



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

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**BUSINESS APPOINTMENT APPLICATION: Jonathan Slater, Queen Mary University of London**

1. The Committee has been asked to consider an application for Jonathan Slater, former Permanent Secretary for the Department for Education between May 2016 - August 2020. His last day in service was 1 September 2020.

Application details

2. Mr Slater sought advice on taking up two roles with Queen Mary University of London (QMUL):

- a. an unpaid, part-time role as Visiting Professor for QMUL. He stated this role will involve occasionally lecturing and participating in roundtables.
- b. a paid, part-time role as Lecturer for QMUL. He stated that his role will be teaching students for example the masters in public policy and/or programmes of executive education. He stated that whilst lecturing on policy, he may teach Civil servants who attend the university, though does not expect any interaction with the Government or the participants outside of this and both roles will not involve lobbying.

3. Mr Slater stated that as Permanent Secretary for the Department for Education (DfE), he had official contact with Russell Group Universities, but confirmed he did not meet with QMUL. He confirmed that he had no direct involvement in any commercial dealings regarding the university. He also confirmed he did not have access to commercially sensitive information on competitors of the organisation while in post. However, he noted that as Permanent Secretary at DfE he was involved in the development of departmental policy on higher education, and in the development of the regulation of higher education. However, he said none of it featured QMUL in particular, as it was generic policy development for the whole sector.

4. DfE and the Cabinet Office provided their views on this application. The details Mr Slater provided in his application were confirmed and it further stated due to his seniority, he would have had access to a wide range of departmental policy and regulatory information on higher education that may give the organisation an unfair advantage. But it confirmed as Mr Slater is seeking to join QMUL to lecture, rather than to provide advice on running the organisation '*there is little chance that QMUL would gain an unfair advantage from his working for them*'. Neither Departments had any concerns with this appointment and it was recommended that he be prevented from using privileged information gained in post and from lobbying the Government.

#### The Committee's Consideration

5. There is a clear link between Mr Slater's role as the Permanent Secretary of DfE and his joining a higher education institute. The Committee<sup>1</sup> noted that Mr Slater did not meet with QMUL and both Departments confirmed he did not make any decisions specific to QMUL alone rather developed policy and regulation affecting the sector. Therefore, despite the overlap in the sector he has responsibility for, the Committee considered the risk he could be seen to have been offered these academic roles as a reward for decisions made, or actions taken in office was low.

6. The Committee noted, there are inherent risks that Mr Slater will undoubtedly have general access to policy and information that could be perceived to benefit any organisation within the education sector. However, the Committee noted that these roles are academic lecturing positions. Nevertheless, the Committee would draw Mr Slater's attention to the restriction on using privileged information, subject to all former Crown servants on leaving post.

7. Additionally, there is a risk Mr Slater may offer an unfair advantage to the organisation in relation to access to the contacts he gained while in service. The lobbying restriction imposed below makes clear that it would be inappropriate for him to use his contacts to the unfair advantage of the organisation. Further, he is prevented from providing advice on bids and contracts with the UK Government, mitigating the risk of impropriety in relation to any future funding from DfE and its Arms' Length Bodies. However, the Committee noted this was in keeping with his role as described.

8. The Prime Minister, under the Government's Business Appointment Rules, has accepted the Committee's advice that this appointment with **Queen Mary University of London** should be subject to the following conditions:

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<sup>1</sup> This application for advice was considered by Jonathan Baume; Andrew Cumpsty; Isabel Doverty; Sarah de Gay; Dr Susan Liautaud; The Rt Hon Lord Pickles; Richard Thomas; Mike Weir; and Lord Larry Whitty.

- 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;
- for two years from his last day in Crown service, he should not become personally involved in lobbying the UK Government or its Arms' Length Bodies on behalf of Queen Mary University of London and all its constituent parts (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients); nor should he make use, directly or indirectly, of his contacts in the Government and/or Crown service to influence policy, secure business/funding or otherwise unfairly advantage of Queen Mary University of London and all its constituent parts (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients); and
- for two years from his last day in Crown service he should not undertake any work with Queen Mary University of London and all its constituent parts (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients) that involves providing advice on the terms of, or with regard to the subject matter of a bid with, or contract relating directly to the work of, the UK Government or its Arms' Length Bodies.

9. 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.

10. 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."*

11. I should be grateful if you would inform us as soon as Jonathan Slater takes up this appointment, or if it is announced that he 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 he has complied with the Rules.

12. Please also inform us if Jonathan Slater proposes to extend or otherwise change the nature of appointment as, depending on the circumstances, it may be necessary for her to make a fresh application.

13. Once the appointment has been publicly announced or taken up, we will publish this letter on the Committee's website, and where appropriate, refer to it in the relevant annual report.

Yours Sincerely,

Isabella Wynn  
**Committee Secretariat**