Access and participation plans

Wave 2

Heather Bowyer

Senior Officer

11 March 2024

Office for Students

OfS

Follow us on Twitter

@officestudents

What we will cover

Access and participation plans requirements

Focus on evaluation

Reflections on Wave 1

Reflections and questions

Office for Students

Timeline of reforms

DFAP appointment

- **February 2022**
- The new approach to access and participation was announced by John Blake, Director for Fair Access and Participation (DFAP).

Variations

- **July 2022**
- 231 providers voluntarily varied existing access and participation plans (APPs), following OfS request to respond to new priorities.

Consultation

- **October 2022 - April 2023**
- The OfS consults on its approach to regulating equality of opportunity in English higher education and APPs, and publishes response along with new guidance and the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR).

Wave 1 (2024-25 onwards plans)

- **July - December 2024**
- 34 providers voluntarily submit APPs responding to the new guidance.

Wave 2 (2025-26 onwards plans)

- **May 2024 - January 2025**
- 183 providers (across three cohorts) to submit APPs responding to new guidance.

Key priorities

Consider opportunities for collaboration and partnership

Clear consideration of the EORR

Focus on improving quality and volume of evaluation activity

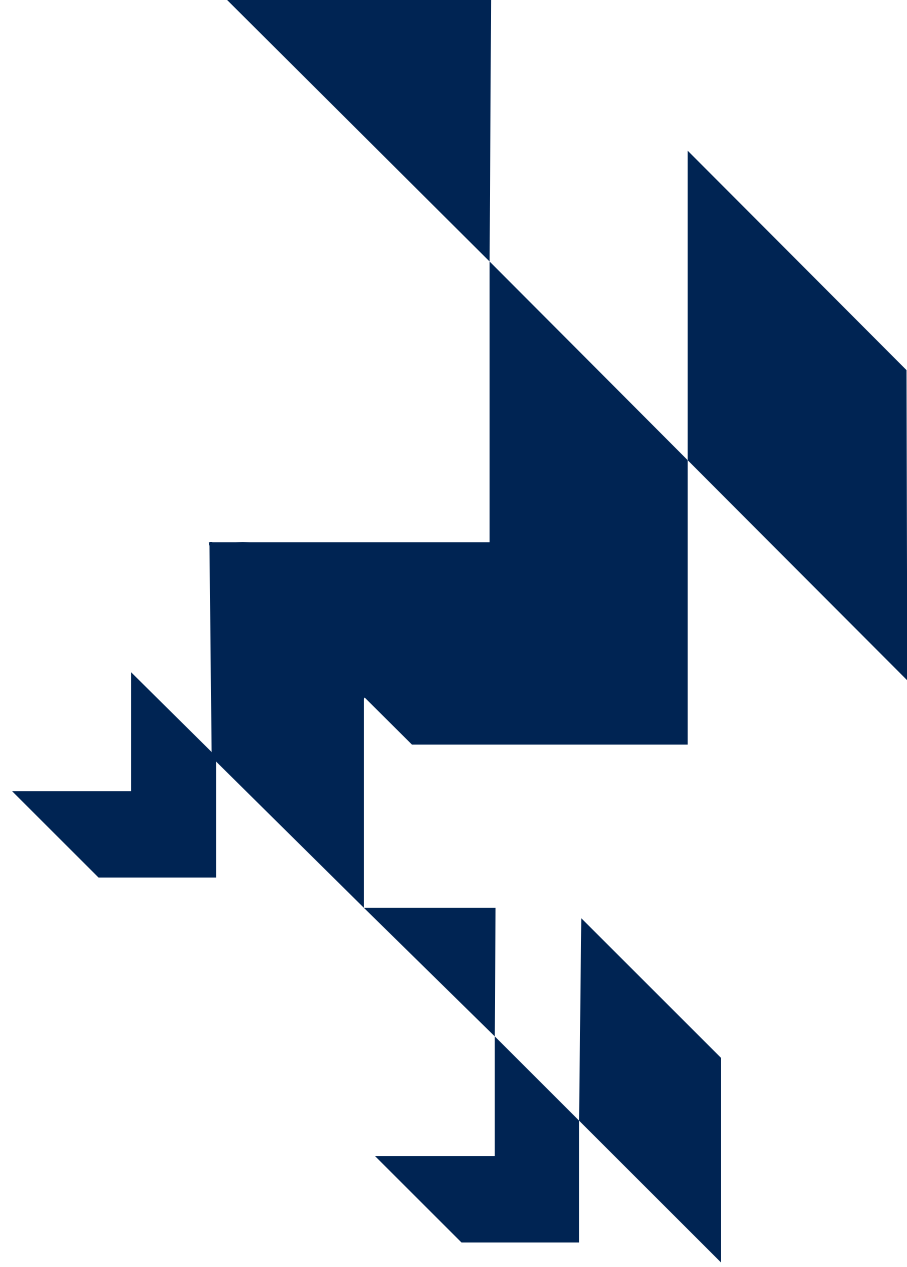More ambitious work to raise attainment of students before they reach higher education

