



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 (with appropriate redactions for items exempt from publication).

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

Key achievements, issues and activities

4. **Reopening for registration, DAPs and university title applications.** On 28 August 2025, we successfully reopened for new applications for registration, degree awarding powers (DAPs) and University title (UT). As we signalled earlier this year, we expect to prioritise work on applications that were directly affected by the pause before progressing any new applications. The announcement of the reopening was largely welcomed in the sector and we contacted all directly affected providers to ensure they could factor the arrangements for reopening into their planning. Colleagues have been preparing carefully to ensure we are ready to reopening, including ensuring resources are redeployed to restart case work. So far, we have not seen a significant influx of new applications for registration or DAPs. We are in contact with sector stakeholders to gauge future demand and to ensure clear messaging about our capacity for new case work.
5. **Registration reforms.** As we reopened for applications, we published final decisions following our consultation on reforms to our registration requirements.¹ This included new initial conditions to ensure that institutions seeking registration treat students fairly and will be effectively governed once registered. We also implemented changes to make the application process more efficient for well-prepared providers and allow us to refuse registrations more quickly where applications do not meet our requirements. We will be monitoring the impact of these changes through our operational measures for registration applications.
6. **New obligations relating to freedom of speech; and harassment and sexual misconduct.** On 1 August, the new statutory duties relating to freedom of speech for providers and the OfS came into force. On the same day, our new requirements for providers to tackle harassment and sexual misconduct came fully into force. In the lead up to this date, we engaged extensively with sector groups and other interested parties. Providers have generally welcomed the examples and structured approach we set out in our freedom of speech guidance. We have begun to monitor compliance with the new duties and will continue to engage with institutions to understand how they are responding.
7. **Sexual misconduct survey.** On 25 September 2025, we published data from our sexual misconduct survey, the largest prevalence survey of sexual misconduct in higher education in the UK.² The data was widely reported in the national and sector media, with many reports also highlighting our new requirements to tackle these issues. The survey results are an important addition to the evidence base on the prevalence of sexual misconduct in the sector and by giving providers access to their own data where possible, we hope that this support institutions in targeting their work in this area. This is an important example of the OfS understanding what matters to students and taking robust steps to improve their experiences of higher education.
8. **Live consultations: a new integrated approach to quality; subcontractual arrangements.** We incorporated the board's feedback on our proposals for an integrated approach to regulating quality and proposals for a new condition of registration for lead providers in subcontractual relationships. The latter consultation closed on 1 October and we will now

¹ See: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/press-and-media/ofs-announces-reforms-to-its-registration-tests-to-protect-students-and-public-money/>

² See: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/press-and-media/ofs-publishes-new-data-on-the-scale-of-sexual-misconduct-in-english-higher-education/>

consider responses as we reach a final view on any changes we should make. The quality consultation is open until 11 December and we have a series of events planned to engage with institutions and others to ensure we understand a wide range of views during the consultation.

9. **International student levy.** Ministers have confirmed plans to introduce a 6 per cent levy on international student fees, including to fund the introduction of maintenance grants for disadvantaged students on certain courses. Exempt from publication.
10. **Launch of the OfS Provider Panel.** Following agreement at the July board meeting, we launched recruitment for the new Provider Panel on 4 September.³ The response to the Panel has been positive, with over 80 applications from sector leaders to join the panel and sector groups welcoming the opportunity for institutions to contribute more directly to our work. We expect to confirm appointments over the coming weeks, with the Panel expected to meet for the first time in early 2025.
11. Exempt from publication.
12. Exempt from publication.

³ See: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/press-and-media/ofs-seeks-senior-leaders-of-universities-and-colleges-to-join-new-provider-panel/>