



House of Commons

**GUIDE TO THE RULES ON  
ALL-PARTY GROUPS**

April 2010

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **What are All-Party Groups?**

- 1) All-Party Groups (APGs) are informal, cross-party, interest groups that have no official status within Parliament and are not accorded any powers or funding by it. They should not be confused with select committees, which are formal institutions of the House.
- 2) There is a great number of APGs. They cover many and diverse fields such as health, education, transport, defence, finance, the media, and sports. Some exist to foster links with other countries and parliaments, others to address a particular issue, and a couple exist mainly for social reasons (eg some sports groups). Some APGs have existed for many decades whereas others come and go in response to issues of the day.
- 3) APGs are essentially run by and for Members of the House of Commons and House of Lords. Mostly they are run by backbenchers though ministers may also be officers or members of APGs and many groups choose to involve individuals and organisations from outside Parliament in their administration and activities.

### **Who to contact for advice about the rules on APGs**

- 4) Information about APGs (including this Guide, the Register of All-Party Groups and the Application Forms for Cross-Party Groups) can be found at [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk) by looking under 'All-Party Groups' in the A-Z Index on the home page there.
- 5) This Guide is principally to inform the officers and staff of registered APGs about how to comply with the rules governing APGs. Since no written guidance can provide for all circumstances, when in doubt please contact:

The Assistant Registrar  
Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards  
House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA

Tel: 020 7219 0401

Fax: 020 7219 0490

Website: [www.parliament.uk/pcs](http://www.parliament.uk/pcs)

Email: [standardscommissioner@parliament.uk](mailto:standardscommissioner@parliament.uk)

## **PART 1: THE REGISTER OF ALL-PARTY GROUPS AND THE APPROVED LIST**

**Overview:** Part 1 explains the difference between the Register of All-Party Groups and the Approved List and how to apply for inclusion on each.

### **Register of All-Party Groups**

#### Origin and purpose of the Register

- 6) The Register of All-Party Groups was set up by a Resolution made by the House of Commons on 17 December 1985, primarily to show which APGs are recognised by Parliament, who their officers are, and information about the source and extent of financial and material assistance received by groups from outside Parliament.

#### Applying for inclusion on the Register

- 7) The Commons officers of any group that is open to Members of more than one political party (and that has at least *one* officer who is a Member of the Commons) is required to register the group by completing Part 1 of the Application Forms for Cross-Party Groups, available at [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk) (look under 'All-Party Groups' in the A-Z Index on the home page) or from the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards.
- 8) Cross-party groups that do not meet both of the criteria listed above do not qualify for registration and are therefore not included in the Register of All-Party Groups. The Chair of such groups should, however, include in his or her entry on the *Register of Members' Financial Interests* details of any financial or material support received in that capacity, subject to the rules governing that Register. Members requiring advice on this point should contact the Registrar on 020 7219 3277.

#### Administration of the Register

- 9) The Register is compiled by the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, which publishes an updated edition of it every 4-6 weeks when the House of Commons is sitting. The most recent edition of the Register may be viewed at [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk) (look under 'All-Party Groups' in the A-Z Index on the home page).
- 10) The Committee on Standards and Privileges advises the House of Commons on the rules relating to the registration of APGs and oversees the administration of those rules by the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards.

### **Approved List**

- 11) In addition to applying for inclusion on the Register a group may also, if it chooses,

apply for inclusion on the Approved List. No group can be on the Approved List unless it is also on the Register.

#### Origin and purpose of the Approved List

12) The Approved List exists as a result of a Resolution made by the House of Commons on 31 October 1984. The main purpose of the list is to provide a means of controlling the use made by groups of the House's facilities and status. Consequently, a group that is on the Approved List a group has to register more information and is subject to considerably more rules than groups that are not on the Approved List (eg it must elect its officers annually and must have a minimum of 20 members). However, the vast majority of groups that are on the Register opt to be on the Approved List as well since it is only by being on the latter that the group gains:

- the right to use the All-Party Notices to advertise all group meetings
- the right to include either the term 'All-Party Parliamentary Group' or the term 'Associate Parliamentary Group' (or any part of those terms) in the group's title
- a relative priority over groups that are not on the Approved List when booking rooms at Parliament.

#### Applying for inclusion on the Approved List

13) In order to apply for inclusion on the Approved List a group must complete Parts 1 and 2 of the Application Forms for Cross-Party Groups, available at [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk) (look under 'All-Party Groups' in the A-Z Index on the home page) or from the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards.

#### Administration of the Approved List

14) The Approved List is compiled and maintained by the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards. Changes to the rules governing the Approved List are determined by the Administration Committee, though where such changes are substantial they are put by the Committee to the House for approval before being implemented.

