



Speechwriter for the Secretary-General - Secretary-General's Office

APPLICATION GUIDELINES - COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT HEADQUARTERS

The job description and person specification detail information on the directorate, and the educational qualifications, experience and competencies required for the post. A summary of the terms and conditions for this post is also made available to you.

- You must be a **national of a Commonwealth Country**. You will be required to provide evidence of this if you are shortlisted for the post.
- It is the Commonwealth Secretariat's policy not to employ close relatives of current members of staff.
- All appointments are subject to **satisfactory references**. You will be required to provide details of three referees, one of whom should be your current or most recent employer and one for your employer prior to that, ensuring that you account for the last two years of your employment history in your application. Referees should not be related to you and should be able to give an assessment of your professional abilities as well as your character. The secretariat reserves the right to take up all references including the current employers during the selection process.
- You will be required to produce evidence of any educational and professional qualifications to support your application on the day of your interview.
- Salary on appointment is £80,672 per annum. This is subject to the deduction of internal income tax (currently aligned with UK income tax rates) and UK National Insurance contributions (from which overseas-recruited Diplomatic staff members are exempt).
- The Commonwealth Secretariat's retirement age is 65. You are expected to be able to serve a minimum 3-year term before your retirement age.

If you wish to be considered for this post, please ensure that you submit your **curriculum vitae** together with a **covering letter** setting out your experience and skills in relation to the person specification, competencies and other requirements for the post. Your application should be received no later than **Monday 18 August 2025 at 17:00 BST**.

Applications should be made via our online application system at <http://thecommonwealth.org/jobs>.

Thank you for your interest in working at the Commonwealth Secretariat.

The Recruitment Team
The Commonwealth Secretariat
E-mail: HQ-Recruitment@commonwealth.int

SUMMARY OF TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR PAY POINT F

This is a summary of the principal terms and conditions for Pay Point F at the Commonwealth Secretariat. These terms and conditions are non-negotiable. The full terms and conditions are set out in the Commonwealth Secretariat Staff Rules and Regulations which form part of the contract of all staff members.

A. **GENERAL**

Contract Term Appointments are on limited term contracts of usually three years. Contracts may be renewed by mutual agreement subject to fully satisfactory performance, the organisations requirements at that time and availability of funds. The Secretary-General will retain the flexibility to approve or decline extensions as circumstances warrant.

Medical Appointments are subject to passing a medical examination.

Security Clearance Appointments are either subject to clearance to the extent that the candidate's own government raises no objection to their suitability for employment or through the provision of a satisfactory Police Check from the candidate's own national police authority.

Probation All appointments are subject to a six-month probationary period. This may be extended at the Secretary-General's discretion for up to another six months.

Period of Notice During probationary service, the appointment may be terminated by the Secretariat giving five weeks' notice. Thereafter employment may be terminated by the Secretariat giving six months, or by the staff member giving three months, written notice.

Annual Leave 30 working days per year. Leave without pay will not qualify for the earning of annual leave entitlements.

Pension/Gratuity The Secretariat contributes 15 per cent of gross salary to either the Commonwealth Secretariat Workplace Pension Scheme or the Commonwealth Secretariat Gratuity Scheme.

On commencement, Staff members are automatically enrolled into the Workplace Pension Scheme. Thereafter, the staff member can select one of the following three options:

Option 1: The equivalent of 15 percent of an individual's gross salary allocated as employer contribution to the Workplace Pension Scheme.

Option 2: An amount equivalent to 10 percent of the individual's gross salary allocated as employer contribution to the Workplace Pension Scheme and 5 percent allocated to the gratuity scheme.

Option 3: Opt out of the Workplace Pension Scheme and have 15 percent of an individual's gross salary paid into the Gratuity Scheme This must be done within 30 days following enrolment.

In respect of the Gratuity Scheme each month the Secretariat will pay the equivalent of 15 percent or 5 percent of an individual's gross salary into an interest bearing account. At the end of the contract, the staff member will receive an ex-gratia payment of the cumulative amount including interest. This payment is subject to the Secretary-General's discretion.

Personal contributions to the Workplace Pension Scheme are subject to limits set by HRMC.

Further information on the above schemes can be obtained from Human Resources and Facilities Management Division (HRFM).

Retirement Age

The Commonwealth Secretariat retirement age is 65 years.

