

6 October 2020

Dear Accountable Officer

## **Insight brief on principles-based regulation**

In our letter of 30 July 2020 we set out our plans to review and reset our regulatory requirements, drawing on our experience of the last two years. In this letter, I want to give you a sense of what we are planning over the coming months.

### **Insight brief**

Today we are publishing an Insight brief which sets the context for our regulatory work.<sup>1</sup>

The brief rearticulates how and why we regulate, and explores why a complex and innovative higher education sector is best regulated through a principles-based approach. Such an approach has challenges and benefits, and we look at the themes that may be particularly relevant as we review and reset our regulatory approach.

The brief also discusses how we continue to reduce the administrative burden for the universities and colleges we regulate, through an increasingly risk-based approach that targets regulatory attention where it is most needed.

The OfS wants all students with the desire and ability to go to university or college to have the opportunity to receive a high-quality higher education with successful outcomes, regardless of their background. Our approach is designed to ensure that these two areas of regulation – quality and equality of opportunity – reinforce one another for the benefit of students. We will say more about the relationship between these two areas in an upcoming consultation on our approach to quality.

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/a-matter-of-principles-regulating-in-the-student-interest/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/a-matter-of-principles-regulating-in-the-student-interest/).

## **Upcoming consultations and activity**

The consultation on quality and standards that we will be publishing later this month will make preliminary proposals about the minimum baseline requirements we set for higher education providers and our approach to ensuring that these are met in practice.

We intend to consult at an early stage of policy development, to secure the best possible engagement with our stakeholders. We want to test our current views with students, providers and others before developing and consulting on more detailed proposals.

During the autumn, we will also continue to discuss with you how to get access and participation plans back on track in the context of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Separately, we plan to consult on aspects of our approach to monitoring and intervention, including our requirements for reportable events and the publication of regulatory decisions. We will also relaunch our consultation on monetary penalties that we paused at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic.

We are also planning an online Insight event in December, to which you should soon receive an invitation. The event will offer the opportunity to discuss some of these issues.

We are taking a phased approach to consultation, to ensure providers and other stakeholders have time to consider our proposals and respond particularly taking account of the pressures of the pandemic. There will be opportunities for you to engage with us at each stage, and we look forward to working with you as we review and reset our regulatory requirements over the coming months.

Yours sincerely

**Susan Lapworth**

**Director of Regulation**

Direct line 0117 931 7416

[susan.lapworth@officeforstudents.org.uk](mailto:susan.lapworth@officeforstudents.org.uk)