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Civil Service Commission

Cabinet Office

26 October 2026

Paid appointment with the University of Chicago: Application under the Business Appointment Rules from Mr Morgan McSweeney, former Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister and Political Strategy Adviser at the Cabinet Office.

The Civil Service Commission (the Commission) has considered an application for advice under the Business Appointment Rules (the Rules) from **Mr Morgan McSweeney**, formerly Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister and Political Strategy Adviser at the Cabinet Office. The application is for a paid, part-time role as a **Pritzker Fellow and J-1 Short-Term Scholar** at the **University of Chicago**. Further detail on the content of the application is in the Annex. The Commission's advice is required as Mr McSweeney is a former special adviser at Special Adviser Pay Band 4. His last day of service was 8 February 2026.

The purpose of the Rules is to protect the integrity of the government. They aim to avoid any reasonable concerns that: a civil servant may be influenced in their official duties by the risk of reward; a civil servant may improperly exploit access to information; and an organisation may gain an improper influence through the employment of a civil servant.

The Rules state that advice must be sought before an appointment is accepted or announced. By taking up this role without prior advice, Mr McSweeney has acted in breach of these Rules. These conditions apply with immediate effect from the date of this letter.

The Commission's advice[1] is that the appointment should be made subject to the following conditions:

1. Privileged information – Mr McSweeney 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 the Civil Service.
2. Lobbying – For two years from his last day in the Civil Service, until 8 February 2028, Mr McSweeney should not become personally involved in lobbying the UK government or its arm's length bodies on behalf of the

[1] See Advice under the Business Appointment Rules for details applying to all advice issued by the Civil Service Commission.

University of Chicago (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients). He should also not use, directly or indirectly, his contacts in the government and/or Civil Service to influence policy, secure business/funding or otherwise unfairly advantage the University of Chicago (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients).

3. Bids and contracts – For two years from his last day in the Civil Service, until 8 February 2028, Mr McSweeney should not provide advice to the University of Chicago on a bid or contract relating to the UK government or its arm's length bodies.

The Rules set out that special advisers must abide by the Commission's advice. It is Mr McSweeney's personal responsibility to manage the propriety of any appointment and to understand any other rules and regulations he may be subject to in parallel with the Commission's advice.

Mr McSweeney must seek advice if he proposes to extend or otherwise change his role with the organisation. As this appointment has already been taken up, this advice letter will now be published on the Civil Service Commission's website.

Yours sincerely,



Kate Owen
Chief Executive

Annex A: The application

1. The University of Chicago is a private research university in the United States of America.

Applicant assessment

2. As a Pritzker Fellow and J-1 Short-Term Scholar, Mr McSweeney stated he teaches a weekly seminar on politics, government, elections and democratic institutions. He also holds student office hours, mentors students, conducts related research, and participates in discussions and events at the university's Institute of Politics.

3. Mr McSweeney confirmed his role does not involve contact with, or lobbying of, government. He stated that his advice draws on his general experience, judgement and public information. He does not use or disclose privileged information obtained in government.

4. As Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister, Mr McSweeney advised the Prime Minister on political strategy and priorities and coordinated political advice and the work of the Prime Minister's Office. Prior to this, he served as a political strategy adviser in the Prime Minister's Office between July and October 2024.

5. Mr McSweeney stated he was not responsible for regulatory, funding or any other decisions affecting the University of Chicago at any time in Crown Service.

The Commission's analysis

6. *Retrospective application.* The Commission notes that Mr McSweeney took up this appointment before receiving final advice. He is therefore in breach of the Rules. This appointment was announced by the University of Chicago and reported in the media in August 2026. Mr McSweeney has stated he was not initially aware of his obligations under the Rules and, upon realising, contacted the Cabinet Office. He retrospectively submitted his application on 24 September 2026 and took up the role on 28 September before receiving final advice. Mr McSweeney has stated he is committed to complying with the Rules going forward.

7. *Application level.* As a Level 1 application for an academic role, the Commission's analysis applies the principle that this category of appointment poses a lower risk to government integrity.

8. *Risk of reward.* Mr McSweeney had no official dealings with the University of Chicago and was not involved in policy, regulatory, or contractual decisions affecting the organisation during his time in post. The risk of the appointment being a reward for decisions made in office is therefore low.

9. *Access to information.* As Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister, Mr McSweeney would have been exposed to privileged information about the government's legislative and policy programme. The Commission notes that Mr McSweeney confirmed he does not draw on privileged information from his time in government in his work with the University of Chicago. The standard privileged information ban mitigates any risks around his access.

10. *Improper influence.* As Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister, Mr McSweeney will have a network of contacts in government that could provide an unfair advantage to the University of Chicago. He has stated there is no contact with government in this role. Any remaining risk of perception of lobbying the government is mitigated by the standard conditions.