

Office for  
Students



# Admissions - challenges and approaches

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# The context

- Student number cap removed in 2012, alongside opening up of the market to new providers. This led to increased competition between providers for students, intensified further due to the demographic dip.
- The number of unconditional offers made to 18-year-olds has risen from 3,000 (2013) to 117,000 (2018). In 2018 34.4% of students got at least one unconditional offer.
- Alongside these changes we are challenging providers to be innovative and ambitious in how they address inequalities in access and participation.

# The OfS's duties

- We have general duties on equality of opportunity, quality, choice, value for money and competition considered alongside those on institutional autonomy, efficiency and proportionality.
- Our competition duty does not mean we regard all ways providers compete as necessarily positive. Rather, our duty refers to encouraging competition 'where that competition is in the interests of students and employers'.

# Questions the OfS is asking

- Are providers sufficiently ambitious and effective in their plans to improve access and participation?
- Are students' consumer rights being upheld in how courses are advertised and offered?
- Are providers giving the support needed to all students, including those recruited through unconditional offers?
- Does the admissions system more widely work in the interests of students, including disadvantaged and underrepresented groups?

# Admissions review

- Exploring how the admissions system serves the interests of students and how this can be best achieved.
- Some aspects of this will be focused on disadvantaged students in particular (e.g. around contextual admissions). Others will be relevant to all students (e.g. around post-qualification admissions).
- Not seeking views on detailed proposals but discussing underlying questions, priorities and options with a wide range of stakeholders.
- Currently developing the detail of what will be consulted on: aiming to launch a consultation document in the Autumn and have a series of events as well as considering written responses.

# Any questions?

- Please feel free to contact me on [david.smy@officeforstudents.org.uk](mailto:david.smy@officeforstudents.org.uk)
- Our insight briefs, including on unconditional offers and contextual admissions can be found at <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/insight-briefs/>

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