15) The Approved List is usually updated every 1-2 weeks when the Commons is sitting. It is distributed to various departments within the Commons but is not published as it simply lists each group by name and states whether it is an All-Party Parliamentary Group or an Associate Parliamentary Group (see para 19 about nomenclature). Groups are not sent a copy of their entry on the Approved List but receive written confirmation from the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards when the group is added to, or removed from, the Approved List.

#### **Distinction between rules governing groups that are on the Register and Approved List**

16) You can check whether a group is on the Register, and whether it is additionally on the Approved List, by viewing the Register at [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk) (look under 'All-Party Groups' in the A-Z Index on the home page). The rules that follow in parts 2-7 of this

Guide apply to groups that are on the Approved List. Where those rules differ from the rules that apply to groups that are on the Register but *not* on the Approved List this is indicated by a text box headed ‘*Note for groups that are on the Register but not on the Approved List*’.

### **Nomenclature used for groups**

- 17) To qualify for inclusion on the Register of All-Party Groups a group must, as a bare minimum, be ‘cross-party’ (ie open to Members who are from more than one political party). However, the vast majority of groups on the Register are not only cross-party but ‘all-party’, meaning that they are open to *all* Members irrespective of their political party. For full details of the criteria groups must meet in order to be included on the Register please see paras 6-8.
- 18) Groups that are on the Register are often referred to as ‘registered groups’ and are categorised on the Register either as a ‘country group’ (relating to a particular country or region) or as a ‘subject group’ (the description given to anything other than a country group).
- 19) The title of any group that is, in addition to being on the Register, on the Approved List depends in part on whether or not persons other than Members of either the Commons or Lords are allowed full membership (ie voting rights). If they are, then the words ‘Associate Parliamentary Group’ must be included in the group’s title; if they are not, then the words ‘All-Party Parliamentary Group’ must be included instead. The rest of the group’s title should merely reflect the group’s subject so that the latter is obvious from its title alone (eg All-Party Parliamentary Group on *Taxation*). Any group that is *not* on the Approved List must exclude both terms (and any part of those terms bar the word ‘group’) from its title, which again should merely reflect the group’s subject so that the latter is obvious from its title alone. For details of the criteria groups must meet in order to be included on the Approved List please see paras 11-13.
- 20) Abbreviated versions of groups’ titles are often very similar and, given the large number of groups in existence, not easily understood. You should therefore use the group’s full registered title in all communications about the group. This helps distinguish between APGs with similar titles and also between APGs and other cross-party bodies such as select committees and unregistered groups.
- 21) Please consult the Assistant Registrar (whose contact details are in para 5) should you wish to change the group’s registered title.

### **Complaints about breaches of the rules governing APGs**

- 22) Complaints, whether from Members, the public or anyone else alleging that an APG has acted in breach of the rules governing the Register or Approved List, should in the first instance be sent to the Registrar of Members’ Interests in the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards. The Registrar will then seek to resolve the complaint, though in serious cases the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards may seek the agreement of the Committee on Standards and Privileges to undertake a formal

investigation.

## **PART 2: KEEPING THE GROUP'S REGISTER ENTRY UP TO DATE**

**Overview:** Part 2 tells you what information you must register and when and how you should do so.

### **Viewing a copy of the group's current Register entry**

- 23) A copy of the group's Register entry is sent to its registered contact when the group is first registered and, with the exception of some minor amendments, whenever the entry is subsequently amended. The group's entry may also be viewed on the latest edition of the Register at [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk) (look under 'All-Party Groups' in the A-Z Index on the home page).

### **Registering changes required to the group's Register entry**

- 24) Any registrable change (ie any addition or deletion required under the rules to the group's Register entry) must be put by the group in writing to the Assistant Registrar within **28 days** of the change (eg the receipt of a donation) occurring, so that the entry may be updated.
- 25) It is not sufficient simply to update the entry once a year after the AGM, unless that happens to be the only time when changes requiring registration arise.
- 26) To register changes please send a letter or email to the Assistant Registrar (whose contact details are in para 5) stating what you want added to or deleted from the entry. Such a notification may be sent on behalf of the group either by an officer of the group, or by their personal staff, or by general staff to the group.
- 27) Please note, however, two important exceptions where the notification process differs from this:
- *After an AGM* the group must send the Assistant Registrar a copy of its current Register entry annotated by hand with any additions or deletions the group is required to register. That entry must be signed by an officer of the group, not by staff, before being sent to the Assistant Registrar (see paras 73-77).

