ACADEMY of SOCIAL SCIENCES

CAMPAIGN for SOCIAL SCIENCE

Chair of the Campaign for Social Science

The Academy of Social Sciences (AcSS) is seeking a new Chair for the Campaign for Social Science, to start on 1 January 2026 as Professor Bobby Duffy completes his six-year term as Chair.

The Campaign is an integral part of the Academy and leads on its public-facing advocacy for social science, and in particular its advocacy with the policy communities in the UK Government and devolved nations to make greater use of social science evidence in policy making. The Campaign complements the Academy's other areas of work, including influencing to help sustain the 'health of the social sciences' sector.

The Chair of the Campaign is an appointed member of the Academy's governing body (Council), in common with the chairs of the other main committees. They chair the Campaign Board which currently comprises 12 appointed members. They are also a member of the Executive Committee of the Council together with the President, Honorary Secretary, Honorary Treasurer and the Chief Executive. The Campaign chair reports to the President of the Academy, Will Hutton FAcSS and liaises closely with the Chief Executive, Dr Rita Gardner CBE FAcSS, Dr Ed Bridges, Head of Policy and Public Affairs, and Steve Grundy, Senior Campaign Manager.

The Campaign's work has made great strides over the past six years under Bobby's chairmanship. The Campaign's presence, profile, engagement and outputs have increased significantly, including on the website and on social media, in published reports and briefings, and in an active events programme. The approach has focused around showcasing applied social science and its ability to change lives, enhance society and shape policy.

However, there remains much still to be done to raise the profile, understanding and use of social science in policy settings. And it is more important than ever given a relatively new UK Government and the rapidly changing contexts of higher education within which the Academy and the social sciences find themselves.

The appointment is for an initial term of three years from January 2026, renewable by mutual consent for a further three years. It is an unremunerated, volunteer role.

This is an exciting opportunity to shape the future of the Campaign's work, and to grow its impact, as part of the Academy's 2024-29 strategy, and beyond.

Background

The AcSS is a UK charity (Registered No: 1088537) the purpose of which is to 'Promote social sciences in the UK for public benefit'. Its strategic objectives frame how it aims to fulfil its purpose and are set out in the strategy which is refreshed every five years.

The Academy is a learned and professional body, at the heart of which is a membership of c. 1700 peer elected Fellows, all of whom are leading scholars or practitioners in academic or other sectors (private, public and third sectors) and who apply their social science expertise beyond their 'day job'. The Academy also has at its heart 46 independent member learned societies – the original founding force behind the Academy – that bring a deep disciplinary expertise to complement the Academy's social sciences sector perspective.

The Campaign for Social Science was launched at the House of Lords in January 2011. Since then, it has progressively built a reputation as a leading public advocate for social science in shaping policy and improving lives. Campaign messages are targeted largely to policy, parliamentary and media audiences. For evidence, it draws on the expertise of both academic and practitioner Fellows and the wider social sciences community, on the work of Academy staff, and on the expertise within the Campaign Board.

The Campaign's work is integrated into the work of the Academy as a whole. It links to several strategic objectives; most particularly to the first objective. The Campaign's work is delivered by matrix working across our small staff team, with the exception of the Senior Campaign Manager whose time is dedicated wholly to the Campaign.

Further information on the Campaign's current work can be found on the Campaign's pages on the AcSS website and in the 2024 AcSS Directors' Report

Key activities currently include:

- Five themed Campaign hubs, the most recent being on 'Good growth', that showcase applied social science evidence-led research and its outcomes and impacts in policy-relevant areas;
- The events programme, in which many events are held in partnership with Campaign supporting institutions and/or learned society members. The current events focus in on 'Good growth' and 'AI and social science', and they are complemented by a high- profile annual Campaign Lecture;
- Campaign policy reports, five of which will have been published in 2024 and 2025. The forthcoming Annual Sage Campaign report for 2025 is on the 'Contemporary Relevance of Social Science' and is targeted to the policy making

community. This draws heavily on a two-year AcSS programme of work to define and exemplify the Academy (including Campaign) key messages.

- Advocacy on education and higher education policy proposals relevant to sustaining the “health” of the social sciences. These often take the form of short briefings and consultation responses, may be collaborative with learned society members, and are badged flexibly under the Academy or Campaign banner according to which is most appropriate.

The Campaign is wholly reliant on sponsorships for its funding and has the responsibility of raising those resources, led by the Senior Campaign Manager and supported by the Board. The Campaign supporters currently are almost entirely drawn from the research-strong Higher Education Institutions across the UK and the lead commercial sponsor, Sage Publishing. Annual income in recent years has been of the order of £200,000 and there is an appetite to increase income from new supporters while also sustaining existing supporters in a time of significant challenge for many universities. The Campaign has reserves of c. £250,000.

