



House of Commons

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

April 2005

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this booklet

This booklet, compiled by the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, is for the use of officers and staff of registered all-party groups. Through this booklet we aim to provide you with information you need to enable you to run your group in accordance with rules laid down by the House of Commons.

Those rules mostly concern the group's membership, the conduct of meetings, and the registration of support received by the group from outside parliament. It is only by complying with the rules that the group will continue to be officially recognised by the House of Commons and to have privileged access to its facilities.

Our contact details

Since no written guidance can provide for all circumstances, when in doubt you should contact us for advice. Please address any queries and correspondence to:

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How to use this booklet

This booklet is intended for use by groups which have already completed the 'Application Forms for Cross-Party Groups' and are therefore already on the Register of All-Party Groups (known as the 'Groups' Register'). Most, but not all, such groups will also be on the Approved List of All-Party Parliamentary Groups and Associate Parliamentary Groups (known as the 'Approved List'). You can check whether your group is on either or both by looking at its Register entry. If your group is on neither, please contact us for the relevant forms.

Starting on the next page you will find 'The Rules', all of which apply to any group that is on the Approved List. If yours is such a group, please disregard the text boxes headed 'If your group is NOT on the Approved List' as they contain the rules which apply to the small minority of groups which are *not* on the Approved List.

At the end of the booklet you will find background information on the establishment, purpose and

administration of the Groups' Register and of the Approved List.

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| PART 1: KEEPING THE GROUP'S REGISTER ENTRY UP TO DATE |
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| Part 1 tells you what information you need to provide us with, and when and how you should do so, in order to keep the group's Register entry up to date. |
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1. A copy of the group's Register entry is sent to the group when it is first registered. **Any change (ie addition or deletion) required to the entry must be put in writing to the Assistant Registrar within 28 days of the change occurring** so that the entry may be updated. It is not sufficient simply to update the entry once a year after the AGM.
2. There are two checklists on the following pages. The first one is for groups that are on the Approved List; the second one is for groups that are *not* on the Approved List. Each serves as reminder of areas where changes may arise and what you need to tell us about them. Each point is fully explained later in the booklet so before writing to us please read the relevant explanation.

CHANGES YOU MUST NOTIFY US OF
Registration Checklist (1) — for groups that are on the Approved List

- G** **Contact person** (notify us of any change to the present contact's details; if a new contact for the group is appointed, notify us of that person's name, address, and telephone number).
- G** **Officers** (notify us if an officer resigns, or is elected, between AGMs by telling us the person's name and office; following an AGM notify us of any changes amongst the officers - see 'AGM' below).
- G** **Qualifying members** (if a qualifying member withdraws his or her membership of the group, changes party affiliation, or is no longer a Member of the Commons or Lords, notify us of the name of a replacement from a suitable party).
- G** **Staff to the group** (where 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, notify us of the name of the staff member; name and nature of the organisation employing him or her; and his or her job title within that organisation).
- G** **Financial and material assistance ie 'benefits'** (where the group receives from the same source outside Parliament one or more benefits whose total value is £1000 or more in a calendar year, notify us of the source and amount for financial benefits, or the source and nature for material benefits).
- G** **Annual General Meeting** (after the group's AGM check all parts of the group's current Register entry, write on it any amendments (ie additions or deletions required), then return the corrected entry to us for updating).
- G** **Group's purpose** (notify us in writing of any change you make to the group's statement of purpose).
- G** **Group's title** (notify us of any change you make to the group's title. If you alter the voting rights allowed to non-parliamentary members you must change the group's title to include the required terminology).
- G** **Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and Inter-Parliamentary Union** (notify us if the group takes up or ends an affiliation with either organisation).

CHANGES YOU MUST NOTIFY US OF
Registration Checklist (2) — for groups that are not on the Approved List

- G** **Contact person** (notify us of any change to the present contact's details; if a new contact for the group is appointed, notify us of that person's name, address, and telephone number).
- G** **Officers** (notify us of any addition or deletion required to the list of officers on the group's Register entry).
- G** **Staff to the group** (where 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, notify us of the name of the staff member; name and nature of the organisation employing him or her; and his or her job title within that organisation).
- G** **Financial and material assistance ie 'benefits'** (where the group receives from the same source outside Parliament one or more benefits whose total value is £1000 or more in a calendar year, notify us of the source and amount for financial benefits, or the source and nature for material benefits).
- G** **Group's title** (notify us of any change you make to the group's title, which must not include the words 'All-Party', 'Parliamentary' or 'Associate').
- G** **Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and Inter-Parliamentary Union** (notify us if the group takes up or ends an affiliation with either organisation).

