



Following Sam Gyimah's resignation Chris Skidmore has been appointed as the new HE Minister. Chris' full role title is Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation with dual reporting hats to both the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Department for Education.

Profile

Author and history lecturer Chris Skidmore is a Tory backbencher. He is one of a number of MPs who took Labour marginals in 2010 and were re-elected with large majorities in 2015. Previously he was a Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Cabinet Office. He plays the guitar and is a fan of Bob Dylan. He is a member of a number of local charities. Chris is married with two children.

Education and Employment History

Born in 1981, he went to Bristol Grammar School and took double first-class honours in history at Christ Church, Oxford. Chris is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

He worked briefly as a journalist on the *Western Daily Press* and *People* magazine, was a researcher to the historian Robert Lacey and an adviser to Bristol's bid for European Capital City of Culture in 2008. He was a part-time lecturer in history at Bristol University.

He has several historical focused publications and has written a biography of the boy King Edward VI and his second book *Death and the Virgin*, was published in 2010. His most recent book *Bosworth, the Birth of the Tudors* appeared in 2013.

Early Political Activities

He chaired the Bow Group and was an education adviser to the Conservative Party, producing reports on topics such as school dropouts and boys' under-achievement. Together with Charlotte Leslie, now MP for North West Bristol, he produced a report on children with special educational needs, such as dyslexia and Asperger's Syndrome.

He published a report on the decline in history teaching in schools, especially in the most disadvantaged areas, and urged a revival by making it a compulsory subject in the English Baccalaureate up to the age of 16.

But in 2011 he turned his mind to the future, as a member of the Free Enterprise group of Tory MPs. He was one of the co-authors with Kwasi Kwarteng MP of *After the Coalition*, setting out a distinctive Conservative agenda, based on entrepreneurship and responsibility. The following year, with four other Conservative MPs, he co-authored *Britannia Unchained – Global Lessons for Growth and Prosperity*.

Political Career

Skidmore was elected to the Kingswood constituency in 2010. The seat had been held by Labour since 1992, with Skidmore winning on a slim majority of 2,445. In 2015 Skidmore won a decisive victory gaining a majority of 9,006, helped by a reduced Liberal Democrat vote.

He delved into history in his maiden speech, invoking the Methodist preachers John Wesley and George Whitefield and their open-air sermons to the coal miners of Kingswood. He spoke of poverty and welfare dependency and urged reform of the welfare system.

- He has campaigned against plans to build houses in the Green Belt, a topic he has pursued in several debates.
- He supported same-sex marriage.
- He supported remaining in the European Union.
- He introduced a Ten-Minute-Rule Bill to require MPs who change their party affiliations to resign their seats and fight by-elections under their new colours.
- In October 2014 he voted for the right of MP recall if constituents signed a petition over a certain threshold.
- In March 2015 he voted against plain packaging for cigarettes.
- In June 2015 he said reducing unemployment was the 'most important' action to reduce child poverty.

Theresa May appointed Chris as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Cabinet Office when she was elected.

He was appointed as vice-chairman of the Conservative party in January 2018, with responsibility for policy. He has also been a party advisor on education (specifically to David Willets and Michael Gove), and was a member of the health (2010-13) and education select committees 2012-14.

His parliamentary posts:

- PPS to George Osborne as First Secretary of State and Chancellor of the Exchequer 2015-16
- Parliamentary Secretary (Minister for the Constitution), Cabinet Office 2016-18
- Now Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and Department for Education (Dec 2018)

His stated political interests are: health, education, social care, disability

Here is his [voting record](#), [speaking record](#), his [parliamentary biography](#) and his [twitter feed](#).