The Campaign, and the Chair, is supported by a Committee (Board) drawn from across the academic, policy and practitioner communities, and including representation from within the devolved administrations. The Board size can vary from 12 to 18 members, each serving a maximum of two three-year terms.

The Board has been chaired previously by:

2010-2012 – the late Professor Tony Crook CBE FAcSS (a former Pro Vice Chancellor at the University of Sheffield, Chair of Shelter, and a Board member of the Royal Town Planning Institute).

2013 (interim) - Professor Michael Harloe FAcSS (a former Vice Chancellor of the University of Salford).

2013 - 2017- Professor James Wilsdon FAcSS (then Professor of Research Policy and Director of Impact and Engagement, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Sheffield).

2017 – 2019 – Professor Shamit Saggar CBE FAcSS (then Professor of Political Science and Public Policy at the University of Essex).

2019 – 2025 – Professor Bobby Duffy FAcSS, Professor of Public Policy and Director of the Policy Institute, King’s College London.

The Role

The Campaign has done much in recent years to raise, successfully, its profile, reach and output. It has also put in place vital infrastructure to underpin further development, including excellent communications support, our key messages about social science, more fully integrated working across the policy, Campaign and communications staff, and an outcome and impact focused approach to its work. In the next phase of development the Campaign seeks to lever these tools and its credibility to increase its impact for the benefit of the social sciences and the public.

Given the modest amount of staff resource, each annual workplan is aligned to the AcSS strategy, and is tightly prioritized and focused on areas of perceived greatest need and greatest opportunity.

The Role of the Chair of the Campaign Board is to:

- Be a figurehead for the Campaign, representing it publicly and as an advocate for its work with the UK and devolved governments and other related public bodies.
- Represent and speak on behalf of the Campaign at key events and meetings.
- Develop the Campaign's strategic vision as part of the Academy's wider strategy, working with the Council, CEO, Head of Policy and Public Affairs and Senior Campaign Manager.
- Lead and Chair the Board which is one of the constituent committees of the AcSS, in supporting and advising the Campaign.
- Support the Campaign's fundraising endeavours which are managed by the Senior Campaign Manager.
- Contribute to the Academy's governance as a senior trustee on the Council and a member of the Executive Committee.

A commitment of around 2 days a month is needed to fulfil these responsibilities.

The role is unremunerated, but all reasonable expenses are paid in line with normal policies. Committee Chair roles are normally held for a term of three years, with a further three year term possible by mutual agreement.

The Person

This is a substantial role, requiring the person to be:

- A social scientist, or an individual who is respected by the social science community and can bring wider skills and experience, whether from within academia, policy, business and/or third sector research, the media, or other social science related fields.

- Recognised and held in esteem by one or more of these fields.
- A sound leader and strategic thinker capable of seeing the bigger picture of the Academy while focusing on the Campaign activities.
- A good public speaker and presenter, able to engage practitioner, academic, policy and business audiences. Media friendly and media experienced, ideally including social media.
- Experienced at dealing with governmental and other public bodies at senior level.
- Knowledgeable about how public policy is formed and influenced.
- Able to open doors to relevant decision makers, network with key individuals vital to promote the Campaign, and an experienced advocate.
- Pragmatic, and 'commercially' minded, confident at supporting fundraising and in helping to diversify the Campaign's sponsor/donor base.
- Risk aware, particularly in relation to reputational risk, and responsive to the requirements charities are placed under regarding advocacy and 'political' activities.
- Experienced at chairing meetings (this is not a first chair appointment role) and in encouraging the active participation of all Board members, both during and after meetings.
- Able to work collaboratively and constructively with the Academy's staff and as a member of the Executive Committee.
- Able to prioritise the Campaign amongst other commitments; and to attend termly meetings of the Academy Council and participate in short monthly virtual meetings of the Academy's Executive Committee.
- Either an existing Fellow of the Academy or of a standing eligible for election as a Fellow.

Application and Recruitment Process

Please write to Dr Rita Gardner CBE FAcSS, Chief Executive of the Academy, setting out how you meet the requirements of the role and enclosing your CV. Applications should please be sent by email to r.gardner@acss.org.uk

The closing date for applications is Friday 31 October 2025. Interviews are likely to be held in person on Monday 17 November 2025 (date still to be confirmed) in central London.

For further information, please contact Rita Gardner by email: r.gardner@acss.org.uk