PART 2: MEMBERSHIP

Part 2 covers the rules on the group's officers and qualifying members; membership lists and subscriptions; and the group's staff and contact person.

Officers

If your group is NOT on the Approved List: paragraphs 1 and 4 apply, but disregard paragraphs 2 and 3. You are not required to hold annual elections and are not permitted to advertise elections on the All-Party Notices.

1. The officers are responsible for ensuring that the group complies with the rules. 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 (ie a Chair and a Secretary). Jointly held posts are allowed (eg Joint Chairs), as are combined posts (eg Secretary/Treasurer). Each officer must be a Member of the Commons or Lords. At least one officer must be from the Commons.
2. The group's officers must be elected en bloc every 12 months from the date of the last Annual General Meeting (AGM)¹ shown on its Register entry. An election may additionally be held between AGMs (eg to replace an officer or create a new post), should you wish to do so.
3. Any election of officers must be advertised on the All-Party Notices.²
4. You must notify us of any changes required to the group's Register entry as a result of any elections held.³

Qualifying members

If your group is NOT on the Approved List: disregard this section. Your group does not have any 'qualifying members'.

5. Qualifying members have no special responsibilities other than demonstrating that the group qualifies for inclusion on the Approved List by meeting the minimum membership quotas, which are as below.
6. Each qualifying member must be a Member of either the Commons or the Lords and may also be an officer. The group must have at all times have exactly 20 qualifying members on its Register entry, namely: 10 from the Government party, plus a total of 10 Opposition/Other Members (of which at least 6 must be from the *main* Opposition party). Independent Members and cross-bench peers may be included in the 'Others' category, together with any

¹ See Part 3 under 'Annual General Meeting' for full details.

² See Part 3 under 'Advertising meetings: the All-Party Notices' for full details.

³ For elections held at an AGM, see Part 3 under 'Registering the result of an AGM' for full details.

Member of the Commons or Lords who is not a Member of the Government party or main Opposition party. We do not register more than 20 names.

7. You must keep the list of qualifying members shown on your Register entry up to date. If a qualifying member tells you that he or she no longer wishes to be a member of the group, you must notify us of a replacement (bearing in mind the rules on Government/Opposition/Other membership quotas) within 28 days. If a qualifying member changes his or her party affiliation, or is for some reason (eg death, retirement) no longer a Member of the Commons or Lords, we will write to the group and give you 28 days to notify us of an appropriate replacement.

Membership list

If your group is NOT on the Approved List: this section applies to your group.

8. 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.
9. Any Member of the Commons or Lords is entitled to join the group; anyone else may join at the discretion of the group. There are no rules on the process by which new members are enrolled and come to be included on the membership list; that is for the group to determine.

Membership subscriptions

If your group is NOT on the Approved List: disregard this section. Your group may charge a membership fee but there is no set maximum rate for Members of either House or for anyone else.

10. The group may charge members a subscription fee. The maximum fee chargeable to a Member of either House is £5 per year. No such limit exists for any other person or organisation; that is for the group to determine.

Contact person

If your group is NOT on the Approved List: this section applies to your group.

11. The contact person for the group is shown on its Register entry and must be one of the officers (all of whom must be Members of the Commons or Lords), as it is they who are ultimately accountable for the group. We address correspondence and forward enquires about the group to the contact, even if he or she then delegates the task of responding to someone else (eg to an external organisation acting as the group's secretariat). Multiple

contacts are not registered. If the contact changes you must notify us of the new contact's name, address and telephone number.

Staff

If your group is NOT on the Approved List: this section applies to your group.

12. 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, it is the responsibility of the group's officers to ensure that we are notified. To do so, notify us of the name of the staff member; name and nature of the organisation employing him or her; and his or her job title within that organisation. Please avoid using acronyms and abbreviations. There is no need to state the amount of any remuneration received by staff.
13. It is by no means the case that staff to a group are issued with a parliamentary pass as a matter of course. Passes must be sponsored by a Member or the Commons or Lords, each of whom has a limited number of passes to allocate—mainly to their personal staff.

