

Office for
Students



Annual Financial Return 2020

Submission process guidance

Enquiries to FinanceData@officeforstudents.org.uk

Publication date 9 September 2020

Contents

Overview	3
Details of the submission process	4
Submission process diagram	4
1. Access the portal area	5
2. Download your return information file	7
3. Download your templates	8
4. Complete all tables in the workbook	9
5. Review validation errors and warnings	10
6. Submit completed workbook	11
7. Download queries file	13
8. Review queries	14
9. OfS reviews query responses	16
10. Follow-up queries from the OfS	16
11. All queries resolved	17
12. Workbook finalised	17
13. Submit other required files	18
14. Complete and submit sign off form	21

Overview

1. This document provides detailed information on submitting your Annual Financial Return 2020 (AFR20). It covers all stages of the submission process for the Annual Financial Return 2020, including downloading your templates, submitting all the required files and the data verification process.
2. You should read '[Regulatory Advice 14: Guidance for providers for the financial monitoring returns](#)', which gives an overview of the Annual Financial Return 2020, before reading this document.
3. The Annual Financial Return 2020 return process operates to various deadlines, depending on when the financial year for your provider in the 2020 calendar year ends. There are three deadlines that have been set for all providers. These are referred to in this document as 'deadline X' (where X is either 1, 2 or 3). The bespoke deadlines for your provider were emailed to your Accountable Officer on 3 August 2020.
4. In summary, the process for completing the Annual Financial Return 2020 is set out in the table below.

Deadline number	Description
Deadline 1 – six months after 2020 year-end	The initial submission of a valid workbook in order for your provider's data to go through the OfS's data verification process.
Deadline 2 – seven months after 2020 year-end	The final submission of all files required for the Annual Financial Return 2020. All queries raised by the OfS, regarding the data returned, responded to and any revisions to the workbook finalised and submitted.
Deadline 3 – seven months and one week after 2020 year-end	The return is signed off by the Accountable Officer and the sign off form submitted to the OfS.

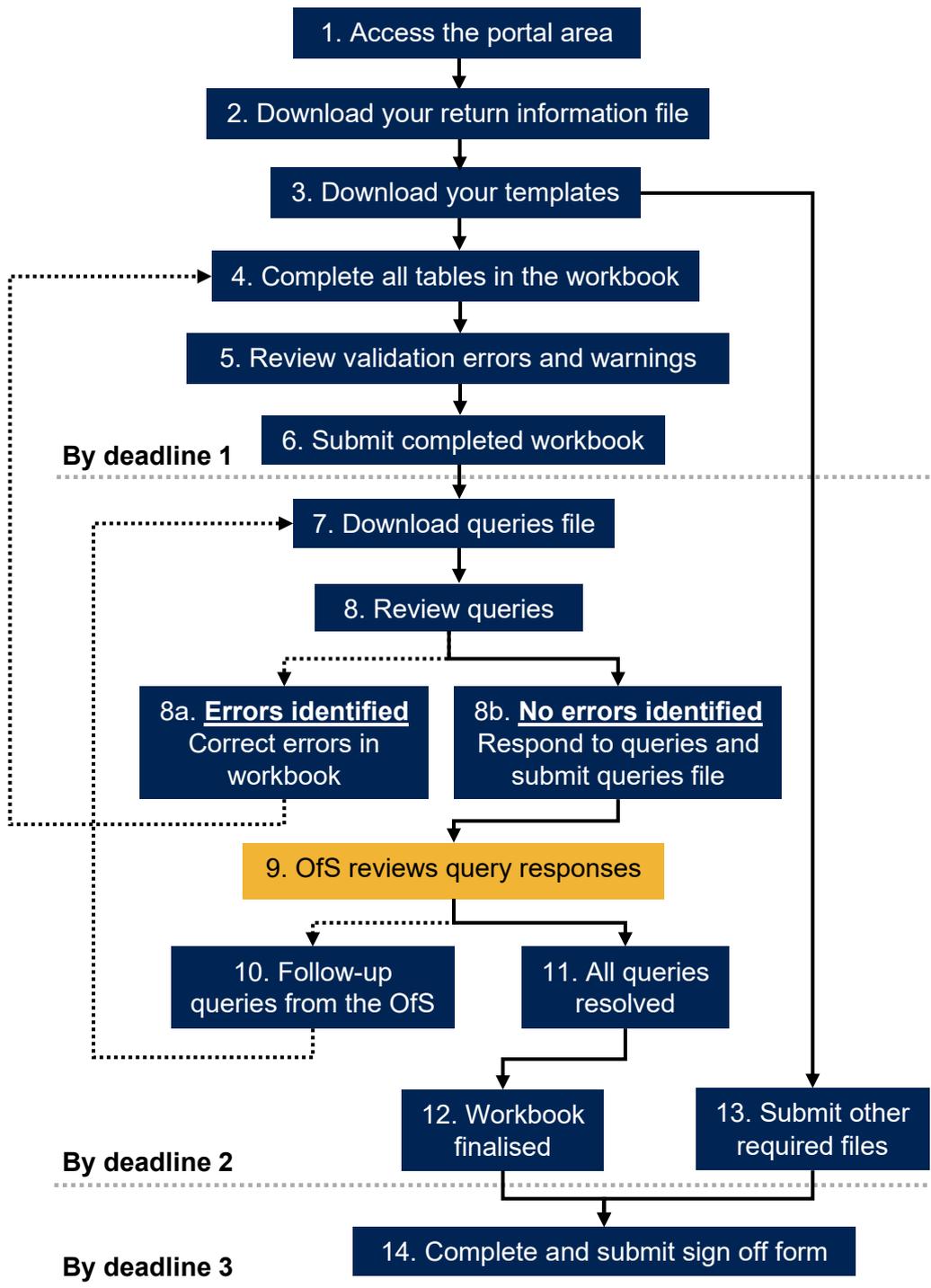
5. Please contact FinanceData@officeforstudents.org.uk if you have any questions regarding the submission process.

