

Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Minister for the Cabinet Office
The Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2AS

22 April 2016

Dear Minister,

RE: Exemption for universities and research institutes from new ‘anti-lobbying’ clause

Further to my letter to you of 11 April, I am writing to congratulate the Cabinet Office for announcing on 19 April that it is the Government’s intention that grants awarded by the research councils and Higher Education Funding Council for England will not include from 1 May 2016 the new so-called ‘anti-lobbying clause’ outlawing the use of funds to influence or attempt to influence policy.

It is clear that it was not the original intention of the Government to apply the clause to grants for academic research, and you obviously listened to the very strong case made by the Minister for Universities and Science and others about the potential damage that could be inflicted. Your action this week is supported widely, including by more than 32,000 people who have signed an official petition that I created to call for the exemption (<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/122957>).

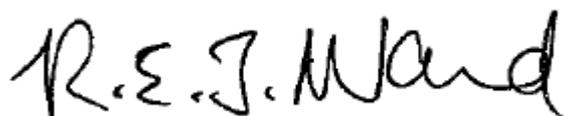
However, I now encourage you to complete your wise initiative by extending the exemption to cover all Government grants to universities and research institutes, and not just those awarded by the research councils and the Higher Education Funding Council for England. There are a number of important and valuable schemes operated by the Department of Health, the Department of Energy and Climate Change, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Department for International Development, and other Departments, which provide grants to academic researchers. Often these schemes are intended to directly support evidence-based policy-making in the UK and abroad. The application of the new ‘anti-lobbying’ clause to these schemes would reduce their cost-effectiveness because researchers would no longer be able to use their grants to engage with Ministers, civil servants or other policy-makers for fear of exerting an influence.

As you know, there is no evidence that the past use by researchers of Government grants to support activities to influence policy-makers has resulted in a waste of public funds. Indeed, successive UK Governments have recognised a clear need to encourage researchers, including through the terms and conditions of grants, to engage more with policy-makers about their work so that the full economic and social return can be gained from the investment of public funds.

Hence, extending the exemption to cover all Government grants awarded to universities and research institutes would fulfil the Cabinet Office's stated goal for introducing the 'anti-lobbying' clause, namely to ensure that taxpayers' money is used for maximum benefit.

I am copying this letter to Jo Johnson.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R.E.J. Ward". The letters are cursive and connected, with a distinct flourish at the end of the word "Ward".

Bob Ward

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