Expand and promote diverse pathways and flexible provision

Support students' mental health

Office for Students

OfS requirements and expectations

Poll

Join at menti.com | use code 1147 4339

What stage are you at with yo

1st | Not started

2nd | Currently writing

Office for Students

Producing an APP

Identify risks	Understand underlying risks	Set objectives and targets	Design interventions	Plan evaluation	Write plan

Student engagement activities

Embedding a whole provider approach

Academic and governance engagement and sign off

Office for Students
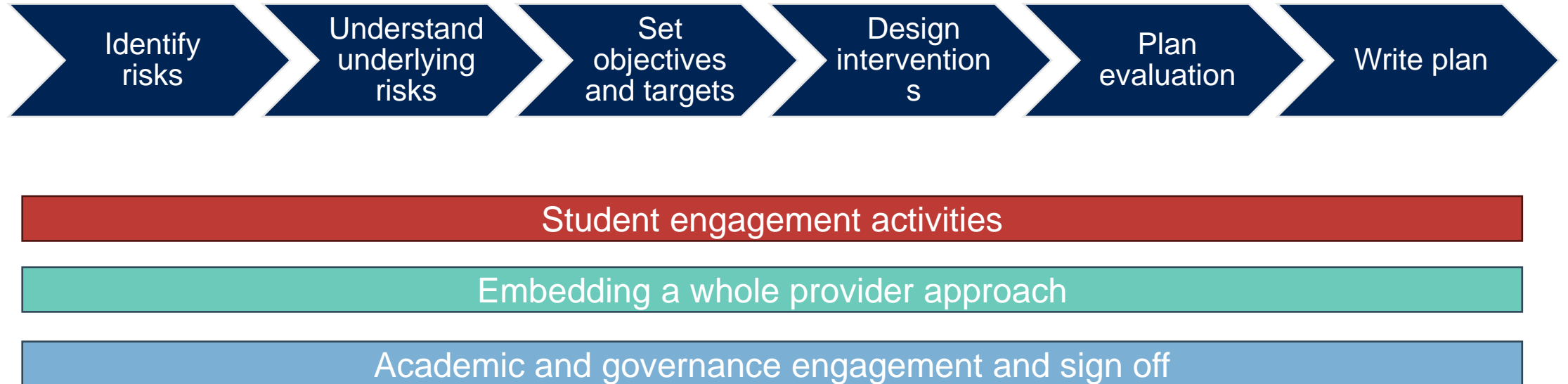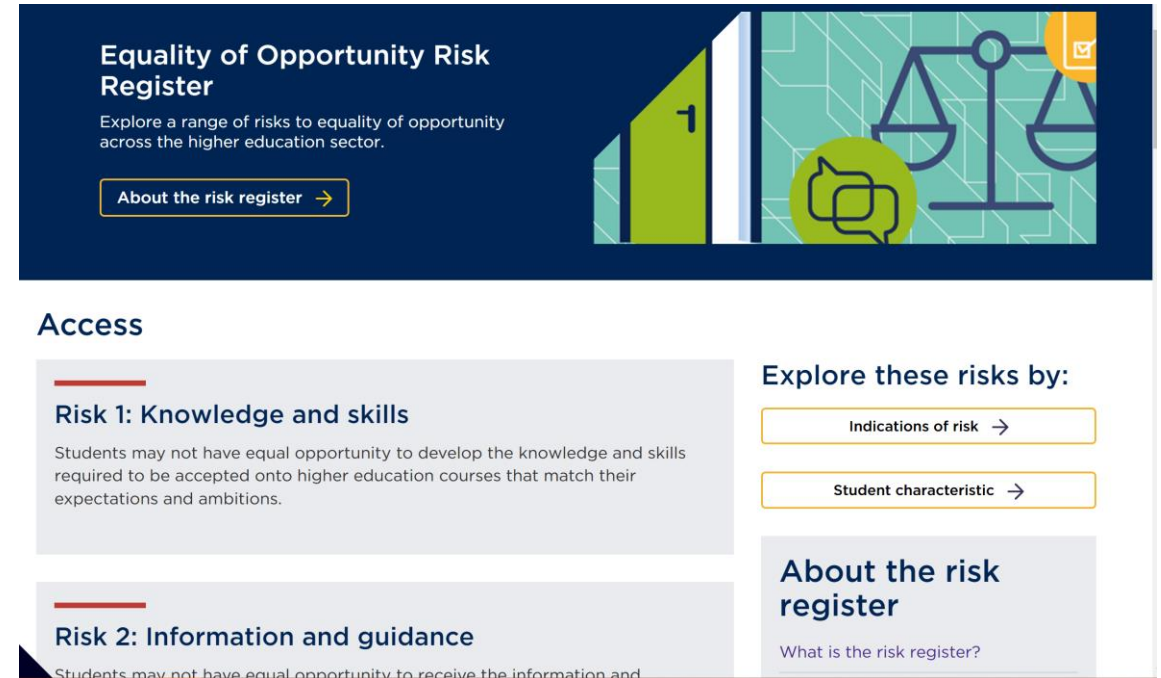
Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR)