Details of the submission process

6. The following section gives detailed information of the submission process for the Annual Financial Return 2020.

Submission process diagram

7. Below is a diagram of the submission process. You can click on any text in the diagram to be taken to the relevant section of this guidance.



1. Access the portal area

8. In order to download the templates and submit your return, you will need access to the 'Financial monitoring returns' area on the OfS portal (<https://extranet.officeforstudents.org.uk/Data>). Each portal user will need to be granted access to this area to download the templates and submit the return.
9. Once you have been granted access to this area, you will then be able to view all financial monitoring returns, including the Annual Financial Return 2020.

Obtaining access to the 'Financial monitoring returns' portal area

10. If you previously had access to the 'Annual Financial Return 2019' area, you have automatically been granted access to the 'Financial monitoring returns' area. You will see the area on the homepage of the OfS portal.
11. If you do not have an OfS portal user account, you will need to ask the nominated OfS portal user administrator at your provider to create an account for you. Each person who requires access to the 'Financial monitoring returns' area will need to be registered with their own account. Instructions on how the user administrator creates an account can be downloaded from the log in page of the portal (see the link in paragraph 8).
12. If you already have an OfS portal user account, but do not have access to the 'Financial monitoring returns' area, you will need to be assigned to it by the nominated OfS portal user administrator at your provider. Instructions on how the user administrator assigns users to an area can be downloaded from the log in page of the portal (see the link in paragraph 8). If you are the user administrator, you will also need to assign yourself to the area.
13. If you do not know who your user administrator is, you can view the user administrators at your provider by logging onto the OfS portal. Select 'My account' towards the right-hand side of the yellow banner, and then click 'Activate an access key'. The names and contact details of the user administrators at your provider will be at the top of the page. If you are not registered and do not know who your user administrator is, please contact Portal@officeforstudents.org.uk.

Navigating the Annual Financial Return 2020 portal area

14. Once you have been granted access to the 'Financial monitoring returns' portal area, it will be available on the homepage of the OfS portal (<https://extranet.officeforstudents.org.uk/Data>).

Financial monitoring returns

Here you can submit your financial monitoring returns (including the Annual Financial Return and Interim Financial Data Collection)

15. Within the 'Financial monitoring returns' portal area is a list of all of the current and previous financial monitoring returns. Please note that all returns are listed but may not be applicable to your provider either previously or at the current time.

16. Click on the link under the 'Annual Financial Return 2020 (AFR20)' section.

Annual Financial Return 2020 (AFR20)

The Annual Financial Return 2020 (AFR20) is relevant to the latest audited financial year for your provider that ends in the 2020 calendar year. The deadlines for this return are dependent upon the financial year end of your provider. The specific deadlines for your provider have been emailed to the Accountable Officer and Finance Strategic contact, and are also available to download in the AFR20 portal area. Click the link below to access the portal area for the AFR20 return.

