

When student number controls were reintroduced in England earlier this month, many universities breathed a sigh of relief. The admissions free-for-all that could have seen prestigious institutions scoop up thousands of extra undergraduates at the expense of others would not happen. But do the new rules accompanying the number cap go too far? Today, we hear from those who fear that the Office for Students' proposed new powers to fine those who "threaten the stability of England's higher education sector during the crisis" are "alarmingly broad" and give too much clout to the regulator. One vice-chancellor calls the proposals "the equivalent of taking police state powers" and a "serious assault on university independence". Yesterday, OfS chair Sir Michael Barber told MPs they had nothing to fear from what were rules to ensure "generosity of spirit" within the sector. (F: THE 19.05.20)