**Note for groups that are on the Register but not on the Approved List:**  
Disregard para 27 as your group is not required to hold AGMs.

- *If a group is applying for the first time for inclusion on the Register of All-Party Groups or else is re-registering the group following a general election*, the group must complete the Application Forms for Cross-Party Groups. That form must be signed by an officer of the group. Furthermore, because the Register comes under the jurisdiction of the House of Common that officer must be an MP, not a Member of the House of Lords.

**Confirmation sent to a group following changes made to its Register entry**

- 28) Once any amendments required to the group's entry have been processed, the Assistant Registrar will send confirmation, including a revised copy of the entry, to the group via its registered contact. The revised entry will appear in the next edition of the Register.

### PART 3: MEMBERSHIP OF APGs

**Overview:** Part 3 covers the rules on the group’s officers and qualifying members; membership lists and subscriptions; and the group’s staff and registered contact.

#### Officers

**If your group is on the Register but not on the Approved List:** Disregard para 32 and the last sentence of para 33 as your group is not required to hold AGMs and is not permitted to advertise any elections on the All-Party Notices.

- 29) The officers run the group and are responsible for ensuring that it complies with the House’s rules. Each officer must either be a Member of the House of Commons or a Member of the House of Lords (though at least *one* officer must be an MP).
- 30) Groups typically have a Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. However, you may adapt those titles as you wish and may have fewer or more officers than the four listed. The minimum number of officers allowed is two, one of whom must be the Chair (or whatever version of that title you prefer eg Chairman). Jointly held posts are allowed (eg Joint Chairs), as are combined posts (eg Secretary/Treasurer).
- 31) At least one officer must be present at every group meeting.
- 32) The group’s officers must stand for election every 12 months from the date of the last Annual General Meeting shown on the group’s Register entry. Information about how to hold an AGM is provided in paras 50-78. An election may additionally be held between AGMs (eg to replace an officer or create a new post). Please note that *any* meeting that involves an election of officers must be advertised as such in advance on the All-Party Notices. Information about how to do this is given in paras 62-63.
- 33) You must register any changes required to the group’s Register entry as a result of any elections held. In particular, please see paras 73-78 for information about how to register the result of an *AGM*.

#### Group’s registered contact

- 34) The group’s ‘registered contact’ is shown on its Register entry and must be one of the group’s officers (each of whom must be Members of either the Commons or Lords), as it is they who are accountable for the group.
- 35) Routine correspondence from the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards is sent to the group via its registered contact. Typically this includes reminders about AGM procedures and confirmation of amendments made to the group’s register entry. How any such information is then relayed to the group’s members or secretariat is up to the group to organise as multiple contacts are not registered for any group. If the registered contact changes, the group must register the new contact’s name, address and telephone number (all of which must be the

parliamentary or constituency details of the MP or Peer concerned and not those of staff to the group).

### Qualifying members

<p><b>If your group is on the Register but not on the Approved List:</b> Disregard paras 36-40 as your group does not have any 'qualifying members'.</p>
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- 36) Qualifying members are no different from ordinary members of the group except that their names are cited on the Register as proof that the group qualifies for registration by meeting the membership quotas detailed below.
- 37) Each qualifying member must be a Member of either the House of Commons or the House of Lords. The names of **exactly 20** qualifying members must be registered, namely 10 who are from the same party as the government and 10 who are not from the government's party. At least 6 of the latter 10 must be from the main opposition party. No group's Register entry lists more than 20 qualifying members, even if a group's membership list exceeds that number.
- 38) Officers may be listed on the Register as both officers *and* qualifying members if you wish.
- 39) After an AGM the group must check with each qualifying member listed on its Register entry that they wish to continue as members of the group, and register the name of an appropriate replacement for any that do not (bearing in mind the party quotas detailed in para 37). If, at any other time, a qualifying member informs the group that he or she no longer wishes to be a member of the group you must register the name of a replacement within 28 days of the member resigning.
- 40) If a qualifying member changes his or her party affiliation, or is for some reason no longer a Member of the House of Commons or House of Lords, the Assistant Registrar will write to the group and give you 28 days to register the name of an appropriate replacement. If the group fails to meet that deadline it ceases to qualify for inclusion on the Approved List and is removed from it. Paras 80-82 detail the consequences of removal.

### Membership list

<p><b>If your group is on the Register but not on the Approved List:</b> Disregard para 41 and the first part of para 42 as there are no rules about your membership list and your group does not have to be open to <i>all</i> Members of the Commons or Lords.</p>
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- 41) One of the officers (usually the Secretary or Treasurer) must be responsible for maintaining a comprehensive and up-to-date membership list. That list may well extend beyond those named on the group's Register entry.
- 42) Any Member of the Commons or Lords is entitled to join the group; anyone other than

a Member of the Commons or Lords may only join at the discretion of the group.