- Launched in March 2023.

- National risk register that identifies 12 key risks to equality of opportunity affecting students accessing and in higher education.

- The EORR is evidence based and draws on national datasets and the latest research.

- Providers should consider the EORR when developing their APPs.

Equality of Opportunity Risk Register

Explore a range of risks to equality of opportunity across the higher education sector.

About the risk register →

Access

Risk 1: Knowledge and skills

Students may not have equal opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills required to be accepted onto higher education courses that match their expectations and ambitions.

Risk 2: Information and guidance

Students may not have equal opportunity to receive the information and

Explore these risks by:

Indications of risk →

Student characteristic →

About the risk register

What is the risk register?

What is the impact of this risk?

Nationally, which students is this most likely to affect?

In a provider context, what are the indications of risk?

Office for Students

Objectives, intervention strategies and targets

We expect:

- Clear objectives based on the risks to equality of opportunity identified.

- For each intervention strategy to be underpinned by a theory of change – think about how the activities work together towards your objectives.

- Intervention strategies to include the interim and long term outcomes.

- Evidence informed strategies and activities, with an overview of the evidence used.

- Consideration of the OfS's key priorities.

- Targets which are proxies of your progress.

- Evaluation plan for each intervention strategy.

- Expected cost for each intervention strategy, including the cost of evaluation.

Office for Students
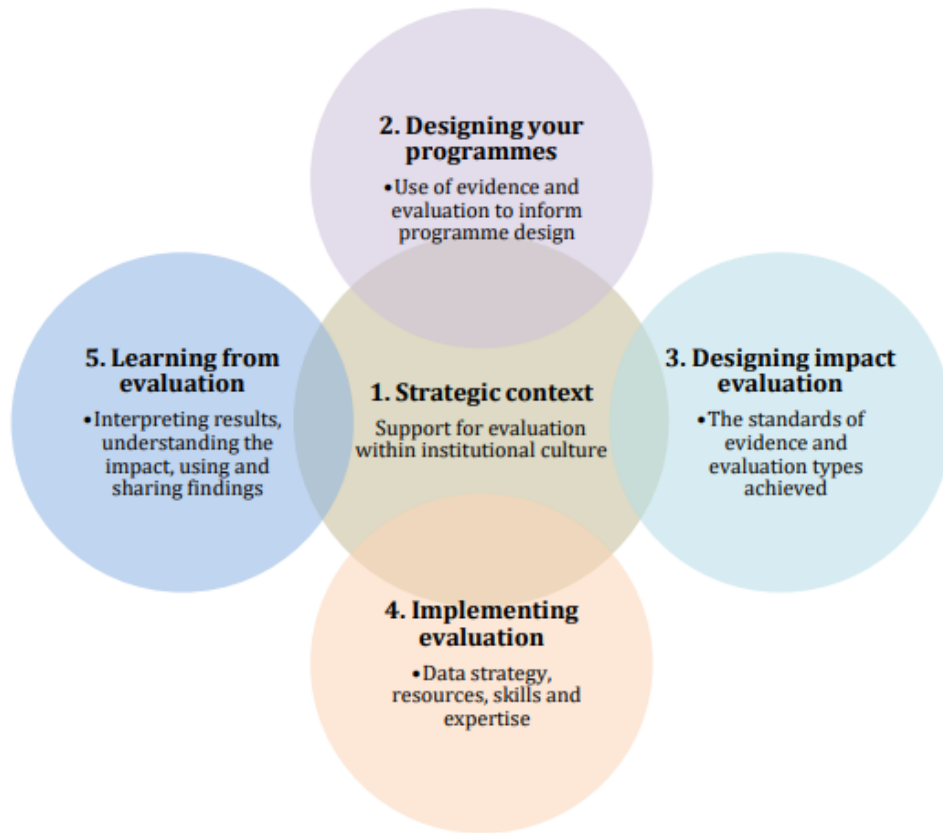
Evaluation: what is expected?

