

Student panel 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 a report on the work of the student panel following its meeting on 20 June 2024.

Recommendation

2. The board is invited to note the updates in this paper.

Student interest and student engagement

3. The panel was updated on progress since the last meeting to define the student interest.
4. A summary of the current definition was discussed. The panel was broadly supportive of the current definition.
5. The panel recognised that consumer rights are a significant aspect of students' power to hold their providers to account. While students may not always like language that frames students as consumers it is important, and we should recognise that in the OfS's thinking. The panel discussed:
 - a. Provision extends beyond the purely academic experience – the panel noted that non-academic elements are also important to students' overall higher education experience.
 - b. University and college context is also important as experience can vary between different types of provider.
 - c. Soft skills are particularly important for future work and study. It is important to recognise these in the development of a definition of student interest.

- d. The panel noted that a definition of student interest has to be broad enough to encompass the wide variation in students' experiences while still containing enough detail to be meaningful.
6. The panel discussed mechanisms for strengthening the use of student insight and input in the OfS and contributed to a discussion about the future of the student panel.
- a. The panel discussed how it has fulfilled a range of different functions as a panel. Several mechanisms may be more appropriate than a single panel in the future.
 - b. Hearing from a wide range of students is important.
 - c. The ways of working such as the tenure of panellists and participation outside of meetings should be reviewed.

Student panel impact

7. The deputy chair of the panel updated the panel on the impact of the March student panel meeting:
- a. The working definition of student interest was updated to reflect the panel's comments, specifically it was reframed in terms of long term and short term interests. The working definition was further refined through polls and focus groups of which the panel were apprised in the June meeting.
 - b. The panel's ideas about effective communication with students will be embedded in the portfolio of digital communication approaches to be enacted in the coming year.
 - c. The panel's recommendations to consider adapting and tailoring how the OfS communicates with students regarding our work depending on the topic and requirements was noted, as were the panel's comments on the current and potential positioning of the OfS brand with students and will feed into future communication developments.
 - d. The panel reflected on the importance of recording impact and sharing this with the panel itself and the board.

Next meeting

8. The next student panel meeting will be held on 7 November 2024.

Paper publication

9. To be published alongside board papers.

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