



Parliament for PhD students - how to engage with the UK Parliament



What is the UK Parliament
UK Parliament, Government and devolved administrations
Who uses research at the UK Parliament
- POST; Select Committees; Libraries; APPGs
Resources and support for PhD students

What is the UK Parliament?



House of Commons



House of Lords



The Monarch

What does the UK Parliament do?



- Represents the people
- Checks and challenges the work of the Government (scrutiny)
- Makes and changes laws (legislation)
- Debates the important issues of the day (debating)
- Checks and approves Government spending (taxes and budgets)

What is the UK Government?



- The party or parties who can command the confidence of the House of Commons forms the Government.
- The Government:
 - runs public departments (e.g. Home Office, Department for Education)
 - proposes new laws to the UK Parliament
 - is accountable to Parliament

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

Devolved administrations

Northern Ireland Executive /
Northern Ireland Assembly
(*Stormont*)

'MLAs' = Members of the
Legislative Assembly

Scottish Government /
Scottish Parliament
(*Holyrood*)

'MSP's = Members of the
Scottish Parliament

Welsh Government / *Senedd*
Cymru (Welsh Parliament)

'MSs' = Members of the Senedd

Since 1999

- Certain powers devolved (e.g. education or health)
- Certain powers reserved (e.g. UK defence or foreign policy)



Questions?

Who uses research in the UK Parliament?



POST

- Bridges research and policy to ensure that the best available research evidence feeds into the legislative process and scrutiny of Government, through:
 - Horizon scanning briefings (POSTnotes)
 - Reactive advice for Committees and Libraries (POSTbriefs)
 - Events
 - Knowledge Exchange (internal and external)
 - Academic fellowships

Online Information and Fake News



Digital technologies such as internet search engines and social media platforms are an increasingly popular way of accessing news and information. This note considers how people access news online, how algorithms (sequences of instructions) and social networks influence the content that users see, and options for mitigating any negative impact.

Background

In 2017, the proportion of UK adults consuming news online exceeded those who watched news on TV (74% versus 60%).¹ Meanwhile, a smaller proportion read news in print (41%), compared to in 2013 (59%).^{1,2} Social media platforms (2016³) and internet search engines can help users to find the items that they consider most interesting or relevant by filtering content. Some suggest that filtering could mean users seeing only content that conforms to their preferences.⁴ Others argue that users still see more content, for example, via print, TV or radio.⁵ Academics, journalists and others have raised concerns about the impact of algorithms on news consumption online, and the effect that it has on public opinion, for example, as elections.⁶ This

Overview

- Social media platforms and internet search engines have made it easier to produce, distribute and access information online.
- These technologies, combined with user behaviour, filter the content that users see. Some studies suggest that this limits user exposure to attitude-challenging information while others argue that users still see a wider range of information than offline.
- Online fake news has the potential to confuse and deceive users, and is often financially or politically motivated.
- UK efforts to address these issues are largely led by industry and focus on fake news. They include better identification, fact-checking and user education.

The Reuters Institute and Ofcom found that the website apps of TV and radio companies are the most popular source of online news in the UK.^{1,2} For instance, 47% of adults who accessed news online (surveyed in 2017) reported that they had used BBC News online in the past week. People are increasingly using social media to access news in the UK,^{1,2} 41% of adults asked in 2017 reported using it as a source for news in the past week, up from 20% in 2013.^{1,2} Search engines are also key for finding news. The proportion of adults who accessed news online in 2016 did so via a search engine, up from 18% in 2013.^{1,2} Other news consumption may differ from what is available data is limited.⁷

POST: getting involved

- Sign up to the POST mailing list, and/or follow POST on Twitter: @POST_UK
- Look out for relevant POSTnotes being written and get in touch with the author to contribute
- Propose a topic for a POSTnote
- Attend an event
- Apply for a Fellowship

Select committees

- Conduct inquiries and produce reports on a range of matters, from the conduct of Government to specialist subject areas
- Committees can be departmental (House of Commons) or more cross-cutting
- Invite evidence from witnesses
- Can employ subject specialists as specialist advisers, usually academics/expert practitioners



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)
- Watch out for opportunities to be a specialist adviser

Find a select committee relevant to your research

- Follow the link in the Q&A feed 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.

Commons and Lords Libraries

- Impartial information and briefing services for MPs, Peers, their staff, committees and staff of the Houses
- Produce a wide range of briefing material, available on dedicated websites for each Library
- House of Commons Library has subject specialists producing briefings
- Reactive and responsive to questions from Members, business in each House and current affairs
- Contact papers@parliament.uk, FAO subject specialist, 250 words maximum



All Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs)

- Informal groups of MPs and Peers focused on subjects or countries
- Some meet regularly, hold events, produce reports and run inquiries
- Allow Members to:
 - develop their knowledge
 - meet other interested Members
 - show their interest
 - raise awareness on a topic

Full register of groups available on www.parliament.uk





More questions?

First steps to getting involved as a PhD student

1. Trust your own expertise!
2. Think about why you want to engage with Parliament, i.e. what would you like to achieve, and which area/s of policy your knowledge/research could relate to
3. Use the resources on the KEU webhub - a 'one stop shop' for information for researchers engaging with Parliament
4. Watch out for opportunities from POST, including PhD fellowships - <https://post.parliament.uk/fellowships/>
5. Position yourself to spot other opportunities to be involved – e.g. to submit evidence to relevant select committee inquiries

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