



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).

Key achievements, issues and activities

4. **Degree classification analysis.** On 15 January, we published further provider-level analysis of degree classifications over time.¹ This follows the sector-level analysis we published in November 2025, alongside our report on degree classification algorithms.² The analysis found that the number of graduates awarded first class degrees fell from 29.6 per cent in 2022-23 to 28.8 per cent in 2023-24, showing that the long-term trend of increases in the award of top degrees is continuing to slow and reverse.
5. **Consumer rights.** In December, we announced that we had referred several more providers to National Trading Standards (NTS).³ In the majority of these case we have concerns about terms included in an institution's student contract, including terms that seek to limit the institution's liability in cases of industrial action. We would expect to publish case reports naming these institutions should NTS conclude that the terms we identified were unfair, including to help other institutions ensure they are meeting their legal obligations.
6. On 27 January, we held our fifth online student debrief event on consumer rights. Over 150 people attended, representing students, their representatives and students' union staff. During the event, we polled attendees and asked them to select a priority from five suggested behavioural principles for universities and colleges:
 - a. 46 per cent of respondents selected 'deliver the education and services they have promised'.
 - b. 17 per cent selected 'promoting students' understanding of their rights'.
 - c. 17 per cent selected 'act in good faith (i.e. honestly and openly)'.
 - d. 10 percent selected 'enable students to receive effective support'.
 - e. 3 per cent selected 'avoid causing foreseeable harm to students'.
7. When asked whether a more consistent, student-friendly approach to student contracts would be helpful, 95 per cent of respondents said 'yes'.
8. **Stakeholder survey.** We launched our new stakeholder survey on 15 January.⁴ It is open to all accountable officers of registered providers and is designed to help us understand more about how we are perceived by the institutions we regulate. We plan to publish the findings and run the survey each year to track ongoing improvement in our relationships with institutions.

¹ See: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/press-and-media/proportion-of-first-class-degrees-falls-for-third-consecutive-year/>

² See: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/press-and-media/ofs-reports-on-the-potentially-inflationary-effect-of-degree-classification-algorithms-on-students-grades/>

³ See: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/press-and-media/ofs-refers-institutions-to-national-trading-standards-to-investigate-concerns-over-clauses-related-to-industrial-action-in-student-contracts/>

⁴ See: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/press-and-media/ofs-launches-new-stakeholder-survey-to-better-understand-how-it-is-viewed-by-the-institutions-it-regulates/>

9. **Students' perspectives on institutional cost reductions.** On 29 January, we published a blog and report describing the experiences of students as their institution has responded to financial challenges.⁵ Half of the students we surveyed had noticed their university or college taking steps they perceived as 'cost-cutting', and 83 per cent of these students thought that these had changed their higher education experience. We reminded institutions that, while action to secure long-term sustainability is necessary, they need to continue to consider the impact of these measures on different groups of students and ensure they benefit from the education they were promised.
10. **Reporting decisions made under delegated authority.** The OfS scheme of delegation that came into effect on 24 November 2025 makes provision for the Chief Executive to report to board those decisions she considers particularly contentious (including because of material risks to the continuity of study for students, public controversy, or a legal challenge against the OfS). Exempt from publication.

⁵ See: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/blog/students-perspectives-on-higher-education-changing-in-response-to-financial-challenges/>