Annual Financial Return 2020 (AFR20)

17. This will take you to the Annual Financial Return 2020 page. This page contains several sections which you should familiarise yourself with:

- a. **Overview** – This section contains links to the guidance for the Annual Financial Return 2020.
- b. **Downloads** – This section contains a series of download files which will be updated as you progress your return. Click the 'Download' button next to each to download the relevant package. The download packages are:
 - i. **Return information and deadlines** – This download contains a file which specifies the exact deadlines and required actions for your provider. See the section '[Download your return information file](#)' for further information. This download also contains a copy of the document 'Financial data collections 2020 information', which was previously emailed to the Accountable Officer and Finance Strategic contact at your provider.
 - ii. **Templates** – This download contains the blank templates for the Annual Financial Return workbook and commentary. See the section '[Download your templates](#)' for further information.
 - iii. **Latest successfully submitted files** – This download contains the latest files successfully submitted by your provider.
 - iv. **Unsuccessful files** – This download contains files submitted that have not been successful (such as invalid workbooks and files submitted using the incorrect naming conventions).
 - v. **Data verification queries and responses** – This download contains the queries that you must respond to once you have submitted your workbook. This file will be updated with any responses you provide and may be updated with further queries from the OfS. See the section '[Download queries file](#)' for further information.
 - vi. **Sign off form** – This download contains the sign off form for your return, to be signed by the Accountable Officer. This will be available once all required files have been submitted successfully and all data verification queries have been responded to and reviewed by the OfS. See the section '[Complete and submit sign off form](#)' for further information.

- c. **Files to be submitted** – This section contains a list of all the possible files that you may be required to submit as part of the return. The naming conventions that are required for each file to be successfully uploaded are also listed here.
- d. **Submit files** – This section allows you to submit the necessary files for the return.
- e. **History of submissions** – This section lists the submissions that you have made.

Common issues with the portal

I cannot log into the OfS portal.

- 18. If you receive an error message while trying to log in, you may be entering the wrong email address or password, or your account may be locked. Ensure that the email address you are using is correct, and then request a new password. You will be sent a new password, which you will be asked to change when you log in. You can also ask your user administrator to reset your password.
- 19. If this new password does not grant you access, it is likely that your account is locked. Contact your user administrator, who can unlock your account for you. It is advisable that you also request a password change at the same time. If you or your user administrator have any problems, please contact Portal@officeforstudents.org.uk.

The 'Financial monitoring returns' area has not appeared on the portal home page.

- 20. Ensure that the user administrator at your provider has assigned you to the area first. If you are the user administrator, you will need to assign yourself to the area to view it.
- 21. Once you have been assigned to a survey, you may need to log out and then log back into the portal for the area to appear.

The download files have not updated after I have uploaded a file.

- 22. You may need to refresh your browser for the download packages to update with the latest files.
- 23. Some files may not yet be available to your provider. This may be because a required action has not yet been completed. Download your return information file for details as to what your current required actions are.

2. Download your return information file

- 24. The deadlines for the Annual Financial Return 2020 differ for each provider, depending on when their financial year ends. Therefore, the return deadline is not displayed on the portal homepage as it would be with other OfS data returns. Providers may also need to submit different files to complete the return.
- 25. The document 'Financial data collections 2020 information', which was previously emailed to your Accountable Officer and Finance Strategic contact, details the deadlines and requirements for your provider. This document is available in the 'Return information and deadlines' download.

26. A return information file is also available in the 'Return information and deadlines' download package.

27. The return information file contains the following information:

- a. The actions required for your provider to successfully complete the return.
- b. The submission deadlines for your provider.
- c. A log of all activities for your provider's Annual Financial Return 2020. This will show which files have been uploaded and when, along with the outcome of the upload, as well as activity regarding the data verification process.

28. The 'Return information and deadlines' download package contains two files. The files will be given the file names as detailed in the table below. This includes your provider's UKPRN, and for the return information file, and the date and time it was created.

File	File name
Return information	ReturnInformation2020_[UKPRN]_[DATE]_[TIME] ¹
Financial data collections 2020 information	[UKPRN] - Financial data collections 2020 information

29. Every time an upload is made of any file to the Annual Financial Return 2020 area, or an activity is carried out, the return information file will be updated with information regarding the latest action. The date and time of the action will be added to the end of the file name as detailed in the table above. You can access the updated return information file by clicking the 'Download' button. You may need to refresh your browser to obtain an updated file.

3. Download your templates

30. Before you begin the submission of your Annual Financial Return 2020, you will need to download the bespoke templates for your provider.

31. Templates are provided for the workbook and commentary files that are required to be submitted. The workbook is bespoke to your provider, containing data that was returned in the Annual Financial Return 2019 (where applicable).

¹ The date and time will only be added to the return information file name once you have made your first upload to the portal.

32. The 'Templates' download package contains two files. The files will be given the file names as detailed in the table below. This includes your provider's UKPRN.

Template	File name
Workbook	FinancialReturn2020_Blank_[UKPRN]
Commentary	Commentary2020_Blank

33. Save the templates to a memorable location on your computer or shared drive. You can download these as many times as required. Please note that it can sometimes be necessary for the OfS to update these templates. The OfS will notify the Finance Strategic contacts at your provider if templates are updated.