Tweets and responses from the day of his appointment

From *Britannia Unchained* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) coauthored by the new Minister of State for Universities
[@CSkidmoreUK](#) [#highered](#)

continue with maths post-16 struggle to stick with it, and around 30 per cent choose not to carry on with the subject at A2.²⁴

Instead of hard choices, students apply for a degree in media or business, which will often allow for the study of easier A Levels.²⁵ As with US college courses, science A Levels are more harshly marked than those in media and sociology, the difference being up to a grade.²⁶ In a culture of equivalence, where all subjects are deemed equal, students make the seemingly rational choice of going for the easier option. But by not taking a maths A Level they may sacrifice an extra £136,000 in lifetime earnings.²⁷

One report quantified that the taxpayer was wasting £40 million per year on 401 university 'non-courses'. Such courses included specialist make-up design at the University of Bedfordshire, fiction and culture at the university of Glamorgan, aromatherapy and therapeutic bodywork at the University of Greenwich and martial arts and adventure tourism at the University of Derby.²⁸ In 2003, this trend led Education Minister Margaret Hodge to criticise the proliferation of 'Micky Mouse' degrees. By contrast, students seem less keen on taking up real work experience. The UK has one of the lowest participation rates in work placement schemes in Europe.²⁹

12:10 PM - 5 Dec 2018



Plashing Vole @PlashingVole · 19m

After an exhaustive search, the government has decided to take a chance on a white man who attended a private school then Oxford as its new **universities minister**. Who knows what wild and wacky things this outsider will do?

Responding to the news that Chris Skidmore is to be the new Minister for Universities, Nick Hillman, Director of the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI), said:

This is an interesting appointment. No one predicted it, but it's not a radical departure. Chris's impressive bibliography as an author of Tudor history, his past experiences elsewhere in Whitehall and his firm loyalty to his party – when such loyalty is seemingly in short supply – must make him a pretty good fit for the post.

He will need all his many talents in the role. The number one challenge he faces is getting to grips with his brief before the Augar review of post-18 education and funding lands on his desk early next year.

He'll also need to become an expert in accounting over the next fortnight, given the forthcoming ONS review of student loans.

And, if he wants the confidence of the sector, he'll need to steel himself for renewed battles with the Home Office over staff and student mobility.

5 December, 2018 | By Nick Hillman | News



Mary Curnock Cook @MaryCurnockCook · 2h



We have a new **minister** for **universities** and science @CSkidmoreUK. As a former SpAd to David **Willetts** and @michaelgove he'll know the importance of these roles - @dianajbeech should be a keeper for a start

Early life and education [edit]

A descendant of Sir James Scudamore, Skidmore was born on 17 May 1981 at Longwell Green in South Gloucestershire (then in the county of Avon), in the West of England. As a teenager, he became a member of the Conservative Party in 1996.^[1] Skidmore was educated at Bristol Grammar School, an independent day school, before attending Christ Church, Oxford, graduating in 2002 with a first-class degree in Modern History (BA), and later an MSt.^[2]

Skidmore worked for David Willetts and Michael Gove as an advisor, and served as Chairman of the Bow Group for 2007–08.^[3] before being appointed by another right-leaning think tank, Policy Exchange, as a Research Fellow.^[3]

Parliamentary career [edit]

After being selected to contest the marginal seat of Kingswood for the Conservatives in 2009, he was elected as its Member of Parliament in 2010, defeating incumbent Roger Berry of the Labour Party.^[4]

Skidmore served as a member of the Health Select Committee, leaving that committee on 17 June 2013 (being replaced by Charlotte Leslie),^[7] to sit on the Education Select Committee.^[8] He is also a member of the Free Enterprise Group of MPs, and along with colleagues co-authored *After the Coalition* (2011) and *Britannia Unchained* (2012). The authors of *Britannia Unchained* claimed that "Once they enter the workplace, the British are among the worst idlers in the world".^[9]

He was re-elected with an increased majority at the General Election in 2015 and became *Parliamentary Private Secretary* to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.^[10]

From 2016 to 2018, Skidmore was *Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State* at the *Cabinet Office*, where he served as Minister for the Constitution.^[11] Following the 2018 *Cabinet reshuffle*, he was sacked from his Cabinet Office role, but gained the role of Vice-Chairman of the Conservative Party for Policy.^[12]

Skidmore was named by the *ConservativeHome* website in 2012 as one of a minority of loyal Conservative backbench MPs not to have voted against the government in any significant rebellions.^[13] He is a regular guest on BBC political programmes, such as *The Daily Politics*.

Skidmore was opposed to *Brexit* prior to the 2016 EU membership referendum.^[14] In February 2018, he argued in a speech to the Centre for Policy Studies that his party needed a broad and positive policy programme to gain wider support, further stating: "If we are just going to talk about Brexit then the Conservative Party will rapidly decline".^[15]



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