relation to the wider higher education public policy environment in which our regulation operates. This will serve our strategic attitude to be vocal that higher education is a force for good, for individuals, communities and the country, as well as being clear where there are weaknesses that need to be addressed. It will support our stewardship of the higher education sector as set out in our 2025-30 strategy.
4. The chair confirmed there will be a full recruitment process from June, and the committee would meet once or twice more with the interim membership before the end of the year.

Effective engagement in the current climate

5. The committee considered a paper that set out challenges and opportunities for non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) in engaging with stakeholders in the current political environment, so that the OfS can be as effective as possible in regulating in the interests of students.
6. Committee members discussed the following:
 - a. The current political and policy environment and what this means for engagement.

b. Exempt from publication.

c. Exempt from publication.

7. A paper will be discussed at the next meeting on the three or four things the OfS wants to be known for by the end of the strategy period.

University of Sussex judicial review judgment

8. The committee discussed the following:

- a. Observations of media coverage.
- b. The OfS's response to the judgment.
- c. Public affairs matters the OfS should be considering moving forward.

9. Exempt from publication.

Provider survey

10. The committee considered a paper that provided analysis of the results of the stakeholder survey.

11. The committee discussed the following:

- a. OfS analysis of the responses, and in particular any overlooked opportunities.
- b. Fostering the right conditions for regulation.
- c. What effectiveness in regulation means.
- d. Developing a stronger beneficial relationship with the sector.
- e. Potential adaptations to the survey in the next cycle.

Paper publication

12. To be published externally along with the board papers (subject to appropriate redactions).