



Department
for Education

We are the department
for opportunity

Office for
Students

ofs

Office for Students chair of the board Information pack



WELCOME



Thank you for your interest in this important role.

England's higher education sector includes some of the best universities in the world. It is also incredibly diverse; our universities have a vast range of different missions and values, with world leading small and specialist providers and further education colleges widening access to higher education for many. Our universities and colleges are engines of economic growth and a key part of our plans to put education back at the heart of change and the forefront of national life.

This government is committed to breaking down barriers to opportunity. It is my aim to ensure higher education provides each and every student, whatever their background, with the skills they need to seize opportunity.

As the independent regulator of higher education in England, the Office for Students is fundamental to delivering this aim. It is also critical in ensuring that our universities and colleges make a strong contribution to economic growth, enabling our next generation of teachers, scientists, engineers, healthcare and IT specialists and other essential professionals and graduates to truly benefit from their higher education experience.

The Office for Students is entering an important stage in its development as a regulator. Whilst our universities and colleges continue to enjoy a world-leading reputation, the sector is facing challenges. In particular, these include the increasingly difficult financial context and the need to safeguard students' interests arising from that.

The government has recently published the report of Sir David Behan's independent review of the Office for Students: "[Fit for the Future: Higher Education Regulation towards 2035](#)".

This vital report looks ahead to these challenges and how the sector will adapt to them, and sets out the future of regulation in this new environment. Its vision for the Office for Students is one of a confident regulator, refocussed to prioritise the financial stability of the higher education sector and deliver better quality and outcomes for students.

Strong, inspiring leadership is needed to navigate these challenges. We are therefore seeking to appoint an outstanding chair who can bring world class leadership, influence and strategic direction to the Office for Students board. The new chair will work closely with ministers, the chief executive and board members to ensure the Office for Students delivers on its priorities.

You will have experience of working successfully at the most senior level and possess first-rate strategic thinking capabilities which can be used to steer the Office for Students to contribute to economic growth and opportunity. You will also have the ability to command the respect and inspire the confidence of ministers, parliament, higher education leaders, students and the general public; including the ability to represent the Office for Students effectively in the media.

I am committed to ensuring that public appointments better represent the views of the communities which they serve. I particularly encourage applicants from underrepresented groups, those based outside London and the South-East and applicants who have achieved success through non-traditional educational routes.

Thank you once again for your interest in this role. We look forward to hearing from you.

Bridget Phillipson

Bridget Phillipson MP
Secretary of State for Education



ABOUT THE OFS

The Office for Students (OfS) is the independent regulator of higher education in England.

Its primary aim is to ensure that every student, whatever their background, has a fulfilling experience of higher education that enriches their lives and careers. It regulates in the interests of students and prospective students from all backgrounds, whether they are:

- undergraduates, postgraduates or studying other levels of higher education
- UK-based or international
- studying full-time or part-time
- based on campus, learning at a distance or in work-based settings or anything in between

Created by the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA), which sets out its powers and duties, the OfS regulates through a voluntary register of higher education providers. Over 420 providers are registered with the regulator, and they teach or supervise over 2.5 million students.

Through its regulatory framework the OfS promotes high quality education to ensure that all students, regardless of background, achieve high quality outcomes that will meet the skills needs of the economy.

On the census date of 31 March 2024, the OfS employed 461 full-time equivalent staff. The regulator is funded primarily through registration fees paid by the higher education sector. Fees for academic year 2024-2025 will total around £30 million. The OfS also distributes around £1.6 billion of government funding annually. This supports teaching and students in higher education, including for expensive to deliver subjects, students at risk of discontinuing their studies and funding to world-leading specialist providers.

As an independent public body, the OfS reports to Parliament through the Department for Education.

Further information about the OfS can be found on its website [here](#) and details of the current board [here](#).



ABOUT THE ROLE

The Secretary of State for Education is seeking to appoint a new non-executive chair to the board of the Office for Students, to support and challenge the organisation as it continues its drive to improve higher education for students in England and deliver upon this government's higher education reforms.

ROLE OF THE CHAIR

The responsibilities as chair are set out in the [Framework Document](#) between the Department for Education and the Office for Students. The chair is responsible for leading the board in the delivery of its responsibilities including, but not limited to, the following:

1. Support and challenge the chief executive providing scrutiny on the effectiveness and performance of the OfS, monitoring progress against its objectives, formulating and ensuring successful delivery of the OfS strategy, promoting the efficient and effective use of staff and other resources and ensuring it is discharging its statutory duties in line with government priorities in a way which minimises regulatory burden wherever possible.
2. Implementation of the core recommendations of the independent review of the Office for Students "[Fit for the Future: Higher Education Regulation towards 2035](#)", working closely with the sector to build effective relationships with partners in the provider, research and business communities, to engage with them, share data, work together on areas of common interest and promote understanding of the OfS' role and its activities. Representing the views of the board to stakeholders and the general public.
3. Delivering high standards of regularity and propriety supporting ministers on the appointment of board members, ensuring that the board is working effectively and board membership reflects the diversity of the student population it serves.
4. Work with ministers, the permanent secretary of the Department for Education (as principle accounting officer) and senior government officials in leading the board of the OfS in the delivery of its statutory duties and responsibilities, ensuring that the board, in reaching decisions, has regard to guidance from the Secretary of State.



