



Skills Commission Code of Governance

1. Overview

- 1.1. The Skills Commission Code of Governance is an agreement between Policy Connect, Commissioners and Associate Commissioners of the Group on the rules under which the Skills Commission operates and is administered. A copy is made publicly available on the website. The intention of the Code is to ensure full transparency.
- 1.2. The Skills Commission does not endorse, support or campaign on behalf of one organisation. Rather, it campaigns for evidence based policy development in Education and Skills. The Commission operates according to a strict Code of Governance, and its work is driven by its Commissioners and Policy Connect.
- 1.3. The Skills Commission is committed to ensuring its activities and funding are entirely transparent. The Skills Commission is funded through a combination of core funding from Edge Foundation, Jisc, Skills and Education Group and FETL, and associate sponsorship of particular research inquiries.
- 1.4. Policy Connect provides all research and secretariat services for the Skills Commission. Policy Connect is a Membership-based cross-Party think-tank with an extensive network of parliamentary groups, research commissions, forums and campaigns working to inform and improve UK public policy. Policy Connect is committed to upholding the principle of transparency in UK parliamentary and public affairs and welcomes any questions you may have on its work and activities. Further details on this are provided below.

2. Composition

2.1. *Commission Co-Chairs*

- 2.1.1. The Commission has two Co-Chairs, one of which must be a Member of Parliament.

2.2. *Parliamentary Commissioners*

- 2.2.1. The Skills Commission is open to Commissioners of all parties and both Houses.
- 2.2.2. The agenda of the Skills Commission is set by Policy Connect in consultation with the Co-Chairs. Expert, Associate Commissioners and the Advisory Panel will be able to provide advice to the Secretariat and Commissioners but will have no executive decision-making powers over the content of the programme.

2.3. *Expert Commissioners*

- 2.3.1. The expert Membership is open to non-parliamentary organisations and individuals.
- 2.3.2. The expert Membership offers the group a useful insight into present developments and the views of the relevant sectors.
- 2.3.3. Expert Commissioners are registered to receive all official group correspondence.
- 2.3.4. At meetings, expert Commissioners are asked to participate actively in discussions, whilst recognising that the Skills Commission is intended as a means of disseminating impartial information.

- 2.3.5. Expert Commissioners may not be required for the Advisory Panel of each inquiry, and this is subject to the discretion of the Co-Chairs and the Secretariat.
- 2.3.6. Expert Commissioners are still invited to join and participate in Commission activities, such as evidence sessions, and may offer advice to the Secretariat even if they are not on the Advisory Panel.

2.4. *Associate Commissioners*

- 2.4.1. The associate Membership is open to individuals from non-parliamentary organisations who can provide core and associate sponsorship of the Skills Commission's activities.
- 2.4.2. Associate Commissioners are invited to sponsor additional resources, research or meetings that fall outside the standard programme. No editorial influence is conferred by such sponsorship.

2.5. *Advisory Panel*

- 2.5.1. An Advisory Panel may be formed which is distinct to the broader body of Commissioners and utilised for particular inquiries. The Advisory Panel may include standing Parliamentary or Expert Commissioners, as well as new Commissioners invited for the purposes of the inquiry.
- 2.5.2. The Advisory Panel is intended to provide closer direction, support and expertise to an inquiry than would be expected of Expert Commissioners. This includes performing an active role in the inquiry process, attending evidence sessions, questioning witnesses, providing support and guidance to the secretariat, and actively promoting the inquiry's aims.

2.6. *Terms of service*

- 2.6.1. Commission Commissioners are invited by the Co-Chairs, sometimes on the advice of existing Commissioners. Final decisions on appointments to the Commission are taken by consensus between the Co-Chairs and Policy Connect.
- 2.6.2. Commission Commissioners are invited by the Co-Chairs, sometimes on the advice of existing Commissioners. Final decisions on appointments to the Commission are taken by consensus between the Co-Chairs and Policy Connect.
- 2.6.3. Commissioners are invited to join the Commission on the basis of their own skills and expertise, rather than affiliation with any particular organisation. As such Commissioners are not expected to send proxies when unable to attend meetings.
- 2.6.4. Commissioners will be asked to join steering groups for projects.
- 2.6.5. Commission Commissioners are expected to attend as many Commission meetings as possible. If they cannot attend, Commissioners are able to submit thoughts or comments to Policy Connect to share with the Commission at the meeting via email.
- 2.6.6. Commission Commissioners are invited to join the Commission for an initial term of one year, or the duration of a project.
- 2.6.7. At the end of the period, Membership will be reviewed through discussion with the Co-Chair, Policy Connect and possibly the Member in question, and if appropriate, renewed for another term. There is no maximum number of terms.
- 2.6.8. If a Commission Member fails to attend three consecutive meetings without contacting Policy Connect, they may be asked to leave the Commission.
- 2.6.9. Commissioners are entitled to take a leave of absence subject to agreement with the Co-Chairs and Policy Connect.
- 2.6.10. If a Commission Member is deemed by the Co-Chairs to have brought the Commission into disrepute, their Membership of the Commission will cease with immediate effect.