Common issues with the templates

My workbook does not contain or contains incorrect prefilled data.

34. Your workbook has been populated with the latest data signed off for the Annual Financial Return 2019. If you were not required to complete this return or have not yet signed off the return (or an updated return), the prefilled data will not be populated (or may reference a previously signed off return).

My workbook contains the incorrect financial year ends.

35. Please alert the OfS as soon as possible by contacting FinanceData@officeforstudents.org.uk. We will need to reissue your workbook template with the correct financial year ends. Your deadlines for the return may also be revised.

I cannot edit my workbook or commentary template

36. You may need to click on 'Enable editing' on the yellow banner if it appears on your screen to edit your templates.

37. Some elements of the workbook template are locked, and you will not be able to edit these.

4. Complete all tables in the workbook

38. Once you have saved your workbook template, you should review all rows and columns on each worksheet and complete the white cells in all tables, as necessary.

39. You should not attempt to alter the format of the worksheets by adding or deleting columns or rows. Only cells where data is required should be edited. The workbook is protected to ensure that the data submitted is accurate and is only entered into the relevant cells. Worksheets contain information that is critical for loading the data accurately, and it is essential that this is preserved. The workbook should not be knowingly unprotected (by using an unofficial macro downloaded from the internet, or otherwise). We will refuse to accept any workbooks which have been tampered with. If you would like to view an

unprotected version of the workbook, you can [download a sample workbook from the OfS website](#). This sample workbook must **not** be used for your final submission.

40. If you wish to copy and paste data in the workbook, ensure that you use the 'paste values' option. This will not copy the formatting of the data you are pasting and will preserve the formatting of the workbook.

5. Review validation errors and warnings

41. Several validation error and warning checks are built into each table of the workbook which help to ensure that incorrect data is not submitted. Once you have input all of the required data into the tables, you must then review these validation checks.
42. If an error is detected in a table, the validation error cell above the table will turn red and show '**Validation errors: see below table**'. The cell corresponding to the failed check below the table will show '**ERROR**' in red, next to a description of the error. If there are no errors, the cell above the table will show '**No validation errors**', and the cells below will show '**Pass**'.
43. If a warning check is triggered in a table, the validation warning cell above the table will turn yellow and show '**Validation warnings: see below table**'. The cell corresponding to the failed check below the table will show '**WARNING**' in yellow, next to a description of the warning. If there are no warnings, the cell above the table will show '**No validation warnings**', and the cells below will show '**Pass**'.
44. Validation errors **must be corrected** before the submission of your workbook. We will not accept workbooks containing validation errors. If an invalid workbook is uploaded to the portal, you will receive error messages, and your upload will not be accepted.
45. Validation warnings should be reviewed before submitting your workbook. You can submit your workbook with validation warnings; however, we will expect you to provide further information about these warnings at the data verification stage.
46. A list of tables that have errors or warnings present can be viewed on the 'Information' tab of the workbook.

Validation information	
Tables with validation errors:	No validation errors
Tables with validation warnings:	No validation warnings

Common issues with the validation checks

My workbook contains validation errors, but I believe the data is valid.

47. Please contact FinanceData@officeforstudents.org.uk where we will discuss any outstanding validation errors with you. If the OfS accepts that the data is valid, then an arrangement will be made to bypass any affected validation errors.

My workbook contains validation warnings, but I believe the data is valid.

48. You will be asked to explain the data as part of the data verification process. Once the OfS is satisfied with your explanations, the yellow highlighting for validation warnings in your workbook will be removed, and the warnings shown as being 'Explained'.

6. Submit completed workbook

49. By deadline 1 for your provider, you must submit a completed workbook to the OfS portal. This will start the data verification process, which is detailed in the '[Download queries file](#)' section. This workbook must not contain any validation errors.

50. The OfS accepts that some of the data may still be draft. You will have an opportunity to update the data in your workbook during the data verification period, ensuring that a final version of the workbook is submitted by deadline 2 for your provider.

51. The workbook needs to be given a specific file naming convention for the portal to recognise that it is the workbook that needs to be processed. This is detailed in the table below.

File to be submitted	Naming convention for upload file
Annual Financial Return workbook	Workbook

52. You should submit your workbook by clicking the 'Upload' button under the 'Submit files' heading on the Annual Financial Return 2020 page.

Submit files

Click the 'Upload' button below to submit the files specified [above](#). You must use the specified file naming convention before submitting a file, as specified [above](#).

Upload the files for Annual financial return 2020 (AFR20)

53. This will take you to another page. Click the 'Choose files' button, select the 'Workbook' file, and click 'OK'. Clicking the 'Upload' button on this page will then upload the workbook to the portal.

