



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>

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You asked for the Committee's advice about a new appointment as a Member of a Steering Group, currently being established by the Royal Society and the British Academy.

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 would become a member of a Steering Group, currently being established by the Royal Society and the British Academy. It will provide evidence on the value of research whilst showcasing the contribution of public investment in science and research to economic prosperity and societal well-being. This role is unpaid and part-time. Each Member of the Steering Group will be required to:

- meet to agree the terms of reference for the project;
- contribute to the design of the final specifications for the research commission;
- suggest and evaluate possible delivery partners for the research;
- review interim findings from the project;
- act as a champion for the project at ad hoc events that will be identified to promote the project findings; and
- provide content that could be used for online communication. (blogs, for example.)

You have also been asked to guide the Steering Group to ensure the research project is well-designed and will have maximum traction with key audiences, including government, policy-makers, funders and researchers.

You confirmed you had no official dealings with the Royal Society. You said you met once with the British Academy about a project it was undertaking on the Future of the Corporation, and with the former Chair of the British Academy, Lord Stern, about general economic matters. You stated you may have contact with Government in your role, through a series of meetings to discuss the project, including (yet to be confirmed) meetings with Her Majesty's Treasury (HMT) and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

The Second Permanent Secretary at HMT, Charles Roxburgh, was contacted about this application. HMT stated its officials met Royal Society and British Academy staff in the past as part of its broader stakeholder engagement programme, but considers that you have no sensitive information as you left office prior to its recent work with the British Academy on Artificial Intelligence, ethics and regulation. The Department noted that these are not commercial organisations and receive most of their funding through grants from BEIS. HMT, therefore, has no concerns about this appointment.

The Committee's consideration

The Committee took into account that this role is unpaid and is within a Steering Group for a project that is currently being established. Although you had some previous contact with the British Academy and its former Chair, this was to take part in board discussions, rather than being in relation to specific decisions. Accordingly the Committee does not consider that this role could reasonably be perceived as a reward for your time in office.

The Committee noted that there is no particular connection between this role and your role at HMT, and that the Department has no concerns about this appointment. These factors lessen any potential risk that the British Academy, the Royal Society or the Steering Group, would gain an unfair advantage as a result of your time in office. However, as Government has had some ongoing contact with the British Academy, and as you will possibly have contact with Government going forward, the Committee considers it appropriate to be clear that any contact with Government should be limited as described in the conditions set out below.

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;

- for two years from your last day in service, you should not become personally involved in lobbying the UK Government on behalf of the British Academy, the Royal Society or the Steering Group. This is not intended to prevent you from reporting to Government on the activities of the Steering Group, however, it would prevent you from making use, directly or indirectly, of your contacts in Government to influence policy or secure funding on behalf of the British Academy, the Royal Society or the Steering Group.

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 the British Academy/Royal Society Steering Group, 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

The Right Honourable Lord O'Neill

