

Office for
Students



Monitoring of capital funding allocated in financial year 2025-26

Guidance for higher education providers

Reference OfS 2026.11

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Executive summary

Action: Higher education providers that received either formula or competitive capital funding during the financial year 2025-26 should upload their return to the OfS portal by **Tuesday 14 April 2026**.

1. This document provides guidance on how to complete the annual monitoring return for capital funding.
2. The Office for Students (OfS) is required to provide assurance on the public grant funding that it pays to providers. The monitoring approach set out in this document is designed to meet these external requirements, which are audited by the National Audit Office at the end of each financial year.

Scope of this monitoring return

3. The OfS currently provides two types of capital funding, both of which are subject to our general terms and conditions of funding:¹
 - a. Annual allocations of formula funding for eligible providers.
 - b. Competitive funding for providers which submitted successful bids for one-year projects in July 2025.
4. This document is therefore relevant to:
 - a. Approximately 60 providers receiving funding for projects through the current scheme.
 - b. Approximately 266 providers in receipt of an allocation of formula capital funding. This grant was generally paid in two instalments – in November 2025 and February 2026.²

Deadlines and actions

5. **Relevant providers must download, complete and upload their monitoring workbook (Excel format) to the OfS portal by 14 April 2026.**
6. **Individual workbooks will be available on the OfS portal from 19 March 2026;** these will be prepopulated with relevant data, including the total capital funding allocations on which we require providers to report. Guidance for portal administrators and delegated portal administrators can be found at: www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/cw1kzffx/how-to-manage-your-portal-users-october-2025.pdf

Other monitoring

7. As part of our monitoring of the competitive capital funding for projects, we're continuing to sample evidence of spending during the funding period. We will contact separately the final selection of projects to be sampled alongside this reporting in April 2026, with our instructions and guidance for this part of the process. Completed returns for this element of the monitoring process will also need to be uploaded to the OfS portal **by 14 April 2026**.

¹ See [Terms and conditions of funding for 2025-26 - Office for Students](#).

² See [Capital funding for financial year 2025 to 2026 - Office for Students](#).

Introduction

8. The OfS's capital funding supports investment in higher education learning and teaching and is paid on a financial year basis (1 April to 31 March); therefore, funds allocated for financial year 2025-26 must be spent in full by 31 March 2026.
9. We require all higher education providers in receipt of our capital funding during the financial year to submit a monitoring return to account for their expenditure.
10. 'Capital funding' and 'capital grant' mean funding allocated in respect of capital expenditure incurred by the provider. Capital expenditure means money used to acquire or maintain fixed assets, such as land, buildings and equipment, which is normally itemised as capital in the provider's audited annual accounts. It does not include expenditure on renting, hiring or leasing of equipment and facilities. In describing money being 'spent' or 'used' in this document, we are using the two words synonymously.
11. Annex A sets out the reporting requirements covering both formula and project capital funding, and detailed information on completing and submitting your return.

Funding in scope of this monitoring return

12. The April 2026 monitoring return requires a breakdown for both types of capital funding:
 - a. Funds spent by 31 March 2026 and how the grant was used.
 - b. Funds not spent by 31 March 2026.
 - c. (For competitive project funding only) final reporting questions on initial impacts and outcomes, and any ongoing works.
13. Funding spent by 31 March 2026 includes contractually committed expenditure that is clearly identified as such. In accounting terms, the provider would expect to be able to accrue for this expenditure to reflect the point at which the contractual commitment was made. Providers **must not** include the following in this monitoring return for financial year 2025-26:
 - a. Any capital expenditure that has already been attributed to OfS capital funding allocations for previous years. For example, if a provider included, in a capital monitoring return to the OfS for 2024-25, expenditure that was contractually committed, it must not include the payment during 2025-26 of that contracted sum in its monitoring return for 2025-26.
 - b. Any capital expenditure that the provider has attributed or will attribute to capital grants from any other UK public funding source.
 - c. Any costs which will be incurred after March 2026.
14. All capital funding must be spent in full and in accordance with our terms and conditions no later than 31 March 2026. This information will also serve as the formal final report for the competitive capital funding projects. If there is a risk that any funding will not be spent in the timeframe, please contact us as soon as possible.

