



Chief executive'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 achievements, issues and activities since the last meeting of the board that are not otherwise covered in separate papers.

Decisions requested

2. The board is invited to note the updates contained in this paper.

Paper publication

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

For further information, please contact Susan Lapworth, Chief Executive.

Key achievements, issues and activities

4. **Financial sustainability report.** On 20 November we published our latest report on the financial sustainability of institutions in England.¹ The report provided an update to our main analysis published in May, incorporating the latest recruitment data for UK and international students. The report was covered extensively in the national media, including on BBC national and regional radio news bulletins.
5. **Education Committee.** After the publication of our updated analysis, I was pleased to appear before the Commons Education Committee on 25 November alongside the Minister for Skills, to give evidence for its inquiry into financial sustainability and insolvency. The committee was keen to understand our approach to monitoring institutions' financial health, how we engage with those exposed to increased financial risks, and the ability of the current systems and legislative framework to protect students should a large provider exit the market. The committee's inquiry also covers international students and their impact on sector finances. Exempt from publication.
6. **Degree classification algorithms.** On 6 November, we published a series of case reports highlighting our concerns about the design of algorithms for degree classifications that may not accurately reflect students' achievement during their studies. Our lessons learned report summarised the findings from our investigations into compliance with condition B4, relating to assessment and awards, for three universities. We expect this report to help institutions consider whether their classification algorithms properly reflect students' achievement, and we will continue to monitor data and engage with institutions where we identify further concerns about classification algorithms.
7. **Equality of opportunity for disabled students.** On 14 October we published our latest insight brief, setting out evidence about the experiences of disabled students in higher education and highlighting issues for universities and colleges to take into account when considering how best to support students with disabilities.² The report reminded institutions about their legal duties, prompted them to consider how best to provide effective support tailored to the needs of individual students, and that assessments should be accessible, credible and rigorous. The publication was followed by a blog in which members of the OfS Disability in Higher Education Advisory Panel shared their thoughts about the lessons from the report.³
8. **Streamlining regulation for further education colleges (FECs).** On 2 December we published a new consultation proposing to simplify how we regulate FECs that are also regulated by the DfE.⁴ This would include disapplying a number of initial and ongoing conditions of registration for FECs that do not have, and are not seeking, degree awarding powers. We expect that this will reduce regulatory duplication for FECs and reduce

¹ See: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/financial-sustainability-of-higher-education-providers-in-england-november-2025-update/>

² See: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/one-size-doesn-t-fit-all-equality-of-opportunity-for-disabled-students/>

³ See: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/blog/improving-disabled-students-experiences-our-advisory-panel-give-their-views/>

⁴ See: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/press-and-media/ofs-proposes-changes-to-streamline-its-regulation-of-further-education-colleges-in-england/>

administrative barriers for registration for those that may seek registration when the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) is launched. The consultation is open until 10 February 2026.

9. **Research and evaluation.** Since the previous board meeting we have published a number of reports that provide insight into the effectiveness of our regulation and provide lessons for our regulatory approaches in future:
 - a. On 16 October we published an evaluation of our 2023 reforms to regulating equality of opportunity. The report found that our approach was seen to be strategic and context-relevant, with institutions reporting that the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register was a valuable tool for targeting their activity. The evaluation also presented evidence for the impact of the reforms on providers' behaviour.
 - b. On 19 November we published an independent report into the impact of our published quality assessments on those institutions that had not been directly assessed.⁵ The research found that awareness of the assessment reports was high and they were widely used by institutions and had prompted internal discussions about compliance. The sector's understanding of the assessment process remains low, however, and institutions perceive the reports as being focused on weaknesses rather than sharing good practice.
 - c. On 19 November we published an independent exploration of students' perceptions of their rights as consumers.⁶ The report found that 50 per cent of students said that they understood and could describe their rights and entitlements as a student, and about one in four who had not made a complaint to their institution were not confident that they would know how to do so.
10. **International student levy.** Following the budget on 26 November, the Department for Education (DfE) confirmed that the OfS will collect the new international student levy. The levy was first proposed in the immigration white paper earlier this year and the Secretary of State has since confirmed that the levy would be reinvested into the higher education and skills system, including for means-tested maintenance grants for students on some courses. DfE has launched a technical consultation which will close on 18 February 2026 **exempt from publication**.⁷
11. In the budget, the chancellor announced that the levy will be set at a flat rate of £925 for each international students each year, with the first 220 international students for each provider exempt. It will apply to all providers registered with the OfS, and will come into effect from the 2028-29 academic year.
12. **Exempt from publication.**
13. **Exempt from publication.**

⁵ See: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/the-impact-of-the-office-for-students-quality-assessments-on-the-wider-higher-education-sector/>

⁶ See: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/ofs-explorations-consumer-rights/>

⁷ See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/international-student-levy-technical-detail>