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Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP
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Appointment of the Chair of the Office for Students

I wrote to you on 17 December 2020 to advise you that I would shortly be announcing Lord Wharton of Yarm as my preferred candidate for the role of Chair of the Office for Students. I understand that the Committee has set 2 February 2021 as the date for the pre-appointment scrutiny hearing.

In accordance with the guidance on pre-appointment hearings, I attach a copy of information about the role, a description of the recruitment process and information on the preferred candidate. Separately under cover of the same email, I am also attaching Lord Wharton's CV. Following the sift and interview process by the Independent Advisory Assessment Panel, the Advisory Assessment Panel agreed their scores and found four candidates met the minimum standard for the role. Having carefully considered the panel's views and the strengths of the candidates, I chose Lord Wharton as my preferred candidate.

In my view Lord Wharton emerged as the strongest candidate for the role from a competitive field. Lord Wharton was the Chairman of Hume Brophy UK Communications until November 2020. He served as the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for International Development from July 2016 to June 2017 and served as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Communities and Local Government, with responsibility for Local Growth and the Northern Powerhouse from May 2015 until July 2016. Prior to that he worked as a solicitor. He was awarded a life peerage to the House of Lords in September 2020.

I look forward to receiving the Committee's conclusions and advice on the appointment in due course.

Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State for Education