Monitoring returns and deadline

15. **Both the competitive capital funding and the formula funding monitoring templates will be available for relevant providers to download from the new OfS portal from 19 March 2026.** These workbooks will be prepopulated with data, including the capital funding allocations on which we require providers to report.
16. Providers must ensure that their completed competitive capital funding or formula funding monitoring workbook is uploaded to the OfS portal by **Tuesday 14 April 2026**. Each provider must have its report reviewed and approved by its accountable officer before submission. The information has to provide assurance that the funding has been used within the year for the purposes awarded, and in compliance with our terms and conditions.
17. Please see Annex A for information on how to complete and submit your return. If you have any questions, please email capitalgrant@officeforstudents.org.uk.

How the information will be used

18. We will use the information gathered through the monitoring process to assess:
 - whether providers have met our requirements for the expenditure of capital funding
 - how funding has been used
 - the progress of projects
 - whether any OfS funds should be reclaimed.

How the Freedom of Information Act affects monitoring returns

19. The OfS is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000, data protection legislation and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.³ If we receive a request for information related to this capital funding monitoring, we will ensure any information that is exempt is protected and we will consult with you as appropriate.

³ Further information on the Freedom of Information Act is available on the ICO website: [Information Commissioner's Office](#).

Annex A: Information on completing and submitting your return

Submitting your monitoring return

1. The OfS is using a new portal for the submission of information and data collections. Providers will be required to use this new portal to complete and submit their monitoring template.

To download, complete and submit the relevant return, providers should log in to the new OfS portal at [Login - Office for Students portal](#) and navigate to the 'Your data returns' area. Select the relevant collection and download the workbook. Choose either:

- the 'Competitive capital funding – final monitoring' collection, or
- the 'Formula capital funding – final monitoring' collection.

Once completed, the relevant workbook should be uploaded to the portal within this same area.

2. Please note that before you can access the workbook you must have been allocated as a data collection contributor for capital funding. An OfS portal user administrator at your provider will need to grant you access.

- [See further guidance on using the new portal and submitting returns](#)
- [See further guidance for portal administrators and delegated portal administrators](#)

3. The tables contain two different cell types:
 - **white cells**, where we require data to be entered as appropriate
 - **blue cells**, which have been either pre-populated with data, or pre-filled by an underlying calculation.
4. When completing the workbook, you may see automatic validation errors, highlighting where data is not feasible (for example, where a negative number has been entered in a column). Please correct and clear any validation errors before submitting the final workbook to us.
5. When you are satisfied that the information is complete and credible, the workbook should be uploaded to the OfS portal by **14 April 2026**. Please note that the portal is usually very busy on the deadline day itself, which can cause the upload process to take longer than usual.
6. The workbook includes a validation check for the sign-off sheet. We do not require hard copy signatures; rather, we use this sheet to confirm that the submitted information has been reviewed and approved by the accountable officer at the provider. If your accountable officer has recently changed, or if there are any difficulties obtaining their approval by the deadline, please email capitalgrant@officeforstudents.org.uk to let us know.

7. You should keep a clear audit trail for the compilation of your data return for at least five years. It should be possible for you to provide a clear rationale for the figures submitted to us, and to supply any underlying data used to support your return (if, for example, requested by auditors).

Table-by-table guide to completing your monitoring return

Cover sheet

1. Your provider's total capital funding allocation for financial year 2025-26 will be shown.
2. Any workbook validation errors in either workbook will be listed on the cover sheet, as well as further instructions to help you to complete the workbook.
3. Providers are encouraged to keep their responses to written answers concise.

Formula capital funding monitoring return

Assurance over formula capital funding for FY 2025-26

Table F1: OfS formula capital funding total expenditure

4. Your provider's formula capital funding allocation in the financial year 2025-26 will be pre-filled.
5. You must complete OfS formula capital funding spent by 31 March 2026. This should include contractually committed expenditure as described in paragraph 13 and 14 of the main document.
6. The expenditure you report in Table F1 should only relate to that incurred in the period from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 that was met from OfS formula capital funding. Record your provider's expenditure to the nearest pound.
7. The OfS formula capital funding not spent by 31 March 2026 is automatically calculated based on the data entered into Table F1.

Table F2: Confirmation of funding spent

8. Table F2 collects information on how your OfS formula capital allocation for 2025-26 was spent. Please provide a breakdown of OfS funding used for each type of expenditure, using the options provided in Table F2. This will enable the OfS to collect consistent information across the sector to assess how our funding was used.