- 43) There are no rules on the process by which new members are enrolled or come to be included on the membership list.

#### *Membership subscriptions*

<p><b>If your group is on the Register but not on the Approved List:</b> Disregard para 44 as there are no rules about your membership fees.</p>
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- 44) The group may charge members a subscription fee. The maximum fee chargeable to a Member of either House is £5 per year. There is no maximum fee for any other person or organisation and that is therefore at the discretion of the group.

#### **Staff**

- 45) Some officers handle the administration of the group themselves; others are assisted by individuals or organisations from outside Parliament who may, for example, act as the group's secretariat. For most groups the provision of such services by external organisations is of a sufficient financial value to constitute a 'benefit' to the group and this support should accordingly be registered (see paras 87-106 about benefits).
- 46) Staff to APGs are not as a matter of course issued with a parliamentary pass. Should you wish to enquire about the possibility of obtaining a pass for any such staff please contact the Pass Office on 0207 219 5920.
- 47) If any member of staff to the group is issued with a parliamentary pass **and** is engaged in a remunerated activity which is advantaged by the privileged access to Parliament afforded by their pass, the group must register the name of the staff member, the name and nature of the external organisation employing him or her, and his or her job title within that organisation.

## PART 4: MEETINGS HELD BY APGs

**Overview:** Part 4 covers the rules on scheduling and advertising meetings; booking meeting rooms and banqueting facilities; attendance and voting rights at meetings; minutes and agendas; and the rules on Annual General Meetings.

### Frequency and scheduling of meetings

**If your group is on the Register but not on the Approved List:** Disregard paras 48-49 as there are no rules for your group on any of the points they cover.

- 48) To assist Members meetings are usually held at Parliament and on a day when both Houses are sitting. Annual General Meetings (AGMs) *must* be held at Parliament and on a day when both Houses are sitting.
- 49) The group must meet at least twice per calendar year. An AGM counts as one meeting. The other meeting must be held on a different day from the AGM to qualify as a separate meeting.

### Annual General Meeting

**If your group is on the Register but not on the Approved List:** Disregard paras 50-53 as your group does not have to hold AGMs.

- 50) In summary, the rules on AGMs (which you should read *in full* in paras 51-78 before organising an AGM) require the group to:
  - Hold an AGM every 12 months at Parliament and on a day when both Houses are sitting.
  - Advertise the meeting (as an AGM to distinguish it from any other type of meeting) in advance on the All-Party Notices compiled by the Government Whips.
  - Ensure the AGM is quorate.
  - Hold an election of officers at the AGM.
  - Register the result of the AGM by sending the Assistant Registrar, by whatever deadline the group has been given, a copy of the group's Register entry, annotated by hand with any additions or deletions required and signed by an officer of the group.

### *Deadline for holding the AGM and registering the result*

- 51) The date of the group's last registered AGM is shown on its Register entry. Groups must hold an AGM, which must include an election of officers, every 12 months. Hence if a group's last AGM was held in March 2009 its next one would be due in March 2010. The group's 'inaugural election of officers' is its first election of a given

Parliament and counts as the group's first AGM of that Parliament.

- 52) When your AGM is due the Assistant Registrar will write to the group's registered contact to remind the group of the procedures involved. The reminder letter will cite a deadline by which the group must both hold the AGM **and** register the AGM result. To give you some leeway the usual deadline, for both, is the end of the month after the one in which the AGM is actually due (though it may be slightly earlier if the deadline would otherwise fall on a day when the House of Commons is not sitting).
- 53) If the group fails to register the AGM result by that deadline, it will immediately be removed from the Approved List. Paras 73-78 explain how to register the result and paras 78-80 set out the consequences of removal.

### **Booking meeting rooms and banqueting facilities**

- 54) To book a meeting room in the House of Commons please contact the Facilities department on 020 7219 3090. The booking should be made by or on behalf of a Member of the House of Commons. Alternatively, if the room booking is sponsored by a member of the House of Lords you may be able to book a room in the House of Lords by calling 020 7219 6049.
- 55) For enquiries about banqueting facilities available in the House of Commons call 020 7219 4804 or to enquire about such facilities in the House of Lords call 020 7219 3356.
- 56) Please note that meeting rooms and banqueting facilities may not be available for use during parliamentary recesses, and that the use of parliamentary premises for direct or indirect financial or material gain is prohibited, except for registered charities.

