



SLC Stakeholder Forum

Nov 2021

Background

The Stakeholder Forum was established in 2009 following the Hopkin Review to advise SLC on the development of Student Finance England (SFE) and for SLC to develop senior relationships within the key HE sector organisations. In addition, five stakeholder working groups were set up under the umbrella of the Forum to give detailed operational advice and support to SLC in delivering and improving its service.

As further significant change occurred with the 2012, HE sector reforms; the delivery of FE Advanced Learning Loans in England, Student Finance Wales Modernisation and SLC's changed role as the main provider of finance to Higher Education Providers.

In 2017, a review was undertaken of the organisations SLC engages with and a new structure with new governance arrangements put in place.

As a result of the Review, it was agreed to widen the scope of the Stakeholder Forum and Working Group structure to include the Further Education sector and the service for Wales. The Forum and working Group Structure therefore changes to become the SLC Stakeholder Forum and Working Groups.

SLC Stakeholder Forum Terms of Reference

PURPOSE OF THE STAKEHOLDER FORUM

The objectives of the group are:

1. To help SLC manage change

To identify and quantify the potential issues and risks arising from SLC's strategic development programme.

2. To undertake 'bigger picture' thinking about service provision across the sector

To undertake horizon scanning across the sector and become a 'listening post' for patterns and trends in strategic behaviour of providers and applicants, sharing and discussing these patterns and highlighting any possible implications for SLC delivery.

3. To support SLC on major issues and mitigation of business risks

To undertake interventions to help resolve any major escalated issues by providing advice and/or solutions and facilitating communications to the sector; helping mitigate business risks identified through appropriate support and actions.

4. To provide a policy feedback loop from delivery experience

By bringing a wider perspective of the linkages between policy developments, the regulatory environment and SLC's operational delivery the Forum can provide feedback on the impacts of policy on delivery. This is not a formal route for input to policy at the formulation stage but a channel of feedback through SLC for DfE to consider the impact of changes on the delivery system.

SCOPE

- The Forum will deal with matters related to SLC's services in England and Wales delivered on behalf of DfE for England and on behalf of the Welsh Government.
- The scope includes SLC's services in both the FE and HE sectors.
- The scope includes the service for prospective and current students, including the payment of grants, loans, and fees. The scope includes both full-time and part-time support, however the service for the repayment of loans is out of scope.
- The group will consider matters related to service provision for its entire customer base, though input will be provided to it on more specific aspects of the service through the Disabled Student and Vulnerable Student working groups.

MEMBERSHIP

- Members of the Forum are drawn from the following partners:
- HE Sector Chair
- Student Loans Company (SLC)
- National Union of Students (NUS)
- Universities UK (UUK)
- GuildHE
- Association of Colleges (AoC)
- Universities and Colleges Admissions service (UCAS)
- Office for Students (OfS)
- Association of Heads of University Administration (AHUA)
- Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)
- British Universities Finance Director Group (BUFDG)
- Academic Registrars Council (ARC)
- The Chair of the SLC Student Finance Operations Stakeholder Group attends the forum.
- Representatives of DfE and the Welsh Govt attend the Stakeholder Forum in an observer capacity. The chair of the Forum is appointed by DfE in consultation with UUK, GuildHE and AoC and may provide advice to DfE on behalf of the Forum.

TERMS OF OFFICE FOR MEMBERS

- With the exception of the Forum Chair and the Chair of the SLC Student Finance Operations Stakeholder Group, all other member appointments are for a period of two years.
- Appointments are made by the Chair of the Forum in consultation with SLC and the Chair/Chief Executive of the membership body or other organisation.
- Where an organisation has appointed a member to the Forum in line with their specific job role, then this member can remain on the Forum as long as they occupy the relevant role.

FORMAT AND FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

The Forum will meet in a cycle of meetings geared to the academic/application cycle, providing a direct input to SLC's management and delivery of the service.

Subject to business agendas the Forum will typically meet 3 times per annum.

There may be more frequent progress monitoring and teleconferences at peak times, e.g., before the beginning of the academic year. Ad hoc shared problem solving, and joint communications will take place as risks and issues arise.

Administrative support for the Forum will be provided by SLC. Member expenses will be met by the SLC where required in line with SLC's Stakeholder Expenses Policy.

COMMUNICATIONS

The SLC recognises the importance of timely and clear communications to the HE and FE sectors and that the Forum and working group structure are an important channel for dissemination of agreed messages through membership mail bases.

Appendix 1

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STAKEHOLDER FORUM MEMBERS

Responsibilities of SLC

1. To support the objectives outlined above the SLC will undertake the following responsibilities:
2. Open and honest sharing of information
3. Listening to stakeholder views and resolution of stakeholder issues through the Actions Log
4. Sharing of information across the SLC engagement group structure
5. Provide efficient administration, including agreed messages for communications

Responsibilities of Forum and Group members

To support the objectives outlined above Forum members will undertake the following responsibilities:

1. Stakeholders should make active contributions and initiate agenda items drawing on insights from the sector to provide advice to SLC and act as a sounding board on issues
2. Members should represent the views of their membership not their own institution
3. Members should provide a pre-nominated alternative if they cannot attend meetings
4. Members from representative organisations should ensure they have mechanisms in place to provide two-way feedback for their sector body to understand current issues/questions prior to and following these meetings
5. Members have a responsibility to maintain confidentiality where appropriate and support and assist with communications to the sector
6. The Chair has responsibility to ensure members are active participants and take responsibility for group development including an annual review with SLC
7. The Chair provides a key communications link with the Working Group Chairs and regular informal discussion should take place regarding agendas and decisions

Appendix 2

NEW STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The new structure involves 3 core Stakeholder Engagement groups:

1. **The SLC Stakeholder Forum** – A strategic Forum to enable the HE and FE sectors to engage with SLC to provide advice, challenge and support with risks and issues affecting the delivery of SLCs student finance services as well as helping SLC to develop as an organisation
2. **The SLC Student Finance Operations Stakeholder Group** – To focus on dealing with issues related to the operation of the entire annual application, processing and payment cycle, including customer IAG and HEP processes and interactions.
3. **The Advanced Learner Loans Stakeholder Group** – To ensure the Advanced Learner Loans delivery organisations are supported and to gain the benefit of external advice in the development and implementation of the service.

The structure also encompasses sub-groups:

- (a) **The Disabled Student Stakeholder Group (DSSG)** – To advise and support the delivery of specialist support to disabled students.
- (b) **The Vulnerable Student Stakeholder Group (VSSG)** - To advise and support the operational delivery of specialist support to vulnerable students
- (c) **The Learning Provider Advisory Group** – To provide input on the development of service interactions with Learning Providers in connection with FE Advanced Learner Loans.
- (d) **The HE Bursaries & Scholarships Group.** This group steers the subscription based HE bursary administration system, but also forms part of SLC's stakeholder engagement structure
- (e) There are a number of specialist user groups, sometimes of a temporary nature, to provide technical, practitioner-level information and insight.

OFFICIAL

www.gov.uk/slc

OFFICIAL

