



OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

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1. You approached the Committee seeking advice on taking up an appointment with Applyboard.

The Committee's role and remit

2. As you will be aware, 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:
 - 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
 - an employer could make improper use of official information to which a former Minister has had access; or
 - there may be cause for concern about the appointment in some other particular respect.
3. 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.
4. It is not the Committee's role to pass judgement on whether an appointment is appropriate or suitable in any other regard.

The application

5. You seek to join Applyboard as Chair, a paid part-time role involving 3-4 days of work a month.
6. Applyboard is a North American company headquartered in Canada. The website states it matches students with programs and schools. By using artificial intelligence powered technology, the platform matches students to via backgrounds, areas of interest and financial means. It also works with schools who want to attract international students and with recruiters.

7. You stated that as Chair, your role will be to lead the work of the advisory board: assisting the management with strategic development; and attending meetings of the advisory board (either via teleconference or in person) in Canada. You told the Committee the role is unlikely to include dealings with the UK Government.
8. You informed the Committee you neither met, nor made any commercial or contractual decisions with or on Applyboard while in office. Nor did you have any involvement in policy development or decisions.
9. The Department for Education and The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy were contacted regarding your application. Both confirmed the details you gave in your application and also confirmed:
 - you did not have official dealings with Applyboard;
 - you are unaware of any contractual or non-contractual dealings between the Government and Applyboard;
 - you had no official dealings with competitors of Applyboard;
 - you were not involved in the development of policy decisions, or involved in grants or regulatory work that could have affected their competitors; and
 - you had no access to commercially sensitive information on competitors.
10. Neither department had any concerns about you taking up this role.

The Committee's consideration

11. The Committee¹ took into account that you and the departments confirmed you did not meet with, nor make any policy decisions or developments or contractual or commercial decisions regarding Applyboard while in office. The Committee considered the risk you were offered the role for decisions made in office is low.
12. When considering your application, the Committee noted you had no involvement in decisions regarding Applyboard. Though, considered as Minister responsible for universities, research, innovation and science there is an inherent risk you would have developed contacts which may provide an unfair advantage to a tech company operating in the education sector. The Committee considers that the conditions below sufficiently mitigate the risks in this case.
13. Taking into account the specific facts in this case, in accordance with the Government's Business Appointment Rules, the Committee advises this appointment with Applyboard 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 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 UK Government on behalf of Applyboard (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients); nor should you make use, directly or indirectly, of your contacts in the Government and/or Crown

¹ This application for advice was considered by Sir Alex Allan; Jonathan Baume; Baroness Angela Browning; Terence Jagger; Dr Susan Liautaud; Richard Thomas; Mike Weir; Lord Larry Whitty and John Wood.

service to influence policy, secure business/funding or otherwise unfairly advantage Applyboard (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients).

14. 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.
15. 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."*
16. 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.
17. Once this appointment has been publicly announced or taken up, we will publish this letter on the Committee's website and in the relevant next annual report.

The Baroness Browning

Rt Hon Jo Johnson