PART 3: MEETINGS

Part 3 covers the rules on scheduling and advertising meetings; booking meeting rooms and banqueting facilities; attendance and voting rights at meetings; minutes; and the Annual General Meeting.

Frequency and scheduling of meetings

If your group is NOT on the Approved List: paragraph 2 applies but disregard paragraph 1. Your group does not have to meet a set number of times per year, nor does it have to hold an AGM.

1. The group must meet at least twice per calendar year. An Annual General Meeting (AGM) counts as one meeting; the other meeting must be held on a different day from the AGM to qualify as a separate meeting.
2. Avoid scheduling meetings on dates when the Commons is not sitting as Members are unlikely to be here.

Booking meeting rooms

If your group is NOT on the Approved List: this section applies to your group.

3. To assist Members, meetings are invariably held in the Palace of Westminster. To book a meeting room in the Commons contact the Serjeant at Arms office on 020 7219 3090. The booking must be made by, or on behalf of, a Member of the Commons. Alternatively—if the room booking is sponsored by a peer—you may be able to book a room in the Lords. To do so, contact Black Rod's office on 020 7219 6049. For enquiries about banqueting facilities in the Commons call 020 7219 4804 and in the Lords call 020 7219 3356.
4. Meeting rooms and banqueting facilities are unlikely to be available during a parliamentary recess.

Advertising meetings: the All-Party Notices

If your group is NOT on the Approved List: disregard this section. You are not required to advertise any meetings and are not permitted to advertise any meetings on the All-Party Notices. The only exception to this is if the group decides to apply for inclusion on the Approved List, in which case you must hold an 'inaugural election of officers', which must be advertised as such, in advance, on the All-Party Notices. Contact us beforehand for application forms. No group meeting must ever be advertised anywhere as a 'public meeting'.

5. The All-Party Notices is a listing compiled and issued by the Government Whips each Thursday, if the House is sitting the following week. It mainly shows where and when groups are meeting in the week following its issue but may also show meetings that are due to take place at a later date.
6. To place a Notice call the Whips on 020 7219 4333. Tell them the details of the meeting (ie day, date, time, place, name of group and who they should contact if they have any queries). If the meeting is an AGM, ask them to advertise it as an AGM to distinguish it from other meetings. Their deadline for receipt of information from you is currently the Wednesday before the week in which the meeting is to take place, though you should send them the details of your Notice before then so that you allow sufficient time to deal with any queries.
7. Group meetings must never be advertised anywhere as ‘public meetings’.

Quorum and attendance at meetings

If your group is NOT on the Approved List: disregard this section. You must have at least one Member of the Commons or Lords present at every group meeting. The group’s membership may or may not be open to all Members of the Commons or Lords. It is therefore for the group to decide who may or may not attend its meetings.

8. The quorum for any group meeting is 3 members, at least one of whom must be an officer. Each of those three must be a Member of either the Commons or Lords. Any Member of either House may turn up and speak at any meeting of any group; anyone else may only attend if invited by the group.

Voting rights at meetings

If your group is NOT on the Approved List: disregard this section. It is for the group to decide who has voting rights. Changing the voting rights does not affect the group’s title.

9. Any Member of the Commons or 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.
10. Changes to the voting rights allowed by the group could mean that the group would have to change its title. See Part 6 under ‘Group’s title’ for further details.

Minutes of meetings

If your group is NOT on the Approved List: disregard this section. You are not required to compile or distribute minutes of any description.

11. The group must keep sufficient records to enable it to prove that every group meeting is quorate and that the group meets at least twice each calendar year.⁴ However, we will only ask you to provide this information if we have reason to believe that the group is in breach of the rules.
12. Apart from these requirements, the form, content, and distribution of minutes is for the group to decide.⁵

Annual General Meeting

13. Below are the rules on scheduling and advertising an AGM; what happens at the meeting itself; and how to register the result of the AGM.