3. **Activities of the Skills Commission**

3.1. *Secretariat*

- 3.1.1. The Skills Commission is administered by a full time secretariat, responsible for executing the programme and activities of the group agreed by the Co-Chairs.
- 3.1.2. The research and secretariat services are provided by Policy Connect.
- 3.1.3. Policy Connect is a membership-based, not-for-profit cross-party think-tank working to inform, influence and improve UK public policy development and delivery. It leads and manages an extensive network of parliamentary groups, research commissions, forums and campaigns working to bring together the public and private sectors with parliamentarians and leading experts on important issues. Policy Connect provides support services to a number of parliamentary groups and initiatives.
- 3.1.4. Secretarial and other administrative services include provision of: management staff; project and event management; shared costs of telephone, IT, web and email hosting; financial services; and shared office space.
- 3.1.5. Policy Connect sets the group's agenda and programme in consultation with the Commissioners.

3.2. *Inquiries*

- 3.2.1. The Skills Commission carries out policy inquiries with the aim of providing unbiased recommendations to improve skills policy, based on the evidence heard by the Commission and collected by the secretariat.
- 3.2.2. Inquiry topics can be recommended by the Commission, and final topics are chosen by Policy Connect in consultation with the Co-Chairs.
- 3.2.3. The Commission Co-Chairs and Policy Connect will appoint Inquiry Co-Chairs for each piece of work. Ideally one of these will be a Member of the House of Commons or the House of Lords. The Commission Co-Chairs may act as Inquiry Co-chair.
- 3.2.4. The Commission Chair and Policy Connect will appoint Inquiry Co-Chairs, and/or an Advisory Panel for each piece of work. Ideally one of these Co-Chairs will be a Member of the House of Commons or the House of Lords. The Commission Chair may act as Inquiry Co-chair.
- 3.2.5. An Advisory Panel may be formed which is distinct to the broader body of Commissioners and utilised for a particular inquiry. The Advisory Panel may include standing Parliamentary or Expert Members, as well as new Members invited for the purposes of the inquiry
- 3.2.6. Commissioners, when part of the Advisory Panel, are expected to perform an active role in the inquiry process, attend evidence sessions, question witnesses, provide support and guidance to the secretariat, and actively promote the inquiry's aims.

4. **Finances**

- 4.1. Each inquiry is funded by sponsorship. The Commission empowers Policy Connect to source this sponsorship. Sponsorship for events and inquiries will be sought from expert Commissioners, other businesses and other stakeholders.
Final editorial control resides with Policy Connect subject to agreement with inquiry Co-Chairs and Chair of the Commission. No sponsorship affords editorial control over the Commission's output.
- 4.2. The finances are administered as follows:
 - i. Core and associate sponsorship for the Skills Commission is managed by Policy Connect. Policy Connect prepares annual accounts which are externally audited and published at Companies House. The work of Policy Connect is overseen by a separate scrutiny committee to ensure governance of the use of funds. Please find more information on Policy Connect's financial governance arrangements here: <http://www.policyconnect.org.uk/policy-connect-financial-governance>
 - ii. The group shares administrative and accommodation costs with other Policy Connect groups.
- 4.3. The above arrangements act as a safeguard to the financial liabilities of the Parliamentary Commissioners

- 4.4. No sponsorship or core funding affords editorial control over the Commission's output. Editorial control resides with the inquiry Co-Chairs, and ultimately Policy Connect.

5. Other organisations

- 5.1. Where possible and appropriate, other relevant organisations are invited to participate in meetings and resources.
- 5.2. Internal to Westminster, meetings and resources are open to other parliamentary bodies such as Committee and Parliamentary Office staff, the House of Commons and Lords Libraries, and Member's own research staff.
- 5.3. External to Westminster, representatives from charity and voluntary sector agencies and other relevant organisations are invited to attend meetings at which their contribution is of relevance to the subject area.
- 5.4. Attendance at meetings must be by invitation of and response to the secretariat at Policy Connect.

6. Endorsement

- 6.1. This Code of Governance is endorsed by the Commissioners of the Commission and the secretariat, representing an agreement on how the Commission operates and is administered.
- 6.2. A copy is available on the Commission's website: <http://www.policyconnect.org.uk/sc>