

From the Chair



OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

G/7 Ground Floor, 1 Horse Guards Road SW1A 2HQ

Telephone: 020 7271 0839

Email: acoba@acoba.gov.uk

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

June 2017

You asked for the Committee's advice about accepting a position as an honorary professor of economics in the school of social sciences at the University of Manchester.

The Committee's role and remit

It is the Committee's role to advise on the 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.

It is not the Committee's role to comment on any potential conflicts between one outside appointment and any other(s) a former Minister may take up. Any such conflicts that may arise must be resolved by the employing organisation(s).

In view of the above, the Committee's focus, in considering your application, was specifically on whether your proposed role conflicts in any respect with your previous Ministerial position and obligations in accordance with the Government's Business Appointment Rules.

Honorary professor of economics, University of Manchester

You explained that the position is for a period of three years. You would not be an employee or a member of the University's staff and there are no obligations with the role. The position is unpaid and is not likely to include any contact or dealings with Government.

When considering your application the Committee took into account that you visited different parts of the University on a number of occasions while you were Chancellor. You pledged a £50m fund for graphene research in 2011, £38m of which was used to set up the Graphene Research Institute at the University, a global hub for graphene research, which you officially opened in March 2015.

The Committee also took into account the views of the Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, who had no concerns about you accepting this position.

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

- you should not draw on (disclose or use for the benefit of yourself or the organisation to which this advice refers) any privileged information available to you from your time in ministerial office; and
- for two years from your last day in ministerial office you should not become personally involved in lobbying the Government on behalf of any part of the University of Manchester or any faculty or institute of the University. Neither should you make use, directly or indirectly, of your contacts in Government to influence policy or secure business or funding on their behalf.

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 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 this appointment, 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 Ministerial Code. Similarly, I should be grateful if you would inform us if you propose to extend or otherwise change your role with the organisation as depending on the circumstances, it might be necessary for you to seek fresh advice.

Once this 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 George Osborne