File to upload

No file chosen

54. The file may take a few minutes to process. Once processed, you will be presented with one of two outcomes as detailed in the table below.

Outcome	Description
Success	The file has successfully been submitted.
Errors	The file has failed to upload. If there were validation errors present in your workbook before it was uploaded, then the file has been rejected as it is invalid, or it may be that the submission of the workbook may be currently closed for your provider. Please contact FinanceData@officeforstudents.org.uk if you require assistance in identifying the reason for your workbook not being uploaded.

55. If the outcome was 'Success', then a processed version of the workbook will now be available in the 'Latest successfully submitted files' download package. The file will be given the file name as detailed in the table below. This includes your provider's UKPRN, the number of the submission, and the date and time it was processed.

File submitted	Processed file name
Annual Financial Return workbook	FinancialReturn2020_[UKPRN]_[Submission number]_[Date]_[Time]

56. If the outcome was 'Errors', then the file uploaded will be available in 'Unsuccessful files' download package. The file will be given the file name as detailed in the table below. This will be followed by your provider's UKPRN, and the date and time it was processed.

Issue	Processed file name
Workbook is invalid	INVALID_FinancialReturn2020_[UKPRN]_[Date]_[Time]
Submission of the workbook is currently closed	CLOSED_FinancialReturn2020_[UKPRN]_[Date]_[Time]

Common issues with uploading the workbook

The portal shows that there were errors when I uploaded the workbook.

57. Your workbook was not accepted. Check that there are no validation errors in your workbook. If you are still having issues, please contact FinanceData@officeforstudents.org.uk.

The portal is closed for workbook submissions, but I need to upload a workbook.

58. Depending at what stage you are at in the return process, you may not be able to submit a workbook (for example, if your submission deadline has passed). If you are unable to upload a workbook, please contact FinanceData@officeforstudents.org.uk.

7. Download queries file

59. In order to mitigate the risk of the OfS receiving inaccurate data required for the Annual Financial Return, the OfS will carry out a data verification process on the data you have submitted as part of the return.

60. The data verification process begins when you have submitted a valid workbook for the first time. A queries file will be generated following the workbook submission and will be available for you to download immediately. You should download this file at the earliest opportunity and review the queries raised.

61. You can access the queries file in the 'Data verification queries' download package. Open and save this file to a memorable location on your computer or shared drive. You may need to click 'Enable editing' in the yellow banner if this appears when you open the file. The file will be given the file name as detailed in the table below. This includes your provider's UKPRN, and the date and time it was created.

Download	File name
Queries file	FOR_REVIEW_DataQueries2020_[UKPRN]_[Date]_[Time]

62. The file contains the following tabs:

- a. **Information** – Information regarding the data verification process for your provider.
- b. **Outstanding queries** – A list of queries that you are expected to review and respond to.
- c. **Cost centre analysis** – A table consisting of comparisons of HESA cost centre data across the OfS Annual Financial Return, HESA Student return and HESA Staff return. This tab is only visible to those providers who have submitted the HESA Student and HESA Staff returns.
- d. **Closed queries** – Once you have responded to queries and the OfS is currently satisfied with the responses, the queries will be closed and will be displayed in this tab.

Issues with downloading the queries file

There is no queries file to download.

63. The queries download file will only be available once you have submitted a valid workbook.

8. Review queries

64. Once you have downloaded the queries file, please review the queries raised in the 'Outstanding queries' tab at the earliest opportunity. There are several types of query:
- a. **Validation warnings** – These queries relate to the yellow validation warnings that were highlighted in your workbook when it was submitted.
 - b. **Variiances** – These queries are in relation to the year on year changes for each table in your workbook. These are shown where the change between years has passed a predetermined threshold set by the OfS.
 - c. **Cost centre** – These queries are in relation to the data shown on the 'Cost centre analysis' tab.
 - d. **Ad-hoc queries** – There may also be additional ad-hoc queries.
65. When you have reviewed the list of queries, if you identify an error in the workbook, **do not respond to the queries**. You will need to submit an amended workbook before responding. If you have not identified any errors in the workbook from the queries raised, you can proceed to respond to the queries. Both scenarios are detailed below.

8a. Errors identified

66. If you identify errors with your workbook when reviewing the queries, you will need to submit an amended workbook. Return to the ['Complete all tables in the workbook'](#) section and follow the process again from that point.
67. **We do not require you to submit responses to your queries at this stage**. Once you have made the amendments to your workbook and have submitted a valid workbook, the queries file will be updated using your latest data. Assuming no further errors are identified, you will then need to respond to the queries raised.

