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- NEWS
- 13 February 2025

Royal Society will meet amid campaign to revoke Elon Musk's fellowship

More than 1,300 scientists have signed a letter calling on the world's oldest science society to reassess the billionaire's membership following cuts to US science.

By

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Elon Musk became a foreign member of the Royal Society, the world's oldest scientific academy, in 2018. Credit: Jim Watson/AFP via Getty

The Royal Society in London has called a meeting to discuss the behaviour of fellows following a growing campaign by scientists over the membership of Elon Musk. The 3 March meeting comes after more than 1,300 scientists signed an [open letter](#) expressing "deep concerns" about the conduct of billionaire Musk, who is a fellow.

Musk is working closely with US President Donald Trump on sweeping government reforms that [threaten flagship US research programmes](#) and are [causing havoc to scientists in the United States and globally](#). He is also accused of spreading misinformation on the social media site X, which he owns.

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Two Royal Society fellows have resigned over the institution's perceived lack of action over Musk's behaviour in recent months.

“It is tarnishing their reputation and to some degree devalues the honour of awarding fellowships. Does one want to be associated to a society that does not stand up for its values?” says Stephen Curry, a retired structural biologist at Imperial College London, who wrote the letter and [published it on his blog](#) on 11 February.

A spokesperson for the Royal Society says that issues raised about individual fellows are dealt with in confidence and in accordance with its code-of-conduct processes. Musk did not respond to requests for comment.

Prestigious appointment

Musk became a fellow of the society — the world’s oldest science academy — in 2018 for his companies’ development of technologies such as [space rockets](#), electric cars and [brain implants](#). The society has about living 1,800 fellows and foreign members, considered one of the most prestigious appointments in UK science. They are elected for making a “substantial contribution to the improvement of natural knowledge” through a rigorous competitive process.

Trump appointed Musk, the world’s richest man, to lead an [advisory group called the Department of Government Efficiency \(DOGE\)](#) to find cuts to government spending and regulations. So far, the administration has attempted to [freeze federal research grants and slash funding by the US National Institutes of Health](#).

Curry’s letter describes “an assault on scientific research”. “It has sought to impose huge cuts in funding and a regime of censorship (particularly with regard to equity, diversity and inclusion and climate issues) that is a direct threat to freedom of expression and academic freedom”. These actions contravene the society’s code of conduct for fellows, he says.

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Researchers worldwide have signed the letter, which calls for the society to stand up for the science community and “the values it claims to believe in”.

Nature understands that the society has scheduled a meeting of fellows next month to “discuss public pronouncements and behaviours of other fellows”.

It has been more than 150 years since a fellow has been expelled from the society, according to the spokesperson.

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