

Dear Nadhim,

The Common Sense Group wrote to your predecessor last year regarding our concerns over the highly questionable activities of Advance HE, which we believe both undermines higher education and wastes public funds.

At that time, we were assured that the Department for Education does not *directly* fund Advance HE. Nonetheless, universities and colleges continue to pay millions of pounds to Advance HE in membership fees.

A glance at Advance HE's website reveals practices that are deeply worrying. Charging universities thousands of pounds to be part of their 'Racial Equality Charter Scheme', Advance HE is pursuing an agenda that encourages the elevation of identity politics, irrespective of intellectual integrity. Their activism includes 'decolonising' the curriculum, encouraging insidious anonymous reporting through the 'report and support' system, and divisive 'unconscious bias' training. It is very worrying that over half of UK universities have already signed up to this scheme, whilst many others are taking the radical steps needed to apply.

Straightforwardly, Advance HE are promoting a cultural agenda that is, at best, displacing the core duties for which HE providers receive extensive public funding.

The universities minister is correct to say that "academic freedom is a cornerstone of our system and it is academics, not university bureaucrats or quangos such as Advance HE, who should be determining the curriculum [our students](#) are being taught."

We hope therefore that you will immediately ensure that:

1. **All educational public sector bodies should cease to provide Advance HE with direct grant funding.**
2. **All educational public sector bodies must be forbidden from purchasing the consultancy services of Advance HE.** Last year Advance HE made nearly £15 million by selling consultancy services and membership packages to a range of public sector bodies and universities that are funded by our constituents.

3. **Bodies that hand out taxpayers' money for the purposes of research (such as UKRI) must publicly state their impartiality.** Despite being required to act impartially, in recent years research funding bodies such as UKRI have allowed Advance HE to influence their policies, ethos, publications, and overall direction of travel. Indeed, Advance HE claim that universities should sign up to its equality charter if they wish to receive future funding from such bodies.

This educational '*charity's*' approach is similar to Stonewall's 'Diversity Champions' programme - a benchmarking scheme from which the BBC, House of Lords and various Government Departments withdrew after the extent of its radical political bias was uncovered.

The Cabinet Office acted decisively by acknowledging the danger of allowing unaccountable political organisations to set the standard of behaviour for public bodies, stating that they should not "*routinely use assurance and benchmarking organisations*". Sadly, a similar reliance has emerged in the UK's research funding organisations and higher education providers.

Surely, similar advice should apply to higher education providers, given their essential public function and the significant taxpayer funding they receive. It is unacceptable that resources for teaching, research and student services are funding ideologically driven benchmarking schemes.

Given that the Government has a key role in regulating the HE sector. Just as you are championing the adoption of the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism, and introducing new registration conditions on freedom of speech and academic freedom, the Common Sense Group requests that you urgently investigate this matter. With a view to emulating the Cabinet Office by providing new guidance urging HE providers and other public bodies such as Universities UK and the OfS to desist engaging with such external organisations.

Yours,

Rt Hon. Sir John Hayes CBE MP

Rt Hon. Sir Edward Leigh MP

Tom Hunt MP

Lee Anderson MP

Scott Benton MP

Bob Blackman MP

Ben Bradley MP

Andrew Bridgen MP

Philip Davies MP

Nicholas Fletcher MP

James Grundy MP

Pauline Latham MP

Jonathan Lord MP

Andrew Lewer MP

Karl McCartney MP

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Lord Horam

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