Private Healthcare and Dental Cover

The Secretariat provides non-contributory private healthcare and dental cover for all London-based employees, their spouses/officially recognised partners and children. The cover is subject to underwriting conditions

Insurance

Subject to funding, the Secretariat may put in place various insurance schemes for its employees. Where such policies are in place, they shall be subject to the conditions of the underwriters and may change from time to time. Among the insurance policies the Commonwealth Secretariat provides is the Personal Accident/Travel policy. With regard to bodily injury, the underwriters conditions for that policy provide for the following, in respect of pre existing conditions;

Any contributory degenerative condition or disablement (as determined by a Qualified Medical Practitioner) known by the Insured Person to be in existence at the time of sustaining Bodily Injury will be taken into account by Insurers in assessing the level of benefit payable.

Further information on the existing policies would be made available to staff by the Corporate Services Division on request. Staff shall be notified of any changes in the policies as they become necessary from time to time.

Internal tax

In accordance with the Commonwealth Secretariat Act 1966, Staff of the Commonwealth Secretariat are exempt from United Kingdom income tax on their salaries and emoluments on condition that the Secretariat levies its own internal income tax for the benefit of the Secretariat.

Internal tax rates are aligned to UK rates and allowances for the relevant tax year. The rates and allowances are applied proportionately for all staff who join or leave the Secretariat part way through the UK tax year (6th April - 5th April).

Joining the Secretariat part way through the tax year will result in you being placed on emergency tax code. This includes an amount equivalent to the UK annual tax free allowance divided into equal monthly amounts. By applying this rate, you will effectively receive a pro-rated tax free allowance for the portion of the tax year worked at the Secretariat.

Staff who were liable to pay UK tax prior to recruitment may be entitled to a refund of tax from the Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC) if they have previous taxed earnings in the tax year of joining the Secretariat. The employee would need to apply to HMRC to determine this. Staff liable to pay tax in other jurisdictions/countries would need to apply to the relevant tax jurisdiction to establish whether they would be entitled to a refund of tax.

Further information on the above schemes can be obtained from the Secretariat Payroll team via Human Resources.

B. APPOINTMENT OF BRITISH CITIZENS AND UK RESIDENTS

Salary £80,672 per annum gross, subject to deductions of National Insurance contributions and Commonwealth Secretariat internal income tax aligned with UK income tax rates. This salary is fully inclusive. (Please refer to section A for further information about internal tax).

C. APPOINTMENT OF OVERSEAS RECRUITED STAFF (NON UK NATIONALS)

“Overseas Recruited Staff Member” means an officer of the Secretariat whose stay in the UK is contingent upon their employment with the Secretariat. Should such a staff member acquire or have, while employed in the Secretariat, been entitled to British nationality or residential status in the UK the staff member will cease, from the date of acquisition or entitlement, to be an overseas recruited staff member.

Salary £80,672 per annum Gross. Please note Salaries for overseas staff will be subject to deductions of National Insurance contributions and Commonwealth Secretariat internal income tax aligned with UK income tax rates. (Please refer to section A for further information about internal tax).

Installation and Termination Grant Will be provided on commencement and termination of appointment at 7% of net salary.

Expatriation Allowance Payable on a monthly basis at a rate of 1/12th of 14% of your gross annual salary.

Travel Upon commencement and termination of service, the staff member, and accompanying dependent family members, as defined in the Human Resource Handbook, will have their air travel costs met by the Secretariat in accordance with the Travel and Expense Policy and procedures.

For all journeys, the most direct means of air travel available will be provided. In respect of the accompanying family members the relevant journey must be made within 6 months of the eligible staff member's own journey.

If travel is not at the same time as the member of staff, family members will only be entitled to economy class travel, irrespective of length of journey.

Home Leave The staff member is entitled to home leave once in every three years of qualifying service.

Education Allowance An education allowance will be payable, provided the dependent* child is in continuing full-time education (school and undergraduate level) at the time of the staff member's appointment. The staff member may be entitled to 75% or £18,706 of admissible costs per child per scholastic year.

The admissible cost is subject to a maximum amount of £24,941 per child per scholastic year. Full details of the education assistance policy is available on request.

