

PARLIAMENTARY ENGAGEMENT: GUIDANCE FOR RESEARCHERS

The world today is facing enormous challenges and we look to our policy-makers – and those around them – to find and implement ways to address these challenges. However, solutions only work if those making the decisions are informed by evidence. Your research – both your individual projects and your broader expertise – can play a key role in providing this evidence, but it's not always easy to get your findings and recommendations to those making the decisions.

This guide has been created to help you navigate the system and get your message heard. We've identified a set of steps to guide you through engaging with parliamentarians, from identifying where to start to creating memorable, accessible and useable communications. Use these to build policy engagement into planning at the start of each research project.

Why is parliamentary engagement important?

Evidence-based research should be at the heart of the legislative and scrutiny work taking place in all four of the UK's legislatures: the UK Parliament at Westminster, the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Senedd and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

UK Parliament

[Research carried out in 2017](#) found that research was used by MPs and Peers in a range of different ways: to provide background knowledge; to inform opinions; to test hypotheses; to provide credibility; and to provide balance. However, the same study found that academic research did not always 'cut through' to policy actors, either because it was submitted (or found) too late to be influential in the decision-making process, or because it was poorly presented, too technical or took too long to digest. By engaging effectively with parliamentarians, you'll be sharing your work more widely, contributing to decision-making processes that can lead to demonstrable change within society, and ensuring that your research has impact and makes a difference.

Who should I engage with?

Select committees

The main route for researchers to engage with the UK Parliament is through select committees: cross-party groups of MPs or Peers (or both) who hold meetings separate to the plenary proceedings in the Commons or Lords chambers. Select committees in the House of Commons have a minimum of 11 members and their composition will reflect the overall party composition on the green benches: as there is a Conservative majority in the Commons, select committees will also have a majority of Conservative members. Similarly, the number of committee chairs allocated to each party roughly reflects the composition of MPs: currently there are 16 Conservative chairs, nine Labour chairs and two SNP chairs. The decision on which party chairs which committee is taken in private by the party whips and then the House of Commons as a whole will vote for the chairs (from a shortlist of candidates from the respective party allocated the role of chair). Individual committee members are selected within their own party groups, usually by secret ballot.

Select committees operate primarily by holding inquiries on issues or proposed legislation within their remit. The choice of inquiries will usually come from suggestions from the chair or members, or from committee staff, although occasionally committees will formally ask the public for suggestions. If you build a close relationship with committee staff (as outlined below), you may have an opportunity to offer suggestions of a policy area requiring scrutiny. Inquiries start often with a private meeting by the committee in which they seek the views of experts in the field. They are then likely to issue a Call for Evidence or Terms of Reference inviting the public—and researchers—to submit their views. The select

committee will consider whether to accept the submission as written evidence. If accepted, it will usually be published on the committee's website and will inform the inquiry. The select committee will usually choose to hold a series of oral evidence sessions, inviting key stakeholders and experts to discuss the issues in the inquiry in more depth (only a small proportion of those submitting written evidence will be asked to provide oral evidence as well). It is also likely that the responsible government minister will be asked to answer questions in the final evidence session. Once the evidence gathering is complete, the select committee will draft and agree a final report, with their conclusions and recommendations to the Government (it is worth noting that select committees aim to operate on a consensual cross-party basis in contrast to proceedings in the Commons chamber). This will be reported to the House and published, and the Government is expected to reply within two months. The launch of the report may include a statement by the Chair of the committee in the House of Commons, but this is not guaranteed and does not happen in the majority of cases.

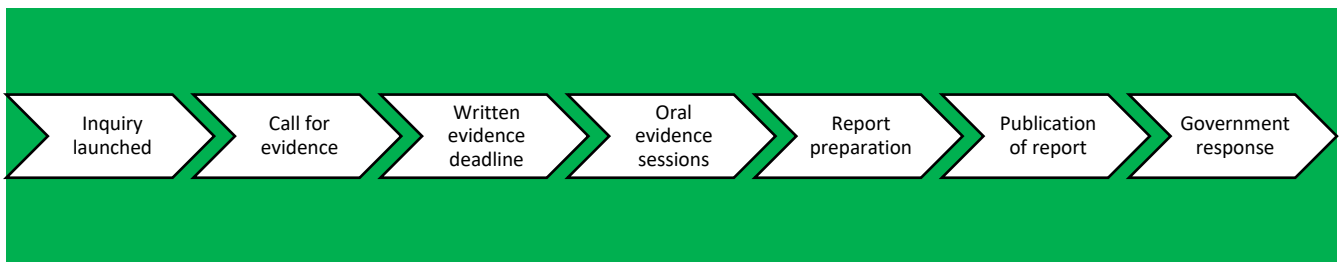


Figure 1: Select committee inquiry process

Select committees also hold one-off evidence sessions, which do not usually include a call for evidence or final report. Select Committees in the Commons will also hold pre-appointment hearings for the Government's proposed candidate for a number of public appointments.