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| <p>If your group is NOT on the Approved List: disregard this section. You are not required to hold an AGM. If you choose to hold an AGM you may hold it whenever you like. You are not required to advertise the AGM and are not permitted to use the All-Party Notices to do so. Rules about the quorum, who may attend the AGM, and who may vote at it are the same as for any other meeting. There are no rules on the process by which officers are elected and none about what is on the agenda. After the meeting you must notify us, within 28 days, of any changes to the group's Register entry which result from the AGM.</p> |
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Scheduling an AGM

14. The group's 'inaugural election of officers' effectively counts as its first AGM in any given parliament. The group must hold an AGM, at which its officers must be elected, every 12 months from that date. You may hold the AGM any time before that date; otherwise you are expected to hold the AGM in the month in which it is due. AGMs should not be held in during parliamentary recesses.
15. The date of the group's last registered AGM is shown on its Register entry. When the group's AGM is due we write to remind you. The reminder letter will give you a deadline. You must hold the AGM **and** notify us of the result of the AGM by that deadline. To give you some leeway on both counts, the usual deadline is the end of the month after the one in which the AGM is due. If you fail to meet the deadline — which will not be extended — the group will immediately be removed from the Approved List.
16. Being removed from the Approved List is best avoided as it means the loss of associated privileges (see Part 4 for full details).

⁴ See Part 3 under 'Quorum and attendance' and 'Frequency and scheduling of meetings' for further details.

⁵ Any country group affiliated to the CPA or IPU should check with them about the form and content of any information they require of groups.

Advertising an AGM

17. It is not acceptable simply to notify all members of the group that the AGM is taking place; all Members of the Commons and Lords are entitled to be notified and to participate in the AGM. For that reason you must advertise the AGM, in advance of the meeting, on the All-Party Notices issued by the Whips office.⁶ As a bare minimum you must ensure that the AGM appears in the issue published the week before the one in which the AGM is being held.

At the AGM

18. The rules about the quorum, who may attend the AGM, and who may vote at it are the same as for any other meeting.⁷ Other than the election of officers, it is up to you what is on the agenda for the AGM. Similarly there are no set rules on the process by which officers are selected or elected.

Registering the result of an AGM

19. After any AGM you must to notify us of the result. Do **not** send a copy of the minutes, annual report, accounts, or membership list. Instead you must check the group's Register entry; write on it any changes (ie additions or deletions) required; sign the entry; then return the corrected entry to the Assistant Registrar.
20. To remind yourself of changes you are required to notify us of, you may find it useful to refer to 'Registration Checklist (1)' in Part 1. Even if the only change required to the entry is to register the date of the AGM you must still return the entry as proof that you have checked all of it. We will then send you a revised copy of the entry for your records.

⁶ See Part 3 under 'Advertising meetings: the All-Party Notices' for details.

⁷ See earlier in Part 3 for full details.

PART 4: REMOVAL FROM OR REINSTATEMENT ON THE APPROVED LIST

Part 4 covers the rules on why groups are removed from the Approved List; how they are affected by being removed from the list; and how they are reinstated on the list.

Reasons for removal from the Approved List

If your group is NOT on the Approved List: disregard the whole of Part 4 (unless you are applying for reinstatement on the Approved List, in which case see the final section of Part 4). A group is generally only removed from the *Groups' Register* if we are told by the group that it has disbanded; or if it fails to confirm its registration following a general election; or if fails to have at least one Member of the Commons amongst its officers. To be reinstated on the Group's Register, a group would usually have to start anew by holding an 'inaugural election of officers' then completing and returning the 'Application Forms for Cross-Party Groups', available from the Assistant Registrar.

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

Effect of removal from the Approved List

2. When a group is removed from the Approved List, associated privileges are withdrawn. This means that the group:
 - a. must change its title to exclude the words 'All-Party', 'Parliamentary', and 'Associate'
 - b. is not permitted to use the All-Party Notices to advertise any meetings
 - c. has a lower priority than groups on the Approved Lists when booking rooms in the Palace of Westminster.
3. 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 entry will also show that the group is no longer on the Approved List.
4. Once a group has been removed from the Approved List it is bound by a different set of rules (ie those cited throughout this booklet in the text boxes headed 'If your group is NOT on the Approved List').

