

Dear [Accountable Officer]

The last few weeks have seen major changes to all aspects of work, life and study as the disruptive impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to unfold. The OfS is acutely aware of the impressive work being done across the higher education sector to mitigate its impact on students and to support the national and global effort to control the virus.

We understand that the vast majority of providers are working flexibly and innovatively to protect the interests of their students and are aware of the intense pressures you are under. For that reason, the OfS has committed (in our [letter of 26 March 2020](#)) to reducing regulatory burden wherever possible during this period to enable you to prioritise your response to the disruption. However, we are still requiring minimum expectations in terms of quality and standards to ensure that student interests are protected. I am now writing to provide more detail about how we intend this to work. This email also updates you on the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) consultation and shares what we know about coronavirus financial support measures.

### **Contacting the OfS**

We have set up new teams dedicated to working with individual providers during the coronavirus crisis to understand the challenges you are facing. These teams are in our Competition and Registration directorate, led by Susan Lapworth.

Colleagues will be available to answer your queries on the new regulatory requirements, advise you on OfS guidance and help you navigate the wider advice available from government. They will not, however, be able to advise you on public health matters.

The teams will also consider any information you submit to the OfS and develop our response in terms of support and regulation. The OfS will continue to publish guidance and information for providers throughout this period and the teams will be available to answer any questions you may have about the implications for you.

Each team is led by a senior OfS manager. The head of your team is [name of OfS manager].

The team will be contacting you in the coming weeks to discuss financial and other impacts of the coronavirus on your organisation. Meantime, if you or another member of your organisation would like to have a conversation with us about a specific issue, you can reach the OfS team through our usual telephone number (0117 931 7305) or on [regulation@officeforstudents.org.uk](mailto:regulation@officeforstudents.org.uk). The teams are working remotely and will be available from 0900–1700 each day.

## **Coronavirus financial support**

A range of business support measures has been made available to UK businesses by the government. We understand that many of these schemes are available to higher education providers and we are encouraging all providers to look at the options offered. Information about these support packages can be found on the government [coronavirus business support webpages](#).

We understand that the two coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Schemes and the COVID-19 Corporate Financing Facility are open to higher education providers, although final confirmation about eligibility for these schemes has still to be determined. We will continue to work with the Department for Education and HM Treasury to get further information about eligibility and will provide further information as soon as we can. In the meantime, if you expect to need to access additional financial support as a result of the pandemic, we encourage you to continue to discuss all available options with your existing lenders.

## **Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF)**

As you will be aware, we were previously planning to develop and consult on a new framework for the TEF during the first half of 2020. The impact of the coronavirus crisis means that we do not currently have a date for the next TEF exercise. We will provide further information as soon as we can. We intend to consult on the future TEF scheme after the government has published the Independent Review and its response to the Review's recommendations. Publication of the subject-level TEF pilot reports has been delayed as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

## **New information and guidance on the OfS website**

Our website is being continuously reviewed and updated in line with the latest government guidance. We have created a [provider guide to coronavirus](#) which includes information about our regulatory requirements, FAQs, and links to all letters and guidance issued by the OfS. There is also a [student guide](#) with FAQs and signposting to sources of information beyond the OfS.

We share updates to our website from our Twitter account: [@officestudents](#) and you can also [sign up to receive regular email alerts](#) and our monthly digital newsletter.

Best wishes,

Nicola

**Nicola Dandridge**  
**Chief Executive, Office for Students**