

What will lobbying by academics mean? Questions to The ..

Published: January 13, 2026, 4:24 am

Ivan Horrocks of the Open University [first drew my attention](#) to the government's plans to restrict 'lobbying' by UK academics in receipt of UK government research funding. Now Ivan has taken the next logical step and asked the Cabinet Office what that might mean. This is his letter to them:

Dear Sir/Madam

I am contacting you regarding the Cabinet Office proposal to insert a clause into contracts for publicly (ie. government) funded research that would restrict the ability of the recipient(s) of that funding from "lobbying".

As you may aware, discussion of this issue is now going viral following a report in The Guardian on Sunday and a follow up blog on the matter that is now trending heavily on Facebook. As an academic with a direct interest in this proposal I am urgently trying to get clarification on a number of points relating to this proposal. I have searched the Cabinet Office web site for more details, but to no avail, hence the need to contact you by email.

My questions are as follows. I have kept them brief as precise answers are essential and a prompt response would also be appreciated so that I can inform colleagues and contacts of the exact nature and breadth of the proposal.

1. To what research contracts will the clause apply (eg. government departments and agencies; research councils; local government; research directly funded with "public" money by universities; etc)?

2. What is the definition of "lobbying" that will be applied?

3. To whom does the clause apply (eg. to the principal/lead investigator, or to all those involved in conducting research covered by a contract)?

4. What will be the penalty should the clause be breached, and to whom will it apply and for how long?

Many thanks in anticipation of your help.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Ivan Horrocks

*Programme Director: Technology Management
Department of Engineering and Innovation
The Open University
Milton Keynes
UK*

When there are answers to these questions the next obvious one is what the consequences of this is on impact as defined for the academic Ref process might be. But we'll get to that in due course, although it would seem at present as if the two will

be in almost direct conflict one with another.

You will be kept posted.