Getting reinstated on the Approved List

5. Once it has been removed from the Approved List, the group does not have to apply for reinstatement on it, although it is only by doing so that the group can regain the associated privileges.
6. Until it has been reinstated on the Approved List the group is bound by the rules cited throughout this booklet in the text boxes headed 'If your group is NOT on the Approved List'. However, where those rules conflict with the guidance below on achieving reinstatement, follow the latter rather than the rules in the text boxes. Where the conflict arises is in that, ordinarily, groups which are not on the Approved List are not required to hold AGMs and do not have any qualifying members.
7. The method of achieving reinstatement depends on why the group was removed from the Approved List:
 - a. if the group has already held the AGM in question, but failed to notify us of the result, you should notify us of the result in the manner detailed in Part 3 under 'Registering the result of an AGM'.
 - b. if the group failed to hold an AGM, you should hold one then notify us of the result in the manner detailed in Part 3 under 'Registering the result of an AGM'.
 - c. if your group failed to maintain a list of 20 current qualifying members on its Register entry, you should provide the necessary replacement names and ensure that they are from the appropriate parties. See Part 2 under 'Qualifying members' for further details.
8. Once the group has been reinstated on the Approved List we will send you confirmation and an updated copy of the group's Register entry for your records.

PART 5: FINANCIAL AND MATERIAL BENEFITS

Part 5 covers the rules on how to register financial or material assistance (ie ‘benefits’) received by the group.

If your group is NOT on the Approved List: all the rules in Part 5 apply to your group.

Accounting procedures

1. However the group chooses to manage its accounts, you must keep sufficient financial records to enable you to *register* benefits in accordance with the rules below.

Registering benefits

2. The group must notify us within **28 days** from the date it receives from the same source outside Parliament one or more benefits whose total value is £1000 or more in a calendar year. Benefits are categorised as either financial or material and must be registered as follows:—
 - a. **Financial benefits**—ie money received by the group (eg donations, grants, subscriptions). Notify us of the source of the benefit and the amount received by the group. How the group spends the money need not be stated.
 - b. **Material benefits**—(eg the provision of services, hospitality, or gifts other than money). If you do not know the value of the benefit, err on the side of caution when assessing its financial value. Notify us of the source and nature of the benefit; you are not required to state its financial value. If the benefit is ‘administrative assistance’, state what this covers.
3. A couple of other points you should bear in mind when notifying us of benefits are:
 - a. **Where a consultancy provides benefits** (eg secretarial services) at the request of a client, you must state the name of both the consultancy and the client.
 - b. **Cumulative benefits.** A donation of, say, £800 would on its own be exempt from registration as it is below the £1000 threshold. But if the group subsequently receives £200 from the same source in the same calendar year then you would have to register the total benefit (ie £1000) within 28 days of receiving the £200. Once the group has made that initial registration, any further donations received from the same source in the same calendar year need only be registered when such further donations total £500 or more in value. The rules on cumulative benefits apply equally to financial and material benefits.

- c. **Where an MP gains *personally* from a benefit** (eg. hospitality, gifts, research services) and the benefit falls within the rules governing the Register of Members' Interests, it should additionally be included (by the Member concerned) on that Register.
4. Unless a benefit is on-going (eg the provision of secretarial services, annually renewed sponsorship), it will be deleted from the Groups' Register after it has appeared on the latter for a year.

PART 6: MISCELLANEOUS

Part 6 contains sundry rules and information about affiliation to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Inter-Parliamentary Union; amending the group's registered purpose or title; stationery and the use of Commons emblems; and how groups are affected by a general election.

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

If your group is NOT on the Approved List: you are not required to inform us if the group takes up or ends an affiliation with the CPA or IPU, but it is helpful to all concerned if you do so.

1. Only country groups (ie those which relate to a particular country or region) may join the CPA or IPU. For further information please contact the CPA on 020 7219 5373 and the IPU on 020 7219 3013. You must inform us if your group takes up or ends an affiliation with the CPA or IPU so that this may be shown on the group's Register entry.

Group's registered purpose

If your group is NOT on the Approved List: disregard this section. You are not required to register the group's purpose.

2. If you wish to amend the group's 'statement of purpose', which is cited on its Register entry, please send us the revised text so that we can update the Register. Only key points may be registered.

