

Press release: Chief Executive of new Office for Students announced

The Department for Education has today (5 July 2017) announced the appointment of Nicola Dandridge as the inaugural Chief Executive of the Office for Students (OfS).

Ms Dandridge was selected for the role following an open and transparent recruitment process, overseen by the office of [The Commissioner for Public Appointments](#).

The OfS is a new public body, established in law by the Higher Education and Research Act 2017. The OfS will be the regulator for the Higher Education sector and will put the student interest at its heart. It will be innovative in its approach to student participation, success and employability. The OfS will put the student interest at its heart and be innovative in its approach to student participation, success and employability. Once fully operational in April 2018, the OfS will replace the [Higher Education Funding Council for England \(HEFCE\)](#) and the [Office for Fair Access \(OFFA\)](#).

Nicola Dandridge is moving to the OfS following 8 successful years as the Chief Executive of Universities UK.

Justine Greening Secretary of State for Education said:

Nicola Dandridge's knowledge and experience will be key for this important role.

The OfS will replace an outdated regulatory system with a framework that can truly respond to the challenges of our 21st Century and ensure the university system meets the needs of the students.

Jo Johnson Universities Minister said:

I am delighted that Nicola Dandridge is taking up this crucial role. Her knowledge and experience of the higher education system makes Nicola an excellent choice to work alongside Sir Michael Barber at the helm of the OfS.

The new regulator will rightfully put the interests of students at the heart of regulation and play a pivotal role in reforming one of our nation's greatest assets – the higher education sector.

Sir Michael Barber, Chair of the Office for Students said:

Nicola's focus on students, her experience in improving

participation and equality for disadvantaged groups, and her years of experience in the higher education sector position her extremely well as the Chief Executive of the Office for Students. Nicola is absolutely passionate about student success, in terms of academic excellence and employability. She will bring the student perspective to everything she does.

Nicola will be instrumental in ensuring that the Office for Students enables the sector to improve outcomes for students. I look forward to working with her to shape the brand new regulatory framework, putting student participation, academic success, and employability at its heart.

Nicola Dandridge said:

I am delighted to be appointed as the first Chief Executive of the OfS. It will be a tremendous privilege to work with Sir Michael Barber and colleagues at HEFCE and OFFA in leading the new organisation.

The creation of the OfS presents an unparalleled opportunity to ensure that every student enjoys a rewarding educational experience and secures the outcomes that they want, whatever their background and whatever their aspirations.

The Secretary of State for Education has also agreed the transfer of 6 members of the current HEFCE board to the OfS board, while the process of recruiting the remaining board positions continues. This includes plans to secure the student voice, by appointing at least one board member with experience of representing students' interests.

1. Nicola Dandridge is currently Chief Executive of Universities UK (UUK), a sector body that supports UK universities by working directly with government, the private sector, the professions and sector agencies. Nicola has been at UUK since September 2009. She was previously Chief Executive of the Equality Challenge Unit, a higher education agency that works with the sector to promote equality for staff and students. Before joining the Equality Challenge Unit, Nicola was a lawyer, qualified in both England and Scotland and working in private practice.
2. The HEFCE Board Members who have been recruited into new roles in the OfS are:
 - Martin Coleman (Deputy Chair)
 - David Palfreyman
 - Steve West
 - Carl Lygo
 - Gurpreet Dehal
 - Kate Lander
3. More information about the OfS board roles and application packs can be found on the [Public Appointments website](#)

4. The HEFCE and the OFFA will be replaced with the OfS in April 2018. The OfS will:
 - have an explicit legal duty to promote choice and consider the student, employer and taxpayer interests
 - operate a risk-based approach to regulation, focusing attention where it is needed and reducing the burden on low-risk institutions
 - have a duty to promote equality of opportunity This will mean looking beyond getting students from disadvantaged backgrounds into university – they will also be charged with making sure that providers are doing all they can to support the students throughout their course, helping to tackle drop-out rates and support disadvantaged students into employment.
5. Speaking on the confirmation of 6 of the OfS Board Members, Sir Michael Barber said:

I am very pleased to see the appointment of Carl Lygo and David Palfreyman, Gurpreet Dehal, Kate Lander, and Steven West as board members for the Office for Students. They bring a combined wealth of experience, from commercial markets to the higher education sector, that will be invaluable as the Office for Students introduces a brand new regulatory approach built around the student. Their diverse perspectives and expertise will be brought to bear on the opportunities and challenges we will face as we enable new providers to join the sector.

Martin Coleman's appointment as Deputy Chair is also very welcome. Martin's background as a leading competition lawyer and competition policy specialist will help set the new tone for the higher education sector in England: a competitive market, guided by sophisticated regulation, geared towards delivering exceptional outcomes for students.

Finally, I am happy to announce the campaign to recruit the remaining members of the board. We will appoint a student representative, who will have a crucial role in bringing the student perspective to everything we do. Additionally, we will ensure that our appointments reflect the diversity and wide range of backgrounds of the student population and our nation as a whole.