### **Advertising meetings**

#### All-Party Notices

<p><b>If your group is on the Register but not on the Approved List:</b> Disregard paras 57-63 as your group is not entitled to advertise any meetings on the All-Party Notices (though you may wish to note para 58 for information).</p>
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- 57) Groups that are on the Approved List are entitled to advertise their meetings on the All-Party Notices, which is a list compiled and issued by the Government Whips (020 7219 4333) every week when the House of Commons is sitting. The list mainly details where and when groups are meeting in the week following its issue but also includes some meetings that are due to take place at a later date.
- 58) The Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards puts ad-hoc announcements and reminders that concern all APGs on the All-Party Notices. These are usually about a particular aspect of the rules or procedures governing all-party groups.

*How to advertise a meeting on the All-Party Notices*

- 59) The Whips' deadline for receipt of copy from you is currently the Wednesday before the week in which the meeting is due to take place but may be sooner if the House of Commons is in recess on the day on which their usual deadline would fall, so make sure you contact them in good time.
- 60) To place a Notice you will need to tell the Whips the details of the meeting – ie: day, date, time, place, name of your group, whether the meeting is anything other than an ordinary one (eg an AGM) and whom they should contact if they have any queries.
- 61) Ordinary meetings (ie any meeting other than an AGM or meeting at which officers are elected) need not be advertised on the All-Party Notices, but AGMs and any other meeting at which officers are elected *must* be (see paras 62-63 for details).

*Advertising AGMs and other meeting at which officers are elected*

- 62) It is not acceptable simply to notify all members of the group that an AGM, or any other meeting at which an officer is to be elected, is being held. Any such meeting must be advertised in advance on the All-Party Notices so that all Members of both Houses are informed. As a bare minimum ensure that such meetings appear in the printed edition of the All-Party Notices that is published the week before the week in which the meeting is being held.
- 63) You must also ensure that the nature of the elections (eg 'AGM', or 'Election of Secretary') is made clear on any Notice you place so that meetings involving elections are distinguished from ordinary meetings.

**Quorum and attendance at meetings**

<p><b>If your group is on the Register but not on the Approved List:</b> Disregard para 64 and the first part of para 65 as there is no quorum for your meetings and the latter do not have to be open to <i>all</i> Members of the Commons or Lords.</p>
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- 64) The quorum for any meeting of the group is 3 members, at least one of whom must be an officer. Each of the 3 must be a Member of either the House of Commons or the House of Lords.
- 65) Any Member of either House may attend and speak at any meeting of the group; anyone else may only attend if invited by the group.
- 66) Meetings of the groups must never be advertised anywhere as 'public meetings' as this can cause security problems.

## Agendas

**If your group is on the Register but not on the Approved List:** Disregard para 65 as there are no rules about your agendas.

- 67) For any meeting of the group, the form and content of the agenda and the business addressed by the meeting are up to the group, except that an AGM must include an election of officers.

## Voting rights at meetings

**If your group is on the Register but not on the Approved List:** Disregard paras 68-70 and the first part of para 71 as there are no rules about voting rights or advertising elections.

- 68) Any Member of the House of Commons or House of Lords may vote at any meeting of the group – unless a subscription is charged, in which case the group may decide to allow only paid-up members of the group to vote.
- 69) Some groups allow non-parliamentarian members of the group (ie members who are not Members of the House of Commons or Lords) to have voting rights; other groups choose not to allow this.
- 70) Voting rights determine part of the group's title, so if you change members' voting rights you must change the group's title accordingly. See para 19 for details.
- 71) Apart from the rules cited in paras 62-63 about the requirement to advertise meetings involving elections, there are no rules on the process by which officers are nominated or how they are elected at the meeting so both vary from group to group.

## Minutes of meetings

**If your group is on the Register but not on the Approved List:** Disregard para 72 as you are not required to keep any form of minutes.

- 72) The form, content, and distribution of minutes is a matter for the group, except that the group must keep sufficient records to enable it to prove that every meeting of the group is quorate and that the group meets at least twice each calendar year. The Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards will only ask you to provide this information if they have reason to believe the group is in breach of the rules, so please so not send them any minutes unless they specifically ask you to.

### Registering the result of an AGM

**If your group is on the Register but not on the Approved List:** Disregard paras 73-78. If any changes are required to the group's Register entry following an AGM please register them within 28 days of the AGM.