WHO WE'RE LOOKING FOR

Applicants will be assessed against the following criteria. If there is a high volume of applicants, preliminary sifting will be conducted against the first essential criteria only.

In your application please include:

- A CV setting out your career history, with key responsibilities and achievements that are relevant to this role.
- A supporting Personal Statement (maximum two pages of A4) detailing how you consider your personal skills, qualities and experience provide evidence of your suitability for the role, with particular reference to the essential criteria listed below.

ESSENTIAL CRITERIA

The successful candidate must be able to demonstrate the following essential criteria:

1. Demonstrable strategic leadership experience at board level, including of driving organisational change and setting high standards for delivery of strategic objectives.
2. Evidenced ability to guide effective decision making at a senior level, particularly in relation to the management of finance and risk.
3. Outstanding ability to influence and build effective relationships with a wide range of senior stakeholders and experience of effective engagement with ministers and senior civil servants.
4. A commitment to the principles of public life and to the principles removing barriers to opportunity in higher education.

DESIRABLE CRITERIA

1. Deep knowledge and experience of regulatory principles and practice, including how to drive improvement through regulatory levers and effecting cultural change.
2. Experience, understanding and analysis of the challenges facing the higher education sector.



EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

We want to encourage applications from people with a diverse range of backgrounds.

The department champions opportunity and social justice in all its policies and is committed to breaking down barriers for all people from all backgrounds, from all socio-economic classes and across all regions of the UK.

We are committed to embedding this principle into our recruitment and public appointments.

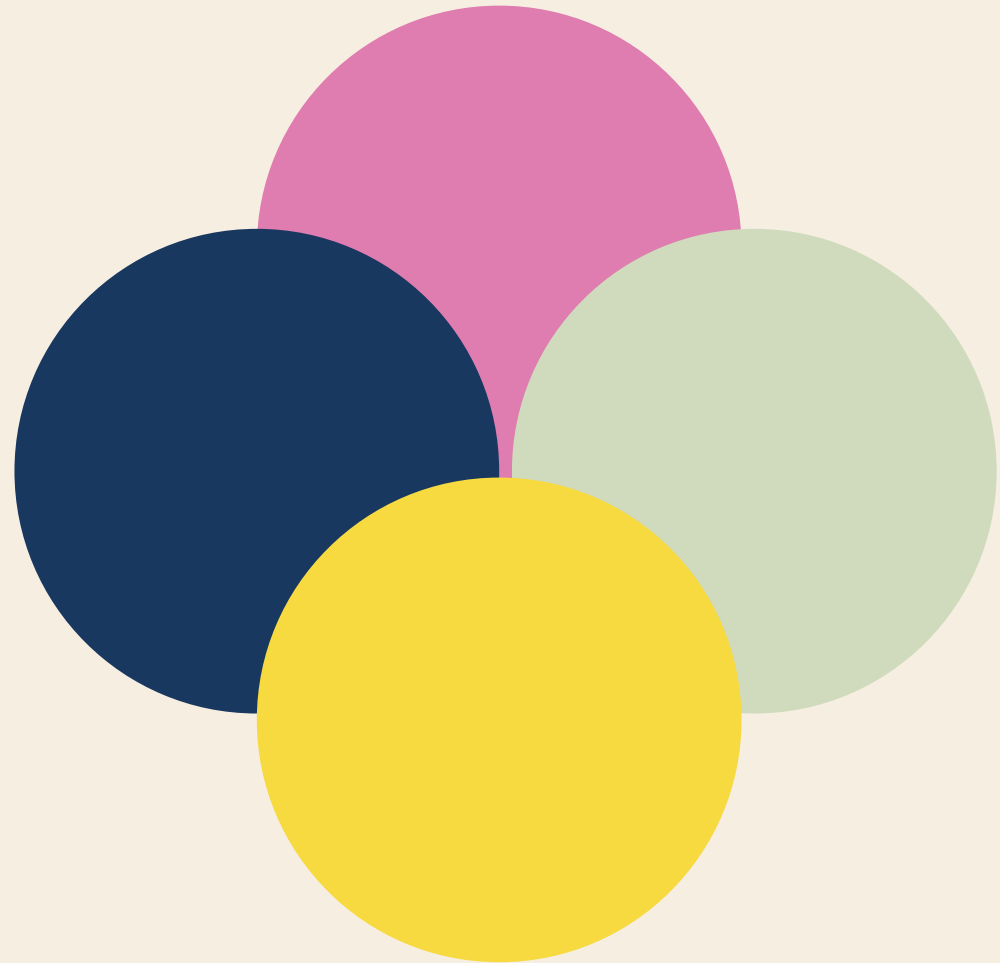
DISABILITY CONFIDENT

We are a member of the Government's Disability Confident scheme and have achieved Disability Confident Leader status, signifying our role as champions of the scheme.

