



**OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS**

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You asked for the Committee's advice on taking up an appointment with The Blavatnik School of Government.

The Committee's remit

As you will be aware it is the Committee's role to advise on any conditions that should apply to appointments or employment under the Government's Business Appointments Rules for Former Ministers (the Rules), which apply to former Ministers for two years after they leave office.

The Rules seek to counter suspicion that:

- a) the decisions and statements of a serving Minister might be influenced by the hope or expectation of future employment with a particular firm or organisation; or
- b) an employer could make improper use of official information to which a former Minister has had access; or
- c) there may be cause for concern about the appointment in some other particular respect.

When the Committee considers applications it must have in mind that Government has judged that it is in the public interest that former Ministers with experience in Government should be able to move into business or into other areas of public life, and to be able to start a new career or resume a former one. It is equally important that when a former Minister takes up a particular appointment or employment, there should be no cause for any suspicion of impropriety.

Appointment details

You have asked for advice on taking up a position as Fellow of Practice at The Blavatnik School of Government (Blavatnik) at the University of Oxford. You explained this role would involve teaching and research on Government reform. Your appointment is likely to involve half a day per week.

You have been clear that you would not lobby the UK Government. The role is not likely to include contact with your former Department or Government more generally.

You informed the Committee that you had no contact with Blavatnik while in office; were not involved in any relevant policy decisions or in the award of grants to your prospective employer; and have no access to commercially sensitive information about any of its competitors.

The Cabinet Office explained that Blavatnik has a relationship with the UK Government – for example, it is delivering some work pro-bono through the Civil Service Leadership Academy and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has a grant agreement with Blavatnik to run the Government Outcomes Lab (which is jointly funded with equal contributions from both parties).

John Manzoni, the Permanent Secretary at the Cabinet Office has no concerns about this appointment.

#### The Committee's consideration

The Committee's view is that this appointment does not give rise to propriety concerns.

It cannot reasonably be seen as a reward for decisions made while in office as you had no contact with the organisation whilst in post.

The Committee has also considered whether your appointment could provide Blavatnik with an unfair advantage and concluded that the risk is low given the nature of the work involved and the fact that you do not expect to have contact with Government. It also noted that over six months have passed since you left Government.

Taking into account these factors, in accordance with the Government's Business Appointment Rules, the Committee advises this appointment be subject to the following conditions:

- you should not draw on (disclose or use for the benefit of yourself or the persons or organisations to which this advice refers) any privileged information available to you as a Minister; and
- for two years from your last day in Ministerial office, you should not become personally involved in lobbying the UK Government on behalf of The Blavatnik School of Government. Neither should you make use, directly or indirectly, of your contacts in Government to influence policy or secure funding on behalf of the Blavatnik School of Government.

By 'privileged information' we mean official information to which a Minister or Crown servant has had access as a consequence of his or her office or employment and which has not been made publicly available. Applicants are also reminded that they may be subject to other duties of confidentiality, whether under the Official Secrets Act, the Civil Service Code or otherwise.

The Business Appointment Rules explain that the restriction on lobbying means that the former Crown servant/Minister *"should not engage in communication with Government (Ministers, civil servants, including special advisers, and other relevant officials/public office holders) – wherever it takes place - with a view to influencing a Government decision, policy or contract award/grant in relation to their own interests or the interests of the organisation by which they are employed, or to whom they are contracted or with which they hold office."*

I should be grateful if you would inform us as soon as you take up employment with this organisation, or if it is announced that you will do so, either by returning the enclosed form or by emailing the office at the above address. We shall otherwise not be able to deal with any enquiries, since we do not release information about appointments that have not been taken up or announced. This could lead to a false assumption being made about whether you had complied with the Rules and the Ministerial Code.

Please also inform us if you propose to extend or otherwise change the nature of your role as, depending on the circumstances, it may be necessary for you to make a fresh application.

Once the appointment has been publicly announced or taken up, we will publish this letter on the Committee's website and include the main details of the application, together with the Advisory Committee's advice, in the regularly updated consolidated list on our website and in the next annual report.

The Baroness Browning

Rt Hon. Ben Gummer

