



# **PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE GUIDANCE**

## **APPLYING FOR THE GRANT OF A ROYAL CHARTER**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

An application for a Royal Charter takes the form of a Petition to The Sovereign in Council. Charters are granted rarely these days, and a body applying for a Charter would normally be expected to meet a number of criteria.

Each application is dealt with on its merits, but in the case of professional institutions the main criteria are:

1. The institution concerned should comprise members of a unique profession, and should have as members most of the eligible field for membership, without significant overlap with other bodies.
2. Corporate members of the institution should be qualified to at least first degree level in a relevant discipline.
3. The institution should be financially sound and able to demonstrate a track record of achievement over a number of years.
4. Incorporation by Charter is a form of Government regulation as future amendments to the Charter and by-laws of the body require Privy Council (i.e. Government) approval. There therefore needs to be a convincing case that it would be in the public interest to regulate the body in this way.

It should be stressed that appearing to meet these criteria does not mean that a body will automatically be granted a Charter.

# 2. PRELIMINARY STEPS

The fact of a formal Charter application will be published by this office on our website and in [The Gazette](#). This is to allow other interested individuals or organisations to comment or to lodge counter-petitions. Because the process of Petitioning for a Charter is thus a public one, and can also be expensive in terms of the preparation of the formal documents, this Office encourages institutions to have taken soundings among other bodies who may have an interest, in order to minimise the risk of a counter-petition. Any proposal which is rendered controversial by a counter-petition is unlikely to succeed.

The Privy Council Office should be approached informally at an early stage so that we can give advice on the likely chances of success of a formal Petition. What is required for this purpose is a memorandum covering:

1. the history of the body concerned;
2. the body's role;
3. details of number of members, grades, management organisation and finance;
4. the academic and other qualifications required for membership of the various grades;
5. the body's achievements;
6. the body's educational role both within its membership and more widely;
7. an indication of the body's dealings with Government (including details of the Government Department(s) with the main policy interest, or which sponsor(s) the body, together with contact details of officials who deal with the body), and any wider international links;
8. evidence of the extent to which the body is pre-eminent in its field and in what respects; and
9. why it is considered that the body should be accorded Chartered status, the reasons why a grant would be regarded as in the public interest and, in particular, what is the case for bringing the body under Government control as described above.

At this stage if the draft Charter and by-laws are available, they should be emailed to [enquiries@pco.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@pco.gov.uk) along with the memorandum. Any documentation submitted to this Office will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Privy Council Advisors will consider the submitted memorandum, which should address the points above, as well as the criteria on page 1 (or address why they are not applicable). At this stage, Advisors will indicate whether or not they are generally supportive of the body applying for the grant of a Charter.



### 3. INFORMAL PROCESS

If Privy Council Advisors are generally supportive at the initial stage, the next (informal) step would be for the petitioning body to submit a draft of the proposed Charter and Byelaws.

These draft documents will then be checked by the Privy Council Office before being referred to Advisors with a policy responsibility for the area concerned, for initial tweaks and comments. This stage usually takes around 4 - 8 weeks, but this is merely an indicative timeline and bodies should note that the actual informal considerations could take longer.

The Privy Council Office will then liaise with the applicant body and the relevant government departments until there is a draft version of the Charter and Byelaws that all parties are content with.

### 4. FORMAL PETITION

After the conclusion of the informal process, the body may proceed to petition for a Charter. An application should be made in the form of a Petition, which should commence:

*“To The King’s Most Excellent Majesty in Council.  
The Humble Petition of .....  
Sheweth as follows:-”*

and it should conclude:

*“Your petitioners therefore most humbly pray that Your Majesty may be graciously pleased in the exercise of Your Royal Prerogative to grant a Charter to Your Petitioners in the terms of the draft herewith submitted or in such other terms as may to Your Majesty seem proper.*

*And Your Petitioners will ever pray, etc.”*

The Petition should state the authority (e.g. resolution of a meeting of members) under which it is submitted and should contain sufficient information to enable the Privy Council to make a recommendation to His Majesty. This information should always include:



1. date of the body's foundation and how, if at all, at present incorporated;
2. details of past achievements and extent and character of present activities;
3. size and composition of, and existing qualifications or requirements for, membership;
4. financial position; and
5. generally, the grounds on which it is submitted that the grant of a Charter is desirable and justified.

Where the petitioning body is already incorporated, the Petition should be submitted in the name of the body concerned and be under its corporate seal duly attested. In the case of an unincorporated association, the Petition should be in the names of the Chairman or President and one or more responsible officers, who should each sign the Petition at the end of the Prayer.

On receipt of the signed and sealed Petition, the Privy Council Office will then arrange for an Order of Referral to be approved by The King at the next available meeting of the Privy Council. Any formal Petition which has been referred by His Majesty in Council, to a Committee of the Privy Council for consideration and report, will be gazetted for a period of eight weeks, inviting representation for or against the granting of the Charter, will be published on this site along with a copy of the formal Petition itself.

At the end of this eight-week period, the Committee will make a recommendation on whether or not to advise His Majesty to grant a Charter. At this stage, an Order in Council is made at a Privy Council meeting formally confirming the Committee's advice and His Majesty's decision, acting on the advice of the Privy Council.

## 5. CHARTER GRANT AND PRINTING

Should the Committee advise that His Majesty grant a Charter to the petitioning body, following the Privy Council meeting at which the Order of Grant is formally approved, the printing and proofing process will then begin.

The Privy Council Office will liaise with bodies to arrange the completion of payment authorisation form, which confirms the person responsible for processing the payment of the printing, when the time comes.



On receipt of a completed payment authorisation form, the Privy Council Office will liaise with the printers to obtain a quote for the printing of the Charter as well as a first proof. These proofs are checked internally by the Privy Council Office before being sent to bodies for a proof check and for final approval.

When a body approves a Charter for printing, it can then take up to 3 weeks for the Charter to be printed and delivered to the Privy Council Office.

At this stage, the Crown Office arranges to take delivery of the Charter, ready for the application of the Great Seal. The Privy Council Office will then send a letter to bodies with contact details for the Crown Office, along with a number of A4 paper copies of their Charter.

Bodies will then liaise directly with the Crown Office for the sealing process and once sealed, the Crown Office will be in touch with bodies to arrange for them to collect their sealed Charter.

## 6. COSTS

For every Charter, the Petitioner will be asked to pay for the cost of printing the formal documents. No charges are made by the Privy Council Office, but fees are payable to the Crown Office in respect of sealing the Charter.

As of January 2025, bodies should budget to pay around £500 per page for the printing of the Charter; and approximately £700 in costs to seal the Charter at the Crown Office. However, these figures should be used as indicative estimates only; and a final quote will be provided once a body reaches the printing stage of the process.