- 73) After an AGM you must register the AGM result by the deadline given in the letter that will have been sent by the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards to the group's registered contact to remind the group that its AGM is due. If you fail to meet that deadline the group will be removed from the Approved List. Paras 51-52 tell you about the deadline and paras 80-82 detail the consequences of removal.
- 74) To register the result do *not* send the Commissioner's office the group's minutes, annual reports, accounts, or membership list. Instead, you are required to check each section of a copy of the group's current Register entry and write on it any additions or deletions required by the rules (see paras 76-77 for details).
- 75) A copy of the group's Register entry is sent to the group via its registered contact when any substantive amendment is made to it, but you can also print a copy from the Register at [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk) (look under 'All-Party Groups' in the A-Z Index on the home page).

### *Reviewing the group's Register entry after an AGM*

- 76) The following list is not exhaustive but indicates the most common amendments that arise when groups review their Register entry after an AGM.
  - Strike out the name of any officer listed who is no longer an **officer** and write in the name, title and party affiliation of any new officers (see paras 29-33).
  - If the group's **registered contact** is no longer an officer you must provide the details of another officer by registering his or her parliamentary or constituency address and telephone number (see paras 34-35 for the role of the registered contact).
  - As part of reviewing its Register entry the group must check with each **qualifying member** listed on its entry that they wish to continue as a member of the group, and register the name of an appropriate replacement for any that do not. The entry you submit should list the names of *exactly 20* current qualifying members (see para 37 about who is eligible to be a qualifying member and about party quotas required).

- For information about registering **financial and material support received by the group** see paras 87-106. In particular, please note that any benefit that has ‘registered [date]’ appended to it on the group’s Register entry is automatically deleted from the Register once it has been on the latter for a year. This applies to such things as membership subscriptions, which you should register each time they are renewed (assuming the value of the renewed benefit meets the financial threshold for registration).
  - Under the heading ‘**Date of group’s last registered Annual General Meeting**’ on the group’s entry please add the date of the AGM you have just held.
  - Before sending the group’s Register entry to the Assistant Registrar in the Commissioner’s office (contact details are in para 5) **the entry must be signed anywhere at the bottom by one of the group’s officers**, not staff.
- 77) Even if only minimal changes are required the group must still submit an amended Register entry as proof that you have checked it all of it.
- 78) Once the Commissioner’s office has received an amended Register entry from the group after its AGM, they will send confirmation (including a copy of the entry that will accordingly appear in the next edition of the Register) to the group via its registered contact.

## **PART 5: GROUPS' REMOVAL FROM OR REINSTATEMENT ON THE APPROVED LIST**

**Overview:** Part 5 covers the rules on why groups are removed from the Approved List; how they are affected by being removed from it; and how to apply for reinstatement on it.

### **Reasons for removal from the Approved List**

**If your group is on the Register but not on the Approved List:** disregard the whole of Part 5 (unless you are seeking *reinstatement* on the Approved List, in which case see paras 83-86).

Furthermore, a group is generally only removed from the *Register* (as opposed to the Approved List) if it disbands, fails to re-register following a general election, or no longer has any Commons officers. To be reinstated on the Register a group would usually have to hold an 'inaugural election of officers' then complete and return the Application Forms for Cross-Party Groups, available from the Assistant Registrar, whose contact details are in para 5.

- 79) Groups are not removed from the Approved List without warning and are usually removed for one of the following reasons:
- failure to hold an AGM by a given deadline
  - failure to register the result of an AGM by a given deadline
  - failure to maintain a list of 20 current qualifying members on its Register entry.

### **Effect of removal from the Approved List**

- 80) When a group is removed from the Approved List associated privileges are withdrawn, meaning that the group:
- must change its title to exclude the term 'All-Party Parliamentary Group' or 'Associate Parliamentary Group' (and any part of those terms bar the word 'group')
  - is not permitted to use the All-Party Notices to advertise any meetings (other than an AGM that is being held in order to apply for reinstatement on the Approved List)
  - has a lower priority than groups that are on the Approved List when booking rooms at Parliament.
- 81) Despite being removed from the Approved List, the group remains on the Register. The group's Register entry is amended to show that it is no longer categorised as an 'All-Party Parliamentary Group' or an 'Associate Parliamentary Group' and those terms are deleted from its title. The Register entry will also show that the group is no longer on the Approved List.

