



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

G/8 Ground Floor, 1 Horse Guards Road, London SW1A 2HQ

Telephone: 020 7271 0839

Email: [acoba@acoba.gov.uk](mailto:acoba@acoba.gov.uk)

Website: <http://www.gov.uk/acoba>

August 2017

**BUSINESS APPOINTMENT APPLICATION: SIR MARTIN DONNELLY KCB CMG**

The Committee has been asked to consider an application from Sir Martin Donnelly, former Permanent Secretary at the Department for International Trade (DIT), to take up a role as a Visiting Academic at Hertford College, University of Oxford.

Sir Martin was the Permanent Secretary at DIT from July 2016 to March 2017 and previous to this, was Permanent Secretary at Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) from October 2010 to August 2016. His last day in the Civil Service was 7 April 2017.

Appointment details

Sir Martin stated that his role as a Visiting Academic (2017-18) would be unpaid and part-time. He will undertake academic research into issues of trust in Government in a globalised economy; and organise seminars with international participants, comparing formal structures of political neutrality, technical competence and the ethics of public service.

Sir Martin advised that he does not expect to have contact with Government within this role and that he has no commercially sensitive information about the University. He stated that his previous role at BIS involved him in broader contact with the higher education sector. However he confirmed that he had no previous official dealings with Oxford University, specifically.

The application was countersigned by Sue Gray, Director General of Propriety and Ethics at Cabinet Office. She advised that she had no concerns about this appointment and confirmed that Sir Martin had no access to commercially sensitive information that could benefit the University. HR Director at DIT, James Wharton, provided the departmental assessment - DIT has no concerns about this appointment and recommends it be subject to the usual requirements around a waiting period, lobbying restrictions and use of official information.

## The Committee's consideration

Whilst the Committee noted Sir Martin had broad contact with the higher education sector whilst he was Permanent Secretary at BIS, this was now over a year ago and therefore it is likely that Government policy relating to this sector has moved on, not least because of the change in administration following the recent General Election. Further, Sir Martin confirmed that he had no official dealings with the University of Oxford, specifically. The Committee considered there is no evidence to suggest the role could reasonably be perceived as a reward, especially as it is unpaid.

As confirmed by DIT, Sir Martin stated that he has no commercially sensitive information about the University or its competitors and that he does not expect to have contact with Government going forward. As such, the risk that the University could potentially gain an unfair advantage as a result of Sir Martin's role is very low. In addition, Sir Martin stated that his work will not involve any engagement with commercially sensitive issues or business sponsorship, and that he will not play any part in the administration of Hertford College. However, the Committee recognises he has spent a number of years in senior positions within government. Therefore to mitigate against any potential risk that contacts made in Whitehall could provide an unfair advantage to the University, the lobbying ban imposed makes it clear that any use of contacts to advantage the University would be inappropriate.

The Prime Minister accepted the Committee's advice that, in accordance with the Government's Business Appointment Rules, the appointment be subject to the following conditions:

- he should not draw on (disclose or use for the benefit of himself or the persons or organisations to which this advice refers) any privileged information available to him from his time in Crown service; and
- for two years from his last day in service, he should not become personally involved in lobbying the UK Government on behalf of Hertford College, the University of Oxford or its students, or make use, directly or indirectly, of his contacts in Government and/or Crown service to influence policy or secure funding on behalf of Hertford College, the University of Oxford or its students.

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 ensure that we are informed as soon as Sir Martin Donnelly takes up this role, or if it is announced that he will do so (I enclose a form for this purpose). 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 Sir Martin Donnelly complied with the rules.

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

Yours sincerely

---

Sarah Parkington  
Committee Secretariat