We use the Disability Confident symbol, along with other like-minded employers, to show our commitment to good practice in employing people with a disability.

We ask that all applicants complete an anonymised Diversity Monitoring Form used only for gathering data in order to ensure departments are recruiting from the widest possible pool.

The information you provide is held by the Department for Education in the Office for Students sponsorship Team and is not shared with the Assessment Panel.



TERMS OF APPOINTMENT

Location

The Office for Students has offices in London and Bristol. The role holder will be required to attend in person, bi-monthly board meetings which will be held in London.

Time Requirement

Approximately 2 days per week.

Term

Four years, subject to satisfactory performance. The Secretary of State may recommend that the appointment be renewed at the end of the first period of office, for a further period of up to four years, subject to consistently good performance. There should be no expectation of automatic reappointment.

Remuneration

£59,000 per annum on the basis of devoting two days a week to the work of the Office for Students.

Expenses

The role holder will be reimbursed for any reasonable travel and subsistence expenses necessarily incurred while on official Office for Students business at the appropriate Office for Students travel and subsistence rates.

Pension

As a statutory appointment the role holder is not entitled to any benefits other than the remuneration and expenses set out above. This is not a pensionable role.

Other

The role holder will be expected to demonstrate high standards of corporate and personal conduct. The successful candidate will be asked to subscribe to a Code of Conduct for Members of the board and must confirm that they have sound understanding of and commitment to the principles of public life (which are also set out on page 10).

Pre-appointment Scrutiny by Education Select Committee

This role is subject to pre-appointment scrutiny by the Education Select Committee.

Pre-appointment scrutiny is an important part of the appointment process for some of the most significant public appointments made by ministers. It is designed to provide an added level of scrutiny to verify that the recruitment meets the principles set out in the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

Pre-appointment scrutiny has two parts.

First, information concerning the appointment and the minister's preferred candidate will be shared with the relevant select committee.

As part of this process the preferred candidate will need to be content for their name and CV to be shared with the select committee as the government's preferred candidate. The candidate may also be required to complete a pre-appointment hearing questionnaire which could include, among other things:

- declarations of any relevant potential conflicts of interest;
- what they see as the priorities and key risks for the organisation;
- questions about how they would lead the board and work with stakeholders;
- their commitment to standards in public life and how they would handle being in the public eye.

Normally any information provided to the select committee by the government or a candidate will be published.

Second, it is likely that the select committee will decide to call the government's preferred candidate to a public hearing to answer questions relating to their suitability to the role. The successful candidate would not be expected to have an in-depth technical knowledge of how the Office for Students works or an exact plan of what they would do in the role. However, they would be expected to provide a credible representation of their understanding of the work of the body and what their role in its future would be.

The proposed date for a pre-appointment hearing for this role will be confirmed at a later date.

The government is committed to making public appointments as accessible as possible so that no one is deterred from applying. The department will provide support to the preferred candidate to help them prepare for the hearing and the clerks to the select committee will also be available to discuss how the hearing will run. The appointee will also be supported by the department in working with the select committee should they require any adjustment to enable them to participate fully in the hearing process.

More information

For more information about pre-appointment scrutiny, please see Cabinet Office Guidance:

[Cabinet Office guidance on pre-appointment scrutiny](#)

The Liaison Committee publishes guidelines to select committees for pre-appointment hearing www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/liaison-committee/role/preappointment-guidelines/

[The Code of Conduct for board members of public bodies](#), which sets out the expectations which the Government places on non-executive members of public bodies.



HOW TO APPLY

**The closing date for applications is
Wednesday 27 November 2024 at 11am.**

Information on the timetable for this campaign, selection process, requisite security clearance and the Assessment Panel can be found on the Centre for Public Appointments website: [Search and apply – Apply for a public appointment – GOV.UK \(apply-for-public-appointment.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.cpa.gov.uk)



PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE

In 1995 the Committee on Standards in Public Life defined seven principles which should underpin the actions of all who serve the public in any way.

Consistent with the Governance Code, applicants will be assessed on merit, and all candidates for public appointment will need to uphold the standards of conduct set out in the Seven Principles of Public Life. These will be tested as part of the selection process and the Assessment Panel must satisfy itself that all candidates for appointments can meet these standards, which are:

SELFLESSNESS

Holders of Public Office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or other friends.

INTEGRITY

Holders of Public Office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

OBJECTIVITY

Carrying out Public Office business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Holders of Public Office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

OPENNESS

Holders of Public Office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

HONESTY

Holders of Public Office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

LEADERSHIP

Holders of Public Office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.



HOW TO COMPLAIN

Please contact the OfS sponsorship team at the Department for Education

If you would like to make a complaint regarding your application for the chair of the board of the Office for Students, please contact: officeforstudents.applications@education.gov.uk

We will acknowledge your complaint upon receipt and respond within 15 working days.

If you are not content with our response please contact the Commissioner for **Public Appointments at publicappointments@csc.gov.uk**

Further information on complaints can be found on the Commissioner for Public Appointment's website <https://publicappointmentscommissioner.independent.gov.uk/>