



Parliament for Researchers - how to work with select committees



UK Parliament and Government
What are select committees
How select committees work
Getting involved with select committees
How to give good evidence
Resources and support for you

Parliament ≠ Government

UK Parliament



- Commons, Lords and Monarch
- Holds Government to account
- Makes laws
- Enables the Government to raise and spend money

UK Government



- Some MPs and some Peers, chosen by the Prime Minister
- Runs Government departments and public services
- Is accountable to Parliament

What are select committees?

- Conduct inquiries and produce reports on a range of matters, from the conduct of Government to specialist subject areas
- Purpose is to hold Government to account
- Invite written and oral evidence from witnesses
- Can employ subject specialists as specialist advisers, usually academics/expert practitioners



House of Commons select committees

- Appointed to scrutinise the spending, policy and administration of Government departments
- One Select Committee per Government department
- Members are backbench MPs
- Staffed by team of parliamentary staff led by clerk



House of Lords select committees

- Major committees are cross-cutting, e.g. Economic Affairs, Science and Technology, Communications and Digital
- Ad hoc committees e.g. COVID-19, Democracy and Digital Technologies
- Members are backbench Peers
- Staffed by team of parliamentary staff led by clerk



How Select Committees work



Select committees: getting involved

- Follow committees on Twitter, and/or sign up for email alerts via www.parliament.uk
- Submit written evidence to relevant inquiries (may lead to oral evidence)
- Apply for opportunities to be a specialist adviser
- Offer to host a visit for a select committee, or give a private briefing



What's in it for you / them?

Select Committees

- expertise
- objectivity
- recommendations

Researchers

- impact
- publication
- profile
- parliamentary privilege



Questions?

What is evidence?

- Written submission in response to a call for evidence
- Spoken contribution at an oral evidence session
- Will be published online unless you request otherwise
- Must be original i.e. not already published elsewhere (although you can reference/hyperlink previously published work)

What is good written evidence?

1. Be concise and relevant:

- Keep to the word limit (3,000 words or less)
- Include a summary
- Use the Terms of Reference and don't copy/paste other reports
- Don't feel that you have to respond to every single term of reference

2. Make policy recommendations

- Don't just diagnose the problem
- Be specific whenever possible
- Don't just call for more research!

3. Write for an interested non-expert, avoiding:

- Too many acronyms
- Jargon
- Politicised language

What is good oral evidence?

1. Be concise and relevant:

- Stick to the question you have been asked
- Don't feel you have to answer every question

2. Be engaging:

- Use examples where possible – e.g. refer to a real person (anonymously) rather than a vague problem
- Highlight your calls for action
- Show respect for the Members and the Committee

3. Feel free to follow up in writing

- If you forget to raise something important
- If you don't have certain facts and figures to hand
- If you want to request a footnote on the transcript



More questions?

Find a select committee relevant to your research

- Follow the link to an A-Z list of select committees.
- Look through the list and identify at least one relevant committee.

There may not be a committee obviously relevant to your research

Try and think about which policy area your research/expertise is most likely to fit into or influence.

Take a look at the range of inquiries from a potentially relevant committee, to get a sense of the scope of that committee.

You can also see all [currently open calls for evidence](#), in order to browse by inquiry rather than by committee.

More resources and support

Online resources and 'how to' guides:

www.parliament.uk/research-impact

@UKParl_Research

Dedicated Knowledge Exchange Unit (Sarah, Naomi and Laura):

keu@parliament.uk



Houses of Parliament
Westminster
SW1A 0AA

keu@parliament.uk
+44 (0)20 7219 2840
[@UKParl_Research](https://twitter.com/UKParl_Research)
parliament.uk/research-impact