

Report from the Risk and Audit Committee

Board's primary role in relation to this paper:

- ☐ A. Set strategy
- ☒ B. Set risk appetite
- ☐ C. Oversee performance
- ☐ D. Understand context

Purpose

1. The Risk and Audit Committee (RAC) met on 25 September and 20 November 2025.
2. This paper provides the board with a summary of the September meeting. An oral summary of the November meeting will be provided at the board meeting.

Recommendations

3. The board is invited to receive the report of the Risk and Audit Committee.

Summary of the meeting

Freedom of speech deep dive

4. The Director for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom joined the meeting to present the deep dive. A recent poll found a high level of academics afraid of discussing controversial issues in their teaching. This highlights the importance of the work in this area. **Exempt from publication.**
5. **Exempt from publication.**
6. Members considered the guidance to be excellent and noted it has been well publicised. **Exempt from publication.**
7. Universities have been required to take steps to secure free speech since the 1986 Education Act, so they are familiar with making finely-balanced judgments over whether speech is within the law. However, we are aware of the challenges for providers in having to make quick decisions with the additional pressure of media attention.

Cyber security report

8. The cyber security dashboard was shared with the committee.

9. Exempt from publication.

10. Exempt from publication.

11. Exempt from publication.

12. Exempt from publication.

13. Exempt from publication.

Update on in year and annual student data collections

14. The annual student data collection for the 2024-25 academic year is progressing as planned, and the final data is expected to be at least as robust as last year's collection.

15. The transition to in year data collection is also progressing as planned, but it is still in its early stages, and the transition will be a major effort. The critical dependencies are Jisc, provider readiness, and providers' software suppliers. Although these structural dependencies result in significant risk, we are currently on track to deliver.

16. The recruitment of independent advisors for the in-year programme was a recommendation from the PwC independent report on Data Futures. The roles will be to provide assurance, challenge and expertise to the programme and sponsorship boards.

17. A draft statement of the OfS's expectations for Jisc's delivery of the duties it holds as the designated data body (DDB) has been shared with Jisc, to which Jisc has raised no concerns or objections. The committee considered the statement of expectations to be essential, and recommended it to the board for approval.

18. A member of RAC attends the DDB Oversight group which meets quarterly and is also attended by a Jisc trustee to ensure that both Jisc and the OfS are held effectively and appropriately accountable for the delivery of DDB functions. It was reported that the tone in the oversight group meetings is collaborative, exempt from publication.

19. Exempt from publication.

20. Effectively communicating the value add of in year data collection to providers was recognised as a challenge.

Risk management

21. The risk report was shared with the committee. Exempt from publication.

22. Exempt from publication.

23. Exempt from publication.

24. Exempt from publication.

25. Exempt from publication.

26. Exempt from publication.

Assurance map

27. The assurance map had been refreshed to reflect the newly agreed strategic risks.
28. KPMG commented that the assurance map was a credible document and will be very helpful in planning where to focus the internal audit programme.

Internal audit

29. Good progress has been made with delivery of internal audits as planned. Exempt from publication.

NAO management letter

30. The National Audit Office (NAO) letter to OfS management following the audit was shared with the committee.
31. The audit had gone well. A few minor comments and observations had been raised to management, with no areas for concern.

NAO value for money and insight work

32. The NAO value for money and insight report was shared with the committee.
33. Exempt from publication.

Physical security annual report

34. The physical security annual report was shared with the committee for information.

Paper publication

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