



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
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16 April 2018

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0312-18**

Thank you for your email of 15 March 2018 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

*I would like to make a request for the following data under the Freedom of Information Act.*

*Is there a stated rationale/policy for how a secondee from the private sector is paid, or how a secondee from the ministry into the private sector is paid? For example, most corporate secondees into the Foreign Office seem to be paid by the private sector, yet most secondees into the private sector are paid by the private sector.*

*Second, how does the ministry decide whether this constitutes improper financial support to the ministry and a potential conflict of interest?*

On 20 March 2018, you clarified your request:

*Thank you for your response. In light of your query and to clarify the request, I have amended my entire FOI request to include the following information:*

- 1. How many Foreign Office civil servants and special advisors have been seconded to the private sector/a foreign government in the last 4 years? Please state rank and job title (if permitted); name of company/organisation seconded to; date/duration of secondment; branch/directorate placed in; salary payee.*
- 2. Please state what conflict of rules applied during these secondments.*
- 3. How many private sector/foreign government employees have been seconded into the Foreign Office in the last 4 years? Please state rank and job title (if permitted); name of company/organisation seconded from; date/duration of secondment; branch/directorate/team placed in; salary payee.*
- 4. Please state what conflict of rules applied during these secondments.*

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested.

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request.

**1. How many Foreign Office civil servants and special advisers have been seconded to the private sector/a foreign government in the last 4 years? Please state rank and job title (if permitted); name of company/organisation seconded to; date/duration of secondment; branch/directorate placed in; salary payee.**

In the last 4 years, 15 Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) civil servants have been seconded to organisations in the private sector.

11 civil servants have been seconded directly from the FCO, for secondments of between 3 months and 4 years duration.

The FCO secondment model is for the civil servant to remain on the FCO payroll, but the civil servant's salary costs to be refunded to the FCO by the host organisation.

There has been one exception to this: a reciprocal arrangement under which the civil servant's salary costs have been paid by the FCO, and the salary costs of the private sector employee seconded into the FCO in return paid by the employee's own organisation.

Fewer than 5 civil servants have been seconded to organisations in the private sector through the Civil Service High Potential Secondment Programme (HPSP), for secondments of between 7 months and 2 years 7 months duration. It is our practice to use "fewer than five" where there are a small number of cases and providing this information could enable individual identities to be revealed. In such circumstances sections 40(2) and (3) of the Freedom of Information Act apply. In this case, our view is that disclosure would breach the first data protection principle. This states that personal data should be processed fairly and lawfully. It is the fairness aspect of this principle, which, in our view, would be breached by disclosure. In such circumstances, s.40 confers an absolute exemption on disclosure. There is, therefore, no public interest test to apply.

Under the HPSP the Civil Service department (in this case, the FCO) seconding the member of staff continues to pay salary, but the Civil Service (not necessarily the FCO) receives an inward secondment from, and funded by, the private sector in return. More information about the [HPSP is available online](#).

In the last 4 years no FCO special advisers have been seconded to organisations in the private sector.

According to available records, in the last 4 years 11 FCO civil servants have been seconded to foreign governments, for secondments of between 3 months and 1 year duration.

These secondments fall into two broad categories: as a precursor to an overseas tour of duty, to enable an individual civil servant to gain valuable experience of a country before his/her tour there begins; or as part of a reciprocal arrangement between the FCO and the foreign ministry of the overseas government, to offer work experience opportunities to staff developing their diplomatic training.

All these secondments of FCO civil servants were funded by the FCO.

In the last 4 years no FCO special advisers have been seconded to a foreign government.

The information you have requested about the civil servant's job title and grade, the name of company/organisation/foreign government seconded to, and the branch/directorate placed in, has been withheld because the small total number of secondments could potentially allow individuals to be identified. As above, sections 40(2) and (3) of the Freedom of Information Act apply.

**2. Please state what conflict of rules applied during these secondments.**

The Business Appointment Rules for Civil Servants are applied to secondments to organisations in the private sector. A private sector organisation may ask a civil servant to sign a confidentiality agreement in addition.

For all secondments, FCO civil servants continue to be bound by the provisions of the Civil Service Code, the Diplomatic Service Regulations and the Official Secrets Acts.

**3. How many private sector/foreign government employees have been seconded into the Foreign Office in the last 4 years? Please state rank and job title (if permitted); name of company/organisation seconded from; date/duration of secondment; branch/directorate/team placed in; salary payee.**

In the last 4 years, fewer than 5 private sector employees have been seconded into the FCO.

Fewer than 5 private sector employees have been seconded directly from an organisation in the private sector to the FCO, for a secondment of 6 months duration.

The employee's salary costs have been paid by the secondee's own organisation, under the reciprocal arrangement noted above.

Fewer than 5 private sector employees have been seconded to the FCO through the High Potential Secondment Programme (HPSP), for a secondment of 7 months duration.

According to available records, in the last 4 years there have been 9 secondments from foreign governments into the FCO, of between 3 months and 3 years duration.

As above, these arrangements are usually the precursor to a posting to the UK, or part of a reciprocal arrangement on staff development. Each of the inward secondments was funded by the foreign government whose employee was on secondment.

The information you have requested about the employee's job title and grade, the name of company/organisation/foreign government seconded from, and the branch/directorate placed in has been withheld because the small total number of secondments could allow individuals to be identified. As above, sections 40(2) and (3) of the Freedom of Information Act apply.

**4. Please state what conflict of rules applied during these secondments.**

Seconded into the FCO are bound by the provisions of the Civil Service Code, the Official Secrets Acts, and all FCO rules, policies and procedures relating to conduct and standards, including confidentiality and security.

Yours sincerely,

Human Resources Directorate



We keep and use information in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. We may release this personal information to other UK government departments and public authorities.