8b. No errors identified

68. There are a series of columns to the right of each query, for recording initial and follow-up responses. You should submit a response to each query in the 'Provider response' column under 'Initial round' in the first instance. Responses to follow-up queries should be placed in the columns to the right of this, labelled 'Second round' and so on.
69. Each response should explain the issue identified in the query, so that the OfS can understand the data returned in your workbook.
70. Once you have completed the responses for all queries raised, you will need to upload the file to the OfS portal. The queries file needs to be given a specific file naming convention for the portal to recognise that it is the queries that need to be processed. This is detailed in the table below.

File to be submitted	Naming convention for upload file
Query responses file	Queries

71. The file may take a few minutes to process. Once processed, you will be presented with one of two outcomes as detailed in the table below.

Outcome	Description
Success	The file has successfully been submitted.
Errors	The file has failed to upload. The submission of the query responses may be currently closed for your provider. Please contact FinanceData@officeforstudents.org.uk if you require assistance in identifying the reason for your query responses not being uploaded.

72. If the outcome was 'Success', then a processed version of the queries file will now be available in the 'Data verification queries' download package. The file will be given the file name as detailed in the table below. This includes your provider's UKPRN, and the date and time it was processed.

File submitted	Processed file name
Query responses file	RESPONSES_DataQueries2020_[UKPRN]_[Date]_[Time]

73. If the outcome was 'Errors', then the file uploaded will be available in 'Unsuccessful files' download package. The file will be given the file name as detailed in the table below. This will be followed by your provider's UKPRN, and the date and time it was processed.

Issue	Processed file name
Submission of the query responses is currently closed	CLOSED_DataQueries2020_[UKPRN]_[Date]_[Time]

74. **You should respond to your queries and submit the responses at your earliest convenience. All queries must be responded to satisfactorily by deadline 2 for your provider, and you should note that there may need to be multiple iterations of this process.**

Common issues with reviewing queries

There are no queries to review in the queries file.

75. You do not need to do anything in relation to the query responses. The OfS will complete a final review of your data and will contact the Finance Strategic contact at your provider when this is complete. The file will be given the file name as detailed in the table below. This includes your provider's UKPRN, and the date and time it was created.

Download	File name
Queries file	NO_ACTIVE_QUERIES_DataQueries2020_[UKPRN]_[Date]_[Time]

I have submitted an amended workbook, but a query is still shown as outstanding.

76. You will still need to respond to the query to acknowledge that you have amended the data, and then submit the query responses.

I submitted a revised workbook after I submitted my query responses.

77. We encourage you to submit your query responses after you have made any revisions and resubmitted the workbook. Please review your queries file again. This will have been updated with any responses you have submitted, but other queries may have been raised. You will then need to submit your responses to the queries again.

9. OfS reviews query responses

78. Once you have submitted a successful query responses file, the OfS will then review your responses at the earliest opportunity.
79. The Finance Strategic contact at your provider will be contacted once the query responses have been reviewed, and you will be supplied with an updated queries file which will include the responses from the OfS.

10. Follow-up queries from the OfS

80. You will receive further queries if the OfS requires further information or has identified a data error for at least one of the queries raised.

Data error identified

81. If the OfS has identified a data error in your workbook, or you have now identified a data error following the follow-up queries, you will then need to follow the same process set out in the 'Errors identified' section. This involves submitting an amended workbook.
82. **We do not require you to submit responses to the follow-up queries at this stage.** Once you have made the amendments to your workbook and have submitted a valid workbook, the queries file will be updated using your latest data. Assuming no further errors are identified, you will then need to respond to the follow-up queries raised by the OfS, and

you may also need to respond to further queries which have been raised following the resubmission of the workbook.

Responding to the follow-up queries

83. If there are no data errors identified, or you have now corrected any data errors and have resubmitted your workbook, you will then need to respond to the follow-up queries.
84. You will need to respond in the next column along, labelled 'Second round'. As the process continues, you will need to submit your responses in the next columns, if the OfS has further queries regarding your data.
85. You should then submit the queries file to the portal, following the same process as set out in the 'No errors identified' section.
86. **You will be required to have responded satisfactorily to all the queries raised by deadline 2 for your provider, including any follow-up queries raised.**

11. All queries resolved

87. Once the OfS is satisfied with all your query responses, all queries will be set to closed and will appear on the 'Closed queries' tab of the queries file. You can access the queries file in the 'Data verification queries' download package. The file will be given the file name as detailed in the table below. This includes your provider's UKPRN, and the date and time it was created.

