# Berkshire entrepreneur behind Oxford Business College scandal faces fallout from £4 million student loan fraud



On a secluded estate in the Berkshire commuter belt—characterised by towering walls and rigid security—a local entrepreneur is constructing what some might term a mini-mansion, reminiscent of cinematic luxury. Spanning approximately ten acres and incorporating several existing properties, the site is bustling with contractors rushing to finish state-of-the-art expansions. This grandeur belongs to Sarwar Khawaja, a businessman entangled in a scandal that has recently uprooted the UK higher education landscape.

Khawaja is the director of numerous companies in sectors ranging from real estate to education. Despite his efforts to cultivate a high-profile persona—evident from sponsored content in reputable publications and social media photos with dignitaries—his public image took a nosedive following revelations about Oxford Business College (OBC), where he held significant influence. Reports have painted a damning portrait of OBC as a hotspot for student-loan fraud, with investigations tracing irregularities that suggest a systemic failure within the institution’s operations.

The origins of this controversy date back to investigative journalism, notably an exposé in the Sunday Times that alleged hundreds of students were dishonestly enrolling at OBC to secure government loans without any intention of completing their degrees. The ensuing government investigation found that as many as 270 students at OBC may have defrauded taxpayers, accumulating claims totalling approximately £4 million. This concerning revelation prompted Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson to declare that all current students at OBC would be banned from securing further loans due to serious doubts over the institution's enrolment practices and attendance monitoring.

This scandal extends beyond OBC to reflect broader issues within the UK’s education system. The systemic exploitation of student loans, particularly among international or immigrant students, has become a growing concern. Reports suggest that since 2022, at least six colleges have incurred around £22 million in fraudulent claims, showcasing a pattern of abuse that has garnered the attention of policymakers. Notably, a government probe has indicated that many students—some with limited English proficiency—were admitted under questionable pretences, raising alarms about the credibility of qualifications being assessed.

Khawaja’s name is now associated with this distressing narrative, and he has seemingly attempted to distance himself from the fallout. In the wake of the scandal, he deleted various accounts and removed references to his role in OBC from the internet, though not without leaving behind a discernible paper trail. Alarmingly, an investigation by Buckinghamshire New University raised red flags over OBC's operations, citing "systemic failures" in their enrolment processes and an alarming lack of monitoring for attendance.

As reports of OBC’s alleged misconduct intensified, it was revealed that staff members had expressed concerns over attendance rates plummeting below 50%. Even a former dean resigned amidst the chaos, alluding to the involvement of unscrupulous recruiting practices for students who were entered into the system despite having no genuine intention to study. Many were reportedly never on campus, yet they continued to receive loans that, under the current rules, could take decades before any repayment became necessary.

In early 2023, the BBC aired its own investigation, revealing the involvement of dubious education agents in facilitating this type of fraud by misleadingly recruiting vulnerable students. This was further compounded by a significant government decision to strip OBC of its student loan funding entirely, thrusting the institution and its leadership into the spotlight.

Despite the ongoing turmoil, Khawaja's connections remain noteworthy. Recently appointed as a "Distinguished Professor of Practice" at Quaid-i-Azam University in Pakistan, he is linked to various philanthropic initiatives aimed at educational advancement. However, his efforts to support educational missions have been overshadowed by the allegations surrounding OBC, compelling questions about the integrity of those at the helm of educational institutions.

While Khawaja's actions and efforts in the realm of education have drawn mixed responses, the case of Oxford Business College serves as a critical reminder of the vulnerabilities within educational funding mechanisms and the necessity for robust oversight in higher education. As ongoing investigations strive to untangle the complex web of practices that have led to systemic fraud, the hope remains that measures will be put in place to ensure that aspiration and genuine educational opportunities sustain their rightful place in society, free from exploitation.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14766413/Educational-philanthropist-student-loan-scandal-government-probe.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14766413/Educational-philanthropist-student-loan-scandal-government-probe.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/franchising-college-loses-access-student-loan-funding)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-41966571), [[4]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09g5l1c), [[2]](https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/franchising-college-loses-access-student-loan-funding)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14766413/Educational-philanthropist-student-loan-scandal-government-probe.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://oxpakprogramme.org/support-the-opp/), [[5]](https://internews.pk/eng/2024/06/06/quaid-i-azam-university-appoints-sarwar-khawaja-as-distinguished-professor-of-practice-in-business-administration/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[2]](https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/franchising-college-loses-access-student-loan-funding), [[3]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-41966571)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14766413/Educational-philanthropist-student-loan-scandal-government-probe.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09g5l1c)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14766413/Educational-philanthropist-student-loan-scandal-government-probe.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/franchising-college-loses-access-student-loan-funding> - Oxford Business College has been stripped of its access to student loan funding after an investigation revealed significant issues with student recruitment and attendance. Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson highlighted concerns over the college's management, particularly regarding the assessment of students' prior qualifications and monitoring of their course attendance. The college intends to challenge the decision through judicial review, asserting that the Department for Education's actions are unlawful. ([timeshighereducation.com](https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/franchising-college-loses-access-student-loan-funding?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-41966571> - The BBC's 'Panorama' programme uncovered widespread fraud within the UK's student loan system. Undercover investigations exposed education agents facilitating bogus students' admission into government-approved private colleges, enabling them to claim loans they were not entitled to. The Public Accounts Committee chairwoman called for a police probe into the matter, emphasizing the need for urgent action to address the exploitation of the education system. ([bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-41966571?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09g5l1c> - 'Panorama' aired an episode titled 'Student Loan Scandal,' investigating how fraudulent education agents recruit bogus students to private colleges, allowing them to claim loans illegitimately. The programme revealed agents supplying fake documents and offering services to fabricate attendance records and coursework, highlighting systemic issues within the student loan system. ([bbc.co.uk](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09g5l1c?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://internews.pk/eng/2024/06/06/quaid-i-azam-university-appoints-sarwar-khawaja-as-distinguished-professor-of-practice-in-business-administration/> - Quaid-i-Azam University in Islamabad appointed Sarwar Khawaja as the Distinguished Professor of Practice in Business Administration. Khawaja, serving as Chairman of Oxford Business College, brings extensive experience in business education and industry partnerships. His role aims to bridge academic theories with real-world business practices, enhancing the university's mission of fostering academic excellence and practical expertise. ([internews.pk](https://internews.pk/eng/2024/06/06/quaid-i-azam-university-appoints-sarwar-khawaja-as-distinguished-professor-of-practice-in-business-administration/?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://oxpakprogramme.org/support-the-opp/> - The Oxford Pakistan Programme (OPP) offers scholarships to Pakistani students, including the Sarwar Khawaja Scholarship, established with his support. This scholarship provides partial funding to cover fee components of OPP Graduate Scholarships, supporting Pakistani students residing in Pakistan or British Pakistani students, thereby promoting educational opportunities and fostering academic excellence. ([oxpakprogramme.org](https://oxpakprogramme.org/support-the-opp/?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1837407> - The University of Oxford and the Balochistan government have agreed to provide STEM scholarships to deserving students from Balochistan under the Benazir Scholarship Programme. The initiative offers full scholarships to talented students, enabling them to pursue higher education at Oxford. Philanthropist Sarwar Khawaja contributed £100,000 to initiate the endowment fund for this programme. ([dawn.com](https://www.dawn.com/news/1837407?utm_source=openai))