Table F3: Funding not spent commentary

9. The workbook automatically calculates the amount of OfS formula capital funding that has not been fully spent, based on the data entered into Table F1. If applicable, you should provide a short commentary to explain why any formula funding has not been spent. We are unlikely to be able to allow providers to retain any unspent funds but if you would like us to consider a request, you should make this clear here.

Competitive capital funding monitoring return

Assurance over competition funding allocation for FY 2025-26

10. Information is collected over two worksheets – one to provide us with assurances over delivery and project spend, and a second containing final reporting questions to help us understand and evaluate the initial impact of this investment. Both worksheets will need to be completed.
11. Capital grants paid during financial year 2025-26 through the bidding competition must have been used:
 - on expenditure items included in the provider’s successful bid
 - in accordance with any other terms and conditions that we specified when we awarded the grant or as per any changes to projects or use of funds approved by us.

Table A1: Key milestones

12. Table A1 collects information on how the project has aligned with the key milestones laid out in the original bid for funding.
13. A commentary should be included that provides an overview of progress against the proposed milestones, including explanations for any milestones that have been amended. Providers are encouraged to keep their response concise.

Table A2: OfS bidding competition capital funding total expenditure

14. Your provider’s OfS competition capital funding for financial year 2025-26 will be pre-filled.
15. We understand that the OfS competition capital funding may be only a proportion of your provider’s total capital expenditure on the project. Table A2 should relate to expenditure met from OfS competitive capital funding provided within financial year 2025-26. Record your provider’s expenditure to the nearest pound.
16. The OfS bidding competition capital funding not spent by 31 March 2026 is automatically calculated based on the data entered into Table A2.

Table A3: Confirmation of funding spent

17. Table A3 collects information on how this funding was spent during the financial year.
18. A commentary should be included confirming that the funding provided was used for the purposes set out in your provider’s capital funding bid, or for any subsequent changes agreed with us. The commentary should clearly demonstrate how the capital funding has been used and how value for money has been achieved. Providers may also include a brief summary of the main items of expenditure and how these align with those outlined in their bid. Responses should be relative to the current position of the project.

Table A4: Funding not spent commentary

19. Table A2 will automatically calculate any unspent competition capital funding. If applicable, you should provide a short commentary in Table A4 to explain why the funding has not been spent in full.

20. Tables O1 to O4 are used to collect information on what the capital project has delivered. This information will help us understand how providers have used OfS competitive capital funding and the value of the overall investment for the sector.

Table O1: Confirmation of project end date

21. Table O1 collects information on the current status of your capital project. A commentary should be included confirming whether the capital project has been completed or if any works are scheduled to continue beyond March 2026. The commentary should clearly set out the current position of the project, and when the facilities are intended to be available for use by students.

Table O2: Project adaptations commentary

22. Table O2 collects information on how the capital project compares to the proposed project included in your original bid, submitted in July 2025.

23. A commentary should be included only where the capital project differs significantly from the project set out in the original bid. The commentary should clearly explain how the project differs and how it achieves the aims and objectives set out in the original bid.

Table O3: Final project progress commentary

24. Table O3 collects information on how the capital project progressed throughout the funded period. A commentary should be included only where significant delays have been encountered. The commentary should explain the nature of any delays, the contributing factors, and the actions taken to address or mitigate them.

Table O4: Environmental sustainability

25. We are seeking assurance that providers have considered environmental sustainability as part of their project and the works undertaken. Please outline the actions taken to address environmental sustainability and reduction of energy usage, where relevant.

26. We are also interested in identifying examples of good practice that could be shared with government. Please indicate whether you are content for us to share the information you have provided and whether you would be able to supply any additional details or examples, if requested.

Validation sheet

27. Validation checks on both workbooks are shown on the validation sheet with explanatory text on any errors. Any validation errors must be corrected before your monitoring return can be accepted by us. Please check your form carefully before uploading it – you will still be able to upload your workbook if it is invalid, but we will not be able to accept it as a submission.

Sign-off sheet

28. Both monitoring returns must be authorised by the accountable officer at the provider. As part of the declaration, the accountable officer must confirm there is no double counting of any capital expenditure. To gain further assurance that the accountable officer has confirmed that the information provided is correct, we ask that the table on this sign-off sheet be completed in full, including the details of the accountable officer. It is also important that the box, 'Return has

been checked by the accountable officer' is completed, to confirm agreement, and that a date is provided for audit purposes.

29. If we need to clarify any of the information returned to us, we will contact the accountable officer in the first instance.



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