Download	File name
Queries file	COMPLETE_DataQueries2020_[UKPRN]_[Date]_[Time]

88. By closing a certain query, the OfS will allow the provider to progress the submission of the Annual Financial Return 2020. This does not indicate that the OfS accepts the data is correct, nor preclude returning to question it a later stage (even after the return has been signed off by the provider), including through audit. It is for the provider to ensure that data comply with the published guidance.
89. The Finance Strategic contact at your provider will be informed when the data verification process is complete for the latest workbook you have submitted. Your return information file will also be updated to confirm that the process is complete regarding the data that you have submitted.

12. Workbook finalised

90. You must submit a valid workbook with finalised data for all financial years by deadline 2 for your provider.

91. You may submit a revised workbook at any time until deadline 2 for your provider. Please note that if you submit a revised workbook, then you will need to participate in the data verification process again. This is to ensure that any data changes are verified by the OfS.

13. Submit other required files

92. By deadline 2 for your provider, as well as your workbook being finalised, you must submit all other required files to the OfS portal.

93. You can submit these files as many times as necessary, however we will only use the last uploaded version of each file type.

94. All files need to be given a specific file naming convention for the portal to recognise that it is that type of file that needs to be processed. This is detailed in the table below.

File to be submitted	Naming convention for upload file
Commentary to the Annual Financial Return workbook	Commentary
Signed audited financial statements	Statements
External auditor's management letter	ExternalLetter
Business plan (where applicable)	BusinessPlan
Signed legally binding obligation of financial support (where applicable)	FinancialSupport
Audited financial statements from the legal entity giving the legally binding obligation of financial support (where applicable)	SupportStatements

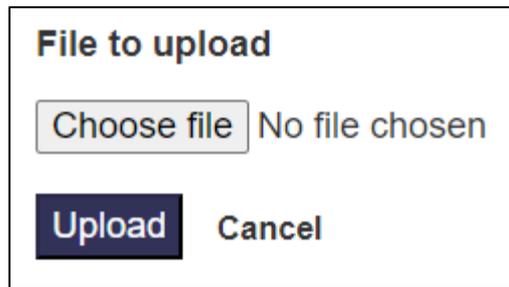
95. You should submit these files by clicking the 'Upload' button under the 'Submit files' heading on the Annual Financial Return 2020 page.

Submit files

Click the 'Upload' button below to submit the files specified [above](#). You must use the specified file naming convention before submitting a file, as specified [above](#).

Upload
Upload the files for Annual financial return 2020 (AFR20)

96. This will take you to another page. Click the 'Choose files' button, select the file you wish to upload (with the correct naming convention), and click 'OK'. Clicking the 'Upload' button on this page will then upload the workbook to the portal.



97. The file may take a few minutes to process. Once processed, you will be presented with one of two outcomes as detailed in the table below.

Outcome	Description
Success	The file has successfully been submitted.
Errors	The file has failed to upload. The submission of the file type may be currently closed for your provider, or the naming convention of the file has not been recognised. Please contact FinanceData@officeforstudents.org.uk if you require assistance in identifying the reason for your file not being uploaded.

98. If the outcome was 'Success', then a processed version of the file will now be available in the 'Latest successfully submitted files' download package. The file will be given the file name as detailed in the table below. This includes your provider's UKPRN, the number of the submission, and the date and time it was processed.

File submitted	Processed file name
Commentary to the Annual Financial Return workbook	Commentary2020_[UKPRN]_[Submission number]_[Date]_[Time]
Signed audited financial statements	FinancialStatements2020_[UKPRN]_[Submission number]_[Date]_[Time]
External auditor's management letter	ExternalAuditorsLetter2020_[UKPRN]_[Submission number]_[Date]_[Time]
Business plan (where applicable)	BusinessPlan2020_[UKPRN]_[Submission number]_[Date]_[Time]

Signed legally binding obligation of financial support (where applicable)	FinancialSupportObligation2020_[UKPRN]_[Submission number]_[Date]_[Time]
Audited financial statements from the legal entity giving the legally binding obligation of financial support (where applicable)	FinancialSupportStatements2020_[UKPRN]_[Submission number]_[Date]_[Time]

99. If the outcome was 'Errors', then the file uploaded will be available in 'Unsuccessful files' download package. The file will be given the file name as detailed in the table below. This will be followed by your provider's UKPRN, and the date and time it was processed.

