

## SOAS External Returns Policy

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Version	1
Date	
Approved By	

### 1.0 Purpose and Aims

1.1 SOAS has to submit various data returns in order to operate as a Higher Education provider in the UK. Several of these returns are requirements of SOAS's continued registration with the Office for Students (OfS) as a provider in the Approved (Fee Cap) category but other bodies collect data or require submissions from SOAS. This policy has been developed to ensure that SOAS meets these regulatory obligations and sets out a framework to assure the Director and the Board of Trustees that returns will be signed off to deadline.

### 2.0 Scope

2.1 External returns are defined as any data return or submission which SOAS is required to make to an external body or agency.

2.2 To ensure that SOAS is cognisant of its responsibilities a schedule of returns required is kept by the Planning team and published on MySOAS. This schedule lists the returns that must be signed off each academic year, and those responsible for submitting them.

2.3 Those returns which require formal sign off by the Director are clearly identified on the schedule.

2.4 The schedule also lists reporting requirements that are not regularly scheduled but must be made should certain events occur, such as notifying the Information Commissioner of data breaches under GDPR.

### 3.0 Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Each return must have a nominated individual who is responsible for submitting the return and ensuring that the information it contains is accurate and fit for purpose. These individuals must be listed on the schedule maintained by the Planning team.

3.2 If a member of staff who is responsible for one or more returns leaves SOAS or changes role it is the responsibility of their line manager to appoint a new responsible individual and to ensure that returns are still completed to the required standard and timescale. The line manager should notify the Planning team ([Planning@soas.ac.uk](mailto:Planning@soas.ac.uk)) if responsibility for a return changes for this or any other reason.

3.3 If a return is discontinued or a new return is required it is the responsibility of any member of staff who becomes aware of this to notify the individual responsible or the Planning team.

#### **4.0 Sign-off Procedure**

4.1 For returns requiring sign-off by the Director the Chief Operating Officer (COO) must first give their assurance that the return is fit for purpose. In the event that the Chief Operating Officer is unavailable to give assurance the Director of Finance and Planning will deputise for them.

4.2 The COO should be notified that the deadline for a return that requires Directorial sign-off is approaching. The amount of notice will vary depending on the return and the circumstances but a guideline for notification is at least a week before final submission (which may not be the same date as the sign-off deadline) to give the COO time to review the return and raise any queries.

4.3 The individual responsible for the return's submission should send the COO a summary report prefaced with the External Return Cover Sheet for their approval and copy the Head of Planning into this communication. In addition to the items listed on the cover sheet, helpful items to include are a comparison with previous submissions and an explanation of high level differences, a comparison to the sector if available and a summary of the queries (if any) raised by the regulator or body that receives the return.

4.4 Once the COO has given approval, the individual responsible for the return should liaise with the Director to seek sign-off.

4.5 Once the return has been signed off the individual responsible for the return should notify the Planning team ([Planning@soas.ac.uk](mailto:Planning@soas.ac.uk)) who will update the schedule.

4.6 Where possible, the aim is for all returns to be signed off at least 24 hours in advance of the final deadline.

#### **5.0 Safeguards**

5.1 The primary responsibility for submitting external returns and ensuring that they are signed off rests with the individual responsible for the return and their line manager.

5.2 Professional Services Senior Leadership Team (PS-SLT) has adopted a standing item to review the schedule of external returns at each meeting to ensure that all members are aware of upcoming deadlines.

5.3 The Head of Planning will send a written report to each meeting of the Audit Committee to notify them of the returns that have been signed off by the Director since the last meeting (and any that were missed/signed off late) and of the returns that are due for Directorial sign-off before the next meeting.