



Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State

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Robert Halfon MP
Chair of the Education Committee
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 August 2020



Appointment of the Chair of the Office for Students

Thank you for your letter of 7 August 2020 and your recommendations in relation to the appointment of the next Chair of the Office for Students.

As you know, I am fully committed to a greater joining up of higher and further education to deliver the high-skilled, high-paid jobs that the country needs, as well as to degree apprenticeships and ensuring students are equipped to succeed at work. These will be important priorities for the next Chair to drive forward.

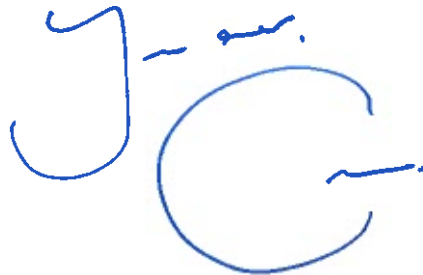
However, our approach to the person specification for the Chair role has been to focus it on the ability and skills that someone would bring to the role, rather than requiring specific higher education experience which would significantly limit the number of suitable candidates.

To recognise the importance of these priorities, however, I will ask my advisory panel to incorporate, where possible, questions about how candidates would approach these issues if they were to be offered the role (together with the ones your clerk raised separately in an email on Prevent and racism). Since time at interview is limited, it may not be possible to examine all of these areas in detail, although of course there will be a further opportunity for the Committee to do so at any pre-appointment scrutiny hearing.

In relation to your recommendation on advertising, we are content to advertise in the national press as you suggest. I will also write separately once recruitment has started about how we are encouraging applicants from BAME backgrounds.

I understand from a separate email sent by the Committee's clerk that, at the shortlist stage, the Committee would like to see information on any companies or organisations that short-listed candidates have shares or interests in or any other interests declared. I have asked that this information is collected for each applicant, to be shared confidentially with the Committee at shortlist stage.

I will write separately to you on the appointment of the new Chair of the Social Mobility Commission as you have requested and confirm that we will share the job specification and criteria in advance of that job being advertised.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'G' followed by a 'W' and a 'C', with a horizontal line extending from the end of the 'C'.

Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State for Education