Evaluation strategy

- A strategy for how you will strengthen evaluation practice overall, including any commitments.

- How you will learn from your own findings and from the wider sector.

- A timetable for sharing findings (sharing the good, the bad and the null).

Intervention strategy evaluation plan

- Focus on determining what works, doesn't work, and for who and in what contexts.

- Methodologies that you expect to use to evaluate the outcomes.

- Description of the mechanisms in place for evaluation findings to influence practice.

- For you to consider evaluating the outcomes in an intervention strategy and the effectiveness of an intervention strategy as a whole.

Office for Students

OfS evaluation self-assessment tool

2. **Designing your programmes**
  •Use of evidence and evaluation to inform programme design

5. **Learning from evaluation**
  •Interpreting results, understanding the impact, using and sharing findings

1. **Strategic context**
  Support for evaluation within institutional culture

3. **Designing impact evaluation**
  •The standards of evidence and evaluation types achieved

4. **Implementing evaluation**
  •Data strategy, resources, skills and expertise

- Enables you to assess your performance and set a baseline from which to make improvements.

- Enables you to identify where improvements are needed.

- Can be used by all providers.

Office for Students

Standards of evidence

Type of evidence	Description	Evidence	Claims that can be made
Type 1 - narrative	The impact evaluation provides a narrative or a coherent theory of change to motivate its selection of activities in the context of a coherent strategy.	Evidence of impact elsewhere and/or in the research literature on access and participation activity effectiveness or from existing evaluation results.	We have a coherent explanation of what we do and why our claims are research-based.
Type 2 – empirical enquiry	The impact evaluation collects data on impact and reports evidence that those receiving an intervention have better outcomes, though does not establish any direct causal effect.	Quantitative and/or qualitative evidence of a pre/post intervention change or a difference compared to what might otherwise have happened.	We can demonstrate that our interventions are associated with beneficial results.
Type 3 – causality	The impact evaluation methodology provides evidence of a causal effect of an intervention.	Quantitative and/or qualitative evidence of a pre/post treatment change on participants relative to an appropriate control or comparison group who did not take part in the intervention.	We believe our intervention causes improvement and can demonstrate the difference using a control or comparison group.

Aim for this!

Even better if you can do this!

Office for Students

OfS

Intervention strategy evaluation plans

Consider which outcomes you will be evaluating

Include your timetable for sharing findings

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation Include type of evidence you intend to generate e.g. empirical (Type 2).	Summary of publication plan When evaluation findings will be shared and the format that they will take.
Tutoring	• Increased GCSE scores. • Increased cognitive scores.	• Triangulation of regression analysis (data sharing agreement in place with participant schools) and semi-structured telephone interviews with teachers. (empirical – Type 2) • Triangulation of pre, during and post intervention knowledge testing and TASO's access and success questionnaire (cognitive strategies scales). (empirical – Type 2)	• Blogs in 2027 including two years of data. • Submit evidence to the repository and share with TASO on a yearly basis (where possible). • Share informally with other faculties delivering access activities. • Share with networks and partnerships e.g., NERUPI and our Uni Connect partnership.

Don't just wait until the end of the plan to share!