There are select committees in each House: in the Commons, select committees typically scrutinise the spending, policies, and administration of a particular government department and its associated public bodies (departmental select committees), with a small number of cross-cutting committees. The remit and structure of Commons committees will usually reflect any changes in the machinery of government. For example, prior to 2008 the issue of climate change was the responsibility of the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs select committee. The creation of the Department for Energy and Climate Change in 2008 led to the establishment of an Energy and Climate Change (ECC) select committee. In 2016, the merger of the Department of Energy and Climate Change with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, led to the ECC committee being abolished and the creation of a new select committee (Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) which is currently responsible for scrutinising policy on climate change. In contrast, the International Development Committee has remained in place, despite the merger of the Department of International Development with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in September 2020.

In the House of Lords, there are twelve permanent investigative select committees focusing on a broad policy area or theme and a further set "special inquiry" committees established on a time-limited basis (usually a single parliamentary session) to consider a specific policy area.

There are also two permanent joint select committees, made up of MPs and Peers working together: considering human rights and the National Security Strategy. In addition, joint select committees may be established on a time-limited basis to consider a specific piece of legislation.

A full list of permanent select committees is below. Committees may also appoint sub-committees on a permanent or inquiry basis. There is also a growing trend for committees to hold joint inquiries or one-off evidence sessions, on cross-cutting issues.

Committee Name	House	Remit	Examples of recent inquiries
Built Environment	Lords	Thematic committee: considers “matters relating to the built environment, including policies relating to housing, planning, transport and infrastructure”.	Established April 2021
Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee	Commons	Departmental committee: examines “the policy, spending and administration of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and its public bodies, including Ofgem, the Financial Reporting Council and the Committee on Climate Change”.	Net Zero and UN climate summits Post-pandemic growth Decarbonising heat in homes Forced labour in UK value chains.
Communications and Digital	Lords	Thematic committee: “considers the media, digital and the creative industries”.	The future of journalism Freedom of expression online
Constitution	Lords	Thematic committee: “examines all public bills for constitutional implications and investigates broad constitutional issues”.	Future governance of the UK Constitutional implications of COVID-19 Revision of the Cabinet Manual
Defence Committee	Commons	Departmental committee: examines “the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Ministry of Defence and its associated public bodies”.	The security of 5G The Integrated Review – Threats, Capabilities and Concepts Women in the Armed Forces: From Recruitment to Civilian Life
Digital, Culture, Media and Sport	Commons	Departmental committee: examines “the work of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and its associated public bodies, including the BBC”.	The future of public service broadcasting Influencer culture Concussion in sport
Economic Affairs	Lords	Thematic committee: considers “economic affairs”	The economics of Universal Credit Employment and COVID-19 Quantitative Easing

Education	Commons	Departmental committee: examines “the work of the Department for Education, covering children’s social care, schools, colleges, the early years and higher education and the DfE’s arms-length bodies, including Ofsted, Ofqual and the Children’s Commissioner”.	Adult skills and lifelong learning Children’s Homes Prison Education
Environment and Climate Change	Lords	Thematic committee: considers “the environment and climate change”.	Established April 2021
Environmental Audit	Commons	Cross-cutting committee: considers “the extent to which the policies and programmes of government departments and non-departmental public bodies contribute to environmental protection and sustainable development, and to audit their performance against sustainable development and environmental protection targets”.	Energy Efficiency of Existing Homes Greening the post-Covid recovery Water quality in rivers
European Affairs	Lords	Thematic committee: considers “matters relating to the United Kingdom’s relationship with the European Union and the European Economic Area, including the implementation and governance structures of any agreements between the United Kingdom and the European Union; to consider European Union documents deposited in the House by a minister; and to support the House as appropriate in interparliamentary cooperation with the European Parliament and the Member States of the European Union”.	Established April 2021
Foreign Affairs	Commons	Departmental committee: examines the “expenditure, administration and policy of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and other bodies associated with the Foreign Office and within the Committee’s remit, including the British Council”.	The UK and Iran Tech and the future of UK foreign policy Global health security
Health and Social Care	Commons	Departmental committee: scrutinises “the work of the Department of Health and Social Care and its associated public bodies”.	Social care: funding and workforce Children and young people’s mental health Treatment of autistic people and individuals with learning disabilities

Home Affairs	Commons	Departmental committee: scrutinises “the work of the Home Office and its associated bodies. It examines government policy, spending and the law in areas including immigration, security and policing”.	Violence and abuse towards retail workers Police conduct and complaints Channel crossings, migration and asylum-seeking routes through the EU.
Housing, Communities and Local Government	Commons	Departmental committee: “scrutinises the policy, administration and spending of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government”.	Impact of Covid-19 (Coronavirus) on homelessness and the private rented sector Long term funding of adult social care Local