Queen Mary
University of London

Senate

Paper Title	Update from ARCS on sector developments
Outcome requested	A summary of developments in the external environment for members' information.
Points for Senate members to note and further information	An update on: • Freedom of Speech Bill • Office for Students: consultation on regulating quality and standards • Office for Students: report on assessment practices in higher education
Questions for Senate to consider	For members' information. The Secretariat is proposing to provide a monthly update for members on internal and external matters of interest. Would members find this update helpful?
Regulatory/statutory reference points	Office for Students: conditions of registration
Strategy and risk	Excellence in Education
Reporting/ consideration route for the paper	n/a
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1. Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill

The Bill has reached the report stage in the House of Commons. The current version is available as follows https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2862.

The current Freedom of Speech Policy is under review and, as discussed at the June meeting of Senate, we will be setting up two groups of colleagues and students drawn from across Queen Mary to review our current Policy in line with the amendments in legislation. With many thanks to those who have been in contact about the group; we will be in touch with more details in the coming weeks.

2. Office for Students: consultation on quality and standards conditions of registration

In November 2020, the Office for Students launched a consultation on a range of issues related to regulating quality and standards in higher education. The second phase of the consultation builds on the initial consultation and sought feedback on the proposed changes to some of the 'B conditions' of registration. The proposals can be summarised as follows:

Proposal 1: for registered providers, three ongoing conditions of registration relating to quality and covering:
i. Academic experience
ii. Resources, support and student engagement
iii. Assessment and awards.

 Proposal 2: for registered providers, one revised ongoing condition of registration relating to standards that extends the definition of 'sector-recognised standards' to allow the regulation of undergraduate degree classifications.

Proposal 3: for providers seeking registration, two new initial conditions of registration that set evidence requirements in a way that is clearer and easier for high quality new providers to meet.

Proposal 4: revised guidance for each of these conditions that includes our approach to gathering evidence, assessment and compliance.

This consultation focused on the qualitative aspects of the conditions of registration; condition B3 *The provider must deliver successful outcomes for all of its students, which are recognised and valued by employers, and/or enable further study* will be consulted upon later in 2021, together with the proposed consultation on the Teaching Excellence Framework.

The consultation has closed, but the document is available here:
https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/d10724c6-1b7f-4d3f-a974-960fef77aa91/consultation-on-quality-and-standards-conditions-final-for-web.pdf

3. Office for Students: report on assessment practices in English HE providers, spelling, punctuation and grammar

The Office for Students has recently published a report of its review of spelling, punctuation and grammar in assessment.
Assessment practices in English higher education providers

4. Monthly updates for Senate members

Given the pace of change in the external environment we are proposing to do a monthly email update for Senate members to provide information on the higher education sector in general, and also on any issues of interest from within Queen Mary. Would members find this helpful? Does a monthly update seem the right frequency, or would members like to receive information every two weeks?