You can provide additional information on the methodology in Annex B if needed

Use the OfS standards of evidence as a guide

Office for Students

Reflections from Wave 1
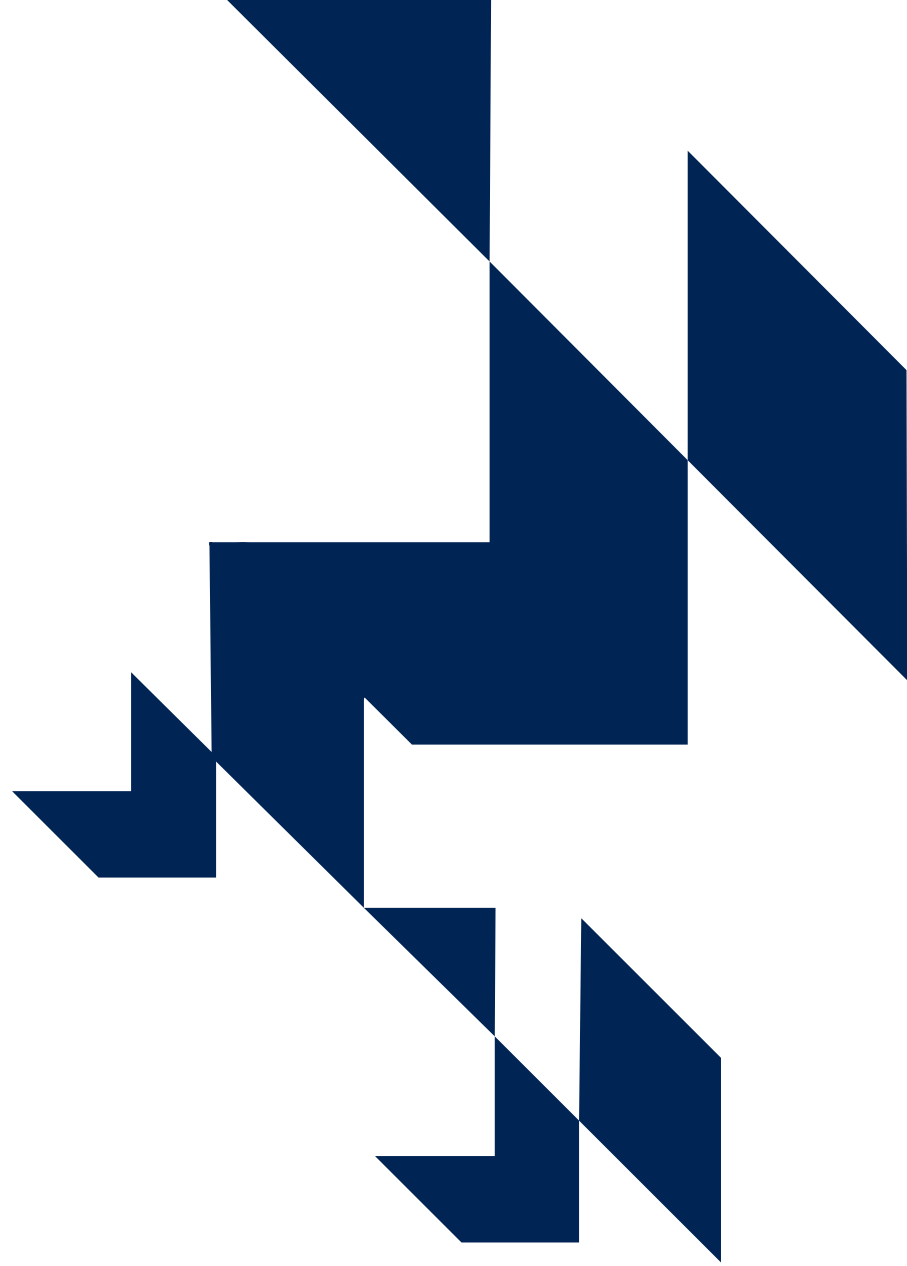
Reflections from Wave 1

- All providers engaged with the EORR, with some very good practice. Although plans demonstrated a shift to addressing the risks to equality of opportunity and use of the EORR, this varied significantly across providers in Wave 1.

- Evaluation featured heavily in the majority of plans, and we saw a step change in the level of detail provided on what will be evaluated and how. But few commitments to evaluate the effectiveness of intervention strategies as a whole.

- Good examples of partnership working but would like to see more of this in Wave 2, particularly at the access stage as it reduces burden on schools as well as providers.

Office for Students

What comes after?

- APP approval is only the **first** step.

- We may set **mitigations or further actions** as a result of your approval.

- APPs should be **live** documents - we don't want to stifle innovation and finding efficiencies, and we are mindful of complexity.

- Providers will be monitoring and evaluating to understand its effectiveness – this could result in providers needing to change approach and request a variation.