Issue	Processed file name
Submission of the Commentary to the Annual Financial Return workbook is currently closed	CLOSED_Commentary2020_[UKPRN]_[Date]_[Time]
Submission of the Signed audited financial statements is currently closed	CLOSED_FinancialStatements2020_[UKPRN]_[Date]_[Time]
Submission of the External auditor's management letter is currently closed	CLOSED_ExternalAuditorsLetter2020_[UKPRN]_[Date]_[Time]
Submission of the Business plan is currently closed	CLOSED_BusinessPlan2020_[UKPRN]_[Date]_[Time]
Submission of the Signed legally binding obligation of financial support is currently closed	CLOSED_FinancialSupportObligation2020_[UKPRN]_[Date]_[Time]

Submission of the Audited financial statements from the legal entity giving the legally binding obligation of financial support is currently closed	CLOSED_FinancialSupportStatements2020_[UKPRN]_[Date]_[Time]
The naming convention of the file has not been recognised	INVALID_[Name of file uploaded]_[UKPRN]_[Date]_[Time]

Common issues with submitting other required files

The portal shows that there were errors when I uploaded a file.

100. Your file was not accepted. Check that you have given the file the correct naming convention. If you are still having issues, please contact FinanceData@officeforstudents.org.uk.

The portal is closed for a file type, but I need to submit it.

101. Depending at what stage you are at in the return process, you may not be able to submit a file (for example, if your submission deadline has passed). If you are unable to upload a file, please contact FinanceData@officeforstudents.org.uk.

14. Complete and submit sign off form

102. Once you have submitted a valid workbook, responded to all data verification queries, and have submitted all of the other required files for your provider, you will then be able to arrange the sign off of your return.

103. Your sign off form will automatically be made available to download when you are able to sign off your return. It can be downloaded from the 'Sign off form' download package. The file will be given the file name as detailed in the table below. This includes your provider's UKPRN, and the date and time it was created.

File	File name
Blank sign off form	SignOff2020_Blank_[UKPRN]_[Date]_[Time]

104. You should ensure that the sign off form contains the correct list of files, and dates and times of when they were submitted. These will be the files that are present in the 'Latest successfully submitted files' download package. The sign off form should then be signed by the Accountable Officer at your provider.

105. You must submit your signed sign off form by deadline 3 for your provider.

106. The sign off form needs to be given a specific file naming convention for the portal to recognise that it is the sign off form that needs to be processed. This is detailed in the table below.

File to be submitted	Naming convention for upload file
Sign off form	SignOff

107. You should submit the sign off form by clicking the 'Upload' button under the 'Submit files' heading on the Annual Financial Return 2020 page.

Submit files

Click the 'Upload' button below to submit the files specified [above](#). You must use the specified file naming convention before submitting a file, as specified [above](#).

Upload
Upload the files for Annual financial return 2020 (AFR20)

108. This will take you to another page. Click the 'Choose files' button, select the 'SignOff' file to upload (with the correct naming convention), and click 'OK'. Clicking the 'Upload' button on this page will then upload the workbook to the portal.

109. The file may take a few minutes to process. Once processed, you will be presented with one of two outcomes as detailed in the table below.

Outcome	Description
Success	The sign off form has successfully been submitted.
Errors	The file has failed to upload. The submission of the file type may be currently closed for your provider (possibly as you have outstanding actions), or the naming convention of the file has not been recognised. Please contact FinanceData@officeforstudents.org.uk if you require assistance in identifying the reason for your file not being uploaded.

110. If the outcome was 'Success', then a processed version of the file will be now available in the 'Sign off form' download package. The file will be given the file name as detailed in the table below. This includes your provider's UKPRN, the number of the submission, and the date and time it was processed.

File submitted	Processed file name
Sign off form	SignOff2020_[UKPRN]_[Submission number]_[Date]_[Time]

111. If the outcome was 'Errors', then the file uploaded will be available in 'Unsuccessful files' download package. The file will be given the file name as detailed in the table below. This will be followed by your provider's UKPRN, and the date and time it was processed.

Issue	Processed file name
Submission of the Sign off form is currently closed	CLOSED_SignOff2020_[UKPRN]_[Date]_[Time]

Common issues with completing the sign off form

The sign off form is not available to download.

112. There will be at least one outstanding action for your provider to complete before you can sign off the return. You can identify outstanding actions in the return information file.

The portal shows that there were errors when I uploaded a file.

113. Your file was not accepted. Check that you have given the file the correct naming convention. If you are still having issues, please contact FinanceData@officeforstudents.org.uk.

The portal is closed for the sign off form, but I need to submit it.

114. Depending at what stage you are at in the return process, you may not be able to submit a file (for example, if your submission deadline has passed). If you are unable to upload a file, please contact FinanceData@officeforstudents.org.uk.

The return has been signed off but I need to resubmit a file.

115. If you have signed off your return before deadline 2 for your provider, then you are still able to resubmit any files as required. Please note that the resubmission of any file will result in a new sign off form being generated, and you will need to arrange for this to be signed and submitted before we can accept your return.



© The Office for Students copyright 2020

This publication is available under the Open Government Licence 3.0 except where it indicates that the copyright for images or text is owned elsewhere.

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/