- 82) Once a group has been removed from the Approved List it is governed by the rules that apply to groups that are on the Register but not on the Approved List (see para 16 for details)

### **Getting reinstated on the Approved List**

- 83) Once it has been removed from the Approved List the group does not have to apply for reinstatement on it, though it is only by doing so that the group can regain the associated privileges cited in para 12.
- 84) Until it has been reinstated on the Approved List the group is bound by the rules that govern groups that are on the Register but not on the Approved List (see para 16 for details), with 2 exceptions. Ordinarily, groups which are not on the Approved List are not required to hold AGMs or to have any qualifying members. However, if the group is seeking reinstatement on the Approved List it may be required to hold an AGM and to provide the names of 20 qualifying members on its Register entry (see para 85).
- 85) The method of achieving reinstatement depends on why the group was removed from the Approved List:
- if the group has already held the AGM in question but failed to register the result, you must register the result. See paras 73-77 for information about how to do this.
  - if the group failed to hold an AGM, you should hold one, ensuring that the meeting is advertised as an AGM in advance on the All-Party Notices and that you register the result of the AGM. See paras 48-78 for information about how to hold an AGM and register the result.
  - if the group was removed for failing to maintain a list of 20 current qualifying members on its Register entry, you should register any replacement names needed, ensuring first that they are from the appropriate parties. See paras 36-40 for information about qualifying members.
- 86) Once the group has been reinstated on the Approved List the Assistant Registrar will send confirmation to the group via its Registered Contact, including an updated copy of the group's Register entry for the group's records.

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## **PART 6: FINANCIAL AND MATERIAL BENEFITS RECEIVED BY APGS**

**Overview:** Part 6 covers the rules on how to register financial or material assistance (ie ‘benefits’) received by the group.

### **Accounting procedures for groups**

- 87) How the group chooses to manage its accounts is a matter for the group as the House has not laid down any rules on this. The group must, however, keep sufficient records to enable it to *register* financial and material assistance it receives in accordance with the rules below.

### **Definition of financial and material benefits received by groups**

- 88) The group must register within 28 days from the date it receives from the same source outside Parliament one or more financial or material benefits whose total value is £1500 or more in a calendar year.
- 89) ‘Financial benefits’ means *money* received by the group (eg donations, grants, subscriptions).
- 90) ‘Material benefits’ means the provision of *goods or services—not money* (eg administrative services, hospitality, gifts).

### **How to register financial benefits received by the group**

- 91) To register a financial benefit the group must register the name of the organisation providing the money and the amount provided, for example:
- £10,000 from Quality Products Ltd.
- 92) When registering the name of an organisation please avoid acronyms and abbreviations.

### **How to register material benefits received by the group**

- 93) To register a material benefit the group must register the name of the organisation providing the benefit and describe the nature of the benefit (see paras 96-99 for some typical examples).
- 94) You are not required to register the *financial value* of the benefit but by registering the benefit you are indicating that you either know for certain or else believe it likely that its value is £1500 or more.
- 95) When registering the name of an organisation please avoid acronyms and abbreviations.

96) Below are some examples of register entries for material benefits. For the provision of **secretariat services** please see paras 97-99.

- Quality Products Ltd paid for a group *reception* held on 21 March 2010.
- Quality Products Ltd paid the *printing costs* of a report published by the group in March 2010.
- Quality Products Ltd paid for *air fares and accommodation* when some members of the group visited Italy from 16-20 March 2010.
- Quality Products Ltd paid for *tickets* to a performance at the Royal Opera House on 21 March 2010.

#### Provision of secretariat services

97) If an organisation is acting as the group's secretariat and if the provision of this service constitutes a benefit worth £1500 or more in a calendar year to the group, register the name of the organisation and describe the service it provides, eg:

- Quality Products Ltd acts as the group's secretariat.

#### *Consultancy organisation acting as group's secretariat*

98) If the organisation acting as the group's secretariat is a consultancy (eg a public relations firm) you should register the name of the consultancy and the service it provides to the group. If any client of the consultancy is specifically paying the consultancy to act as the group's secretariat you must additionally register the name of any such clients, eg:

- Quality Products Ltd employs Image & Co to act as the group's secretariat.

#### *Individual acting in a personal capacity as group's secretariat*

99) If an individual is acting in a purely personal and unpaid capacity as the group's secretariat and if the provision of this service constitutes a benefit worth £1500 or more in a calendar year to the group, register the name of the individual and state the basis on which he or she works for the group eg:

- Mr Robert Perkins acts as the group's secretariat in a personal and unpaid capacity.

#### **Registration of cumulative benefits received by the group**

100) A donation of, say, £1000 from a single source would on its own be exempt from registration as it is below the £1500 threshold for registration. But if the group subsequently receives, say, £700 from the same source in the same calendar year then you should register the total benefit (ie £1700) within 28 days of receiving the £700. Once the group has made that initial registration, any further donation received (whether singly or cumulatively) from the same source in the same calendar year should be registered if and when its value exceeds £500. The rules on cumulative

benefits apply to both financial and material benefits.