Transporting Effects on commencement and termination The Secretariat will pay the cost of transporting by sea a staff member's effects up to 500 cubic feet in the case of a single staff member, and up to 700 cubic feet in the case of a married staff member plus an allowance of 100 cubic feet per dependent child* residing with the head of the family. In addition, up to 15 kilograms of excess accompanied luggage by air will be allowed on joining and termination for the staff member, spouse and each dependent child*. Not more than one automobile may be allowed to be transported. The Secretariat will meet the reasonable cost of insurance of personal effects. The Secretariat will meet the reasonable cost of insurance of personal effects. For a 20ft container (internal volume of 1,050 cubic ft) the value of goods insured is up to £35,000.

Expatriation Benefits Should the staff member acquire resident status in the UK, the entitlement to expatriate salary and other benefits will cease immediately. Staff claiming these benefits will be required to sign an annual 'residential status certificate'. An improper claim will lead to disciplinary action.

Subsistence Allowance on commencement When taking up an appointment and provided a staff member stays in approved accommodation, subsistence allowance at the appropriate United Nations rate will be paid in respect of the staff

and termination member, accompanying spouse (75 per cent) and dependent children* (50 per cent) for a period of up to two weeks from the date of the staff member's arrival. Thereafter, an additional period of three weeks will be granted. The total stay in approved accommodation is for a maximum of five weeks. Two weeks' subsistence allowance will be paid on termination.

Diplomatic Immunities & Privileges There are no diplomatic immunities and privileges attached to the holder of this post. Staff members are expected to observe the laws of the UK and other countries in which they may work. Any involvement with the police or other law enforcement authorities must be reported.

* *A Dependant Child is an unmarried natural child or a legally adopted child, who normally resides with the employee and is under the age of 18 or member of an employee's family under 25 and in full-time education. The Secretary-General has discretion to declare a child who is not the natural or legally adopted child to be a dependent child and to waive the age limits and education requirements where the child is differently abled." Unless otherwise specified, no more than three children (as designated by the staff member) will be considered as "dependent" for the purpose of these rules.*

28 July 2025

Notification of Vacancy

Post Title: Speechwriter for the Secretary-General, Secretary-General's Office

The Commonwealth Secretariat invites member governments to draw the attention of their citizens to this vacancy and to encourage suitable applications.

All applications will be subject to the Secretariat's competitive recruitment process.

An application pack including a job description and person specification, together with the summary terms and conditions of service applicable to the post, are attached. These documents are also available on the Commonwealth Secretariat's website, <http://thecommonwealth.org/jobs>

In line with the Commonwealth's commitment to gender equality, the Commonwealth Secretariat encourages applications from appropriately qualified women for this post. In making appointments, particularly to senior positions, the Secretary-General also takes into account the representational balance of staff from across the regions of the Commonwealth.

All applications, including those supported by member governments, will be acknowledged. The Commonwealth Secretariat receives an extremely high volume of applications for each role and values each one. You can expect to be notified of the outcome of your application in due course, before the recruitment process concludes.

All applications for the post should include a curriculum vitae and three referees, accompanied by a short covering letter setting out their relevant experience and skills in relation to the competencies and other requirements for the post. All applications should be addressed to Human Resources, Commonwealth Secretariat. The closing date is **18 August 2025 at 1700 BST**.



Ms Alia Zafar

Director - Human Resources and Facilities Management Division

Encl.



The Commonwealth

JOB AND TASK DESCRIPTION

Job Title: Speechwriter for the Secretary-General

Directorate: Office of Secretary General (SGO)

Grade: F

Reports To: Chief of Staff

General Information

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 56 independent and equal sovereign states. Its unique strength lies in the combination of its diversity and shared inheritance. Spanning five regions globally, it includes some of the world's largest, smallest, richest, and poorest countries; 33 of its members are small states, many of them island nations. The Commonwealth is home to 2.7 billion citizens, of which 60% are under the age of 30.

The Commonwealth Secretariat in London is the principal intergovernmental agency of the Commonwealth and its backbone, promoting democracy, rule of law, human rights, good governance, and social and economic development. Reflective of its membership, it is a voice for small states and a champion for youth employment. The Secretariat convenes summits and high-level meetings; executes plans agreed by the Commonwealth Heads of Government; promotes Commonwealth values and principles; and facilitates the work of the Commonwealth family of organisations.

Job Summary

The Speechwriter will be responsible for drafting high-quality speeches, statements, op-eds, and clearing briefing notes for the Secretary-General. The role requires exceptional writing skills, a deep understanding of international affairs, and the ability to convey complex policy issues in a compelling and accessible manner.

