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6 May 2020

Dear Accountable Officer

Updates to information supporting access and participation plans

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your colleagues for the work you are doing to protect the interests of your students and the continuing support you are providing both to them and your community during this unprecedented time.

I am writing to inform you about updates to information that can support work on access and participation in the future. While this information is most relevant to providers holding or seeking an approved access and participation plan, it contains information that may be of interest to all providers registered with the OfS.

The OfS does not require you to take any immediate action in response to these updates, as they are for information only at this stage.

Publication of access and participation data resources

1. The Office for Students (OfS) will publish an update to the access and participation data dashboard as official statistics at **0930 on Thursday 7 May 2020**. The dashboard will be published at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/, and will include data for each provider registered with the OfS as of 30 April 2020.
2. The dashboard provides a picture of patterns in access and participation across the student lifecycle, both at sector level and at individual provider level. It will include the most recent 2018-19 student data and features improved presentation and functionality.
3. At the same time, the OfS will release supporting data resources to providers on the OfS portal, at **1030 on Thursday 7 May 2020**. These resources will be available until at least the end of this calendar year, and include:

- Aggregate data summaries for your provider and the sector as a whole, relevant to student outcomes at each stage of the lifecycle. This information is presented in a tabular format and we are working towards including a Tableau data visualisation. The data can be accessed at the OfS portal group named '**Access and participation data resources**'.
 - Individualised student-level data showing the contribution of each individual student to the calculation of the OfS's institutional performance measures. This includes the outcomes reported in the dashboard, and those that have provided evidence for registration condition B3. This data can be accessed on the OfS portal group named '**Institutional performance measures: Individualised student data**'.
4. The OfS portal is available at <https://extranet.officeforstudents.org.uk/data>, where both groups will be accessible to any user granted access by a user administrator. The student-level data contains sensitive personal data so its use and access must comply with data protection legislation. I should be grateful, therefore, if you could ensure that this data is restricted to those who require it within their normal working responsibilities, and that the restrictions of access to and use of the data set out in Annex A to this letter are communicated to your user administrator.

Update of Regulatory notice 1

5. Regulatory notice 1 has been updated with some technical and other minor changes, but our requirements for what must be included in an access and participation plan have not changed. The updated guidance can be found at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/regulatory-notice-1-access-and-participation-plan-guidance/.
6. Furthermore, we have published FAQs addressing our requirements in respect of commitments made in access and participations plans in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Please see www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/coronavirus/provider-guide-to-coronavirus/regulatory-requirements/.

Availability of HESA data to use in the financial support toolkit

7. For providers subscribed to HESA and submitting data in the relevant period, HESA annually processes submitted data into a statistical format that allows providers to assess the financial impact of their bursaries. New datasets make this easier, particularly for those providers with more than 400 students receiving bursaries each year.
8. The new datasets include the latest available data in 2020 from your institution as follows:
- Degree and graduate outcomes for your **2014-15 student cohorts** (data for 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14 was provided previously)
 - Continuation outcomes for your **2017-18 cohorts** (data for 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17 was provided previously)

9. Further information on how to access this data can be found in Annex B to this letter.

Information and guidance

Our website is being continuously reviewed and updated in line with the latest government guidance. Our provider guide to coronavirus includes information about our regulatory requirements, FAQs, and links to all letters and guidance issued by the OfS.

If you have not already done so, please sign up for our regular email alerts, which include a weekly roundup of events, deadlines, publications and news stories, and a monthly update of key publications and announcements: www.officeforstudents.org.uk/sign-up-for-email-alerts/. You can also follow us on Twitter: [@officestudents](https://twitter.com/officestudents)

I wish you, your team and your community well over the coming months.

Yours sincerely

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Annex A: Guidance for accessing the OfS portal

The access and participation data resources will be available from the OfS portal, at <https://extranet.officeforstudents.org.uk/data>.

Your provider's user administrator manages user access to the OfS portal. If you are not sure who your provider's user administrator is, please contact portal@officeforstudents.org.uk.

Guidance for OfS portal user administrators can be found on the OfS portal login page (<https://extranet.officeforstudents.org.uk/data>). User administrators should also be made aware of any guidance and limitations for access to data that the OfS is making available to your provider.

The student-level data available within the access and participation data resources contains sensitive personal data so its use and access must comply with data protection legislation. If you do not require access to student-level data within your normal working responsibilities, your provider's user administrator should only grant you access to the OfS portal group named '**Access and participation data resources**'. They should **not** grant you access to the OfS portal group named '**Institutional performance measures: Individualised student data**'.

If you have *not* previously used the OfS portal, please contact your provider's user administrator and ask them to:

- create your OfS portal user account
- add you to the relevant user group(s), the names of which will have been supplied to your provider's head of provider or accountable officer.

Once the user administrator has set up your account, you will receive an automated email with a link to a page where you can set your password. You will then be able to log in using your email address and password.

If you have used the OfS portal before, please contact your provider's user administrator and ask them to add you to the relevant group(s), the names of which will have been supplied to your provider's head of provider or accountable officer. You will need to ask your user administrator to add you to the relevant group(s), **regardless of whether you had access to previous data releases or not**. Once you have been added to the group(s), you should log in using your email address and password.

Once you have logged in, you will see a link to the relevant content. (Please note that if the links do not appear you may need to refresh the page or log out and log in again. You may also need to clear your browser cookies.)

Additional information

If at any time you forget your password for the OfS portal, click the 'Forgotten password?' link on the login page and enter your email address. You will then be emailed a link to a page where you can reset your password.

If you have problems changing your password, if your account becomes locked, or if you can't see a relevant link to a return, please contact your provider's user administrator. If you are not sure who your provider's user administrator is, please contact portal@officeforstudents.org.uk.

If you have any difficulty with accessing or downloading data that the OfS is making available to your provider, please email portal@officeforstudents.org.uk.

Annex B: Instructions on how to access the HESA data release

If your institution subscribes to HESA and you wish to access this data release, you will need to contact HESA's Liaison Team on 01242 388531 or by emailing liaison@hesa.ac.uk. HESA sent further details by email to provider HESA contacts on 17 April 2020.

Advice for using the financial support evaluation tools is available on the OfS website at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/evaluation-and-effective-practice/financial-support-evaluation-toolkit. The online guidance covers each of the three different evaluation tools (the survey, interview and statistical tools) and we recommend most providers should use multiple tools. The OfS recently published a report which gives an overview of findings which providers have reported to the OfS: 'Understanding the impact of the financial support evaluation toolkit: Analysis and findings', available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/financial-support-evaluation-toolkit-analysis/.

If you have any further queries about using the financial support evaluation tools, please contact evaluation@officeforstudents.org.uk.