Group's title

If your group is NOT on the Approved List: disregard this section. Your group's title is not determined by voting rights. If you wish to change its title, please notify us of the new title, which must not include the words 'All-Party', 'Parliamentary' or 'Associate'. The rest of the title should merely reflect the group's subject so that the latter is obvious from its title alone

3. Part of the group's title is determined by 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. If for any reason the group needs or wishes to change its title, please inform us of the new title.

Group's stationery

If your group is NOT on the Approved List: this section applies to your group.

4. The Serjeant at Arms department is responsible for the rules on stationery. Please contact them on 020 7219 3070 if you need information about any of the following: headed paper and pre-paid envelopes provided at the expense of the House; purchasing House stationery; using House emblems (eg the Portcullis 'logo' and the words 'House of Commons') on stationery and documents the group designs and pays for.

General elections

If your group is NOT on the Approved List: this section applies to your group.

5. Once a general election has been publicly announced we write to groups with information about what action they need to take after the election. In essence, unless the group re-registers within two calendar months from the date when parliament first meets after a general election, it is removed from the Groups' Register, and from the Approved List (if it is on the latter).⁸ The purpose of this is to allow groups some continuity from parliament to parliament and to give them time to appoint new officers, enrol new members etc.
6. In order to re-register after a general election a group has to hold an inaugural election of officers (which counts as the group's first AGM of the new parliament) then complete and return the 'Application Forms for Cross-Party Groups', within the 2 month period.

⁸ The only exceptions are registered groups funded by Her Majesty's Government (currently only the British-American Parliamentary Group); such group are not required to re-register.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Register of All-Party Groups (known as the ‘Groups’ Register’)

Origin and purpose of the Group’s Register

The Groups’ Register was established as a result of a Resolution made by the House of Commons on 17 December 1985. The Groups’ Register exists so that anyone may check which all-party groups are officially recognised by the House of Commons, who their officers are, and what assistance they receive from outside Parliament. Registration is compulsory where the group includes Members of the Commons (and may include Members of the Lords) from more than one party **and** has at least one officer who is from the Commons.⁹

Administration of the Groups’ Register

The Groups’ Register is compiled and maintained by the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards. Changes to the rules governing the Groups’ Register are determined by the Committee on Standards and Privileges, although where such changes are substantial they are put by the Committee to the House for approval before being implemented.

The Groups’ Register is usually updated every 4-6 weeks, except during long recesses and in the period from the Dissolution of one parliament to the start of another when updates are less frequent. The Register is not printed by The Stationery Office and is not available in bookshops but a copy of the most recent edition is put on the internet at www.parliament.uk (select ‘Index’ on the home page, then the letter ‘R’, then ‘Register of All-Party Groups’). A paper copy is also held for public inspection in the Committee Office of the House of Commons (call 020-7219 4300 to make an appointment) and also in the Oriel Room at the House of Commons (where Members may inspect it).

A group’s Register entry shows its title, officers, financial and material assistance received from outside Parliament, and any relevant gainful occupation of its staff. Additional information is shown on its entry if the group is on the Approved List. This includes the names of 20 qualifying members, a statement of the group’s purpose, affiliation to the Inter-Parliamentary Union or Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, and the date of the group’s last registered AGM.

⁹ Groups with no officers from the Commons are not registered. No separate register exists in the Lords for such groups.

Approved List of All-Party Parliamentary Groups and Associate Parliamentary Groups (known as the ‘Approved List’)

Origin and purpose of the Approved List

The Approved List exists as a result of a Resolution made by the House of Commons in October 1984. The main purpose of the Approved List is to control the extent to which groups use the House’s facilities and status. Although groups may choose not to be on the Approved List, 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 the words ‘All-Party’, ‘Parliamentary’ or ‘Associate’ in the group’s title
- a relative priority over unlisted groups in booking rooms in the Palace of Westminster.

In order to qualify for these privileges groups on the Approved List have to register more information and are subject to more rules than unlisted groups. Privileges are withdrawn if the rules are not adhered to.

Administration of the Approved List

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, although where such changes are substantial they are put by the Committee to the House for approval before being implemented.

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.

A group’s entry on the Approved List shows simply the group’s title and whether it is either an All-Party Parliamentary Group or an Associate Parliamentary Group. Groups are not sent a copy of their entry on the Approved List but receive written confirmation from us when the group is added to, or removed from, the Approved List.