The role liaises with relevant Divisions in the Secretariat on behalf of the Office of the Secretary-General to ensure policy coherence and coordination of effort across the Secretariat as well as appropriate support and leadership by the Secretary-General.

Task Description

The duties include but are not restricted to:

- Research, draft, and edit speeches, remarks, and statements for the Secretary-General for delivery at high-profile international and domestic engagements.
- Coordinating and finalizing talking points and briefings for media appearances, official meetings, and conferences.
- Ensure speeches align with the Commonwealth's values, strategic priorities, and the Secretary-General's voice and vision.
- Work closely with policy advisors, communications teams, and external stakeholders to ensure consistency, accuracy and effectiveness of messaging.



The Commonwealth

- Leads the coordination of technical input from Directorates including briefing material and policy papers, reviewing and distilling pertinent information for the Secretary-General in preparation for events as required.
- Aligns messaging to HR communications ensuring a consistent and standardised organisational approach to internal matters.
- Contribute to creating greater awareness of the Commonwealth's work among policy makers, multi-lateral organisations, private business and partners to ensure the Commonwealth is depicted positively
- Conduct thorough research on political, social, and economic developments affecting Commonwealth nations.
- Adapt messaging for diverse audiences, from global leaders and policymakers to civil society and the general public.
- Provide rapid response speechwriting support for urgent and evolving situations.
- Maintain an archive of past speeches and statements for reference and continuity.
- Work with the Director, Communications Division to promote a proactive media strategy for the Secretary-General in line with the wider Communications Strategy of the Secretariat.
- Attends meetings and travels with the Secretary-General as necessary.
- Adheres to the Gender Equality values of the Commonwealth as enshrined in the Charter and Secretariat's Gender Equality Policy.
- Undertakes other duties as may be required from time to time.

Person Specification

Education:

- A post-graduate degree in International Relations, Communications, Journalism, Political Science, or a related field

Experience:

Minimum of 10 years proven experience in speechwriting at a senior government, diplomatic, or international organisation level.

Skills:

- Outstanding writing, editing, and research skills, with the ability to produce clear, persuasive, and engaging content.
- Strong knowledge of international relations, global governance, and Commonwealth affairs.
- Ability to translate complex policy issues into accessible language.
- Political sensitivity and discretion in handling confidential information.
- Exceptional organizational and multitasking abilities.
- Outstanding written and verbal communication skills.
- Proficiency in office software (e.g., Microsoft Office Suite).
- Discretion, professionalism, and attention to detail.
- Ability to adapt quickly to changing circumstances.
- Excellent interpersonal skills, with the ability to work under pressure and meet tight deadlines.



Competencies

Respect for Diversity

Works effectively with people from all backgrounds.

Treats all people with dignity and respect. Treats men and women equally.

Shows respect and understanding of diverse points of view, and demonstrates understanding in daily work and decision-making.

Examines own biases and behaviours to avoid stereotypical responses and does not discriminate against any individual or group.

Identifies biases in systems & processes.

Working with Others

Regularly shares information of value with colleagues.

Shows commitment to delivering on key agreements made to colleagues.

Makes an effort to view a situation from the other party's perspective as well.

Demonstrates awareness and sensitivity to colleagues' pressures.

Utilises networks to ensure similar goals are achieved collaboratively.

Develops long term relationships across cultures and/or geographical boundaries.

Uses relationships to identify the best people to help in the completion of tasks .

Tactfully deals with difficult people to gain buy-in and manage their expectations.

Adapting & Innovating

Recognises opportunities for improvement and proposes change with impact and effect.

Helps others evaluate and strengthen ideas.

Quickly grasps new concepts and how to apply them.

Demonstrates flexibility e.g. by working beyond own remit in order to achieve an objective inter alia.

Will effectively reorganise activities when faced with changing contexts and demands.

Welcomes and adapts to new ideas and/or approaches.

Adapts personal style to meet the needs of others.



Developing and Applying Expertise

Takes advantage of opportunities to develop an area of expertise.

Takes learning from previous experience and applies them appropriately.

Demonstrates willingness to learn new skills and/or approaches.

Accountability

Takes ownership of assigned tasks, honours deadlines.

Ensures timely delivery of outputs within defined cost and quality standard parameters.

Takes ownership of assigned tasks, honours deadlines.

Ensures timely delivery of outputs.

February 2025