### **Registration of personal benefits received by Members and staff in connection with APGs**

- 101) Where an *MP* gains personally from a benefit received in connection with an APG (eg hospitality, gifts, research services) and the benefit falls within the rules governing the Register of Members' Financial Interests, it should additionally be included on the latter by the Member concerned. Members should contact the Registrar on 020 7219 3277 if they need advice on this point.
- 102) If a member of *staff* to the group holds a parliamentary pass as an MP's researcher or secretary and gains personally from such a benefit and the benefit falls within the rules governing the Register of Interests of Members' Secretaries and Research Assistants, the benefit should additionally be included on the latter by the staff member concerned. Staff should contact the Assistant Registrar on 020 7219 0401 if they need advice on this point.
- 103) Similarly, *Members of the House of Lords* and *staff* to the group who hold a parliamentary pass as researcher or secretary to a Member of the House of Lords should consult the House of Lords Registrar on 020 7219 3120 if they need advice as to whether a personal benefit should be included on Registers maintained by the House of Lords on Peers and their staff.

### **Removal of benefits from the Register**

- 104) Any text on the Register naming an organisation that acts as the group's secretariat will remain on the group's Register entry unless you instruct the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards that it should be amended or deleted (something you must do if, for example, the organisation ceases to provide this service).
- 105) Most other benefits (typically subscriptions, financial donations, hospitality) will have appended to their details on the Register the date on which you notified the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards of the benefit. Any such benefit will automatically be *deleted* from the Register once it has appeared on the latter for a year.
- 106) If a benefit such as a membership subscription is renewed you must register this within 28 days of it being renewed (assuming that the value of the renewed benefit meets the financial threshold for registration). Register the name of the organisation providing the benefit and the amount of the renewal.

## **PART 7: MISCELLANEOUS**

**Overview:** Part 7 contains sundry rules and information about the group’s stationery, publications and website; amending the group’s statement of purpose; affiliation to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and Inter-Parliamentary Union; and the requirement to re-register the group following a general election.

### **Group’s stationery, publications and website**

107) Please contact the Resources department on 020 7219 5732 if you need advice about any of the following:

- using House emblems (eg the Portcullis ‘logo’ and the words ‘House of Commons’) on the group’s stationery, publications or website
- use of headed paper and pre-paid envelopes provided at the expense of the House
- purchasing House stationery for use by the group.

108) Financial or material assistance received by the group from sources outside Parliament in connection with its stationery, publications or website may constitute a registrable benefit (see paras 87-106).

### **Group’s statement of purpose**

**If your group is on the Register but not on the Approved List:** Disregard para 109 as you are not required to register a statement of purpose.

109) If you wish to amend the ‘statement of purpose’ cited on the group’s Register entry please send the revised text to the Assistant Registrar so that the Register may be updated. Only key points summarising the group’s remit should be registered.

### **Group’s affiliation to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and/or Inter-Parliamentary Union**

**If your group is on the Register but not on the Approved List:** Disregard para 111 as you are not required to register any affiliation to the CPA or IPU.

110) Country groups (ie groups which relate to a particular country or region) may be eligible to join the CPA or IPU. For further information about the nature of these organisations and the benefits of affiliation please consult the CPA on 020 7219 5373 or IPU on 020 7219 3013.

111) If your group is affiliated to the CPA or IPU you must include this on the group’s Register entry.

### **Requirement to re-register the group following a General Election**

- 112) Once a general election has been publicly announced the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards writes to every registered group to explain how to re-register the group in the new Parliament. In addition, the Commissioner's office posts periodic reminders about the re-registration process on the All-Party Notices issued by the Whips and also publishes related information on [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk) (look under 'All-Party Groups' in the A-Z index on the home page).
- 113) In essence, unless the group re-registers within two months from the date when Parliament first meets after a general election it ceases to exist then and is removed from the Register, and from the Approved List (if it is on the latter).<sup>1</sup> The two-month period is to allow groups some continuity from one Parliament to the next and give them time to make any changes needed regarding officers, members, staff etc.
- 114) To re-register, groups must first hold an 'inaugural election of officers' (which effectively counts as the group's first AGM of the new Parliament) then complete and return the Application Forms for Cross-Party Groups to the Assistant Registrar.
- 115) Once the two-month period has elapsed, the first edition of the Register relating to the new Parliament is published.
- 116) Groups that do not re-register within the two-month period and are consequently removed from the Register may apply for reinstatement on the latter at any time thereafter. Their details will be included in subsequent editions of the Register.

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<sup>1</sup> Registered groups funded by Her Majesty's Government (currently only the British-American Parliamentary Group) are exempt from the requirement to re-register.