Office for Students

Reflections and questions
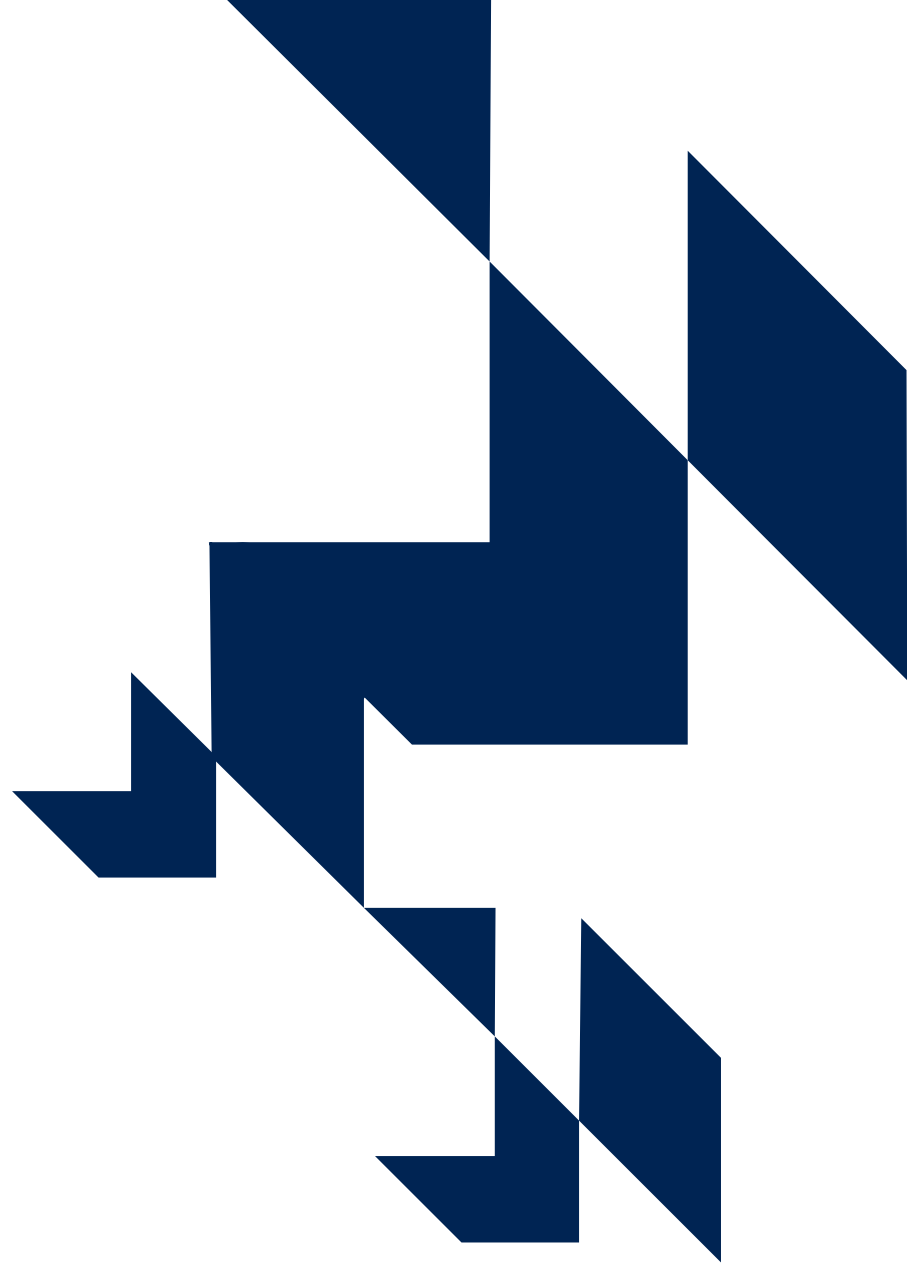
Reflections and questions

- Reflect on your tables if and where there are areas of uncertainty:
  - What would you like to know more about?
  - Are there any areas you need more information in order to develop your plan?
  - How can you support each other to develop your plans?

- Please discuss these as a group and agree any questions you would like to ask.

Office for Students

Further support

Attend our upcoming webinars:

20 March: Part one - student engagement, mental health and the EORR

21 March: Part two - diverse provision, evaluation and pre-16 attainment.

Email us:
app@officeforstudents.org.uk

Further engagement in April, with opportunities designed to support providers in the practicalities of writing their plans and interpretation of guidance in their own context.

Students:
Tailored support will be offered to students from April onwards with opportunities to talk one-to-one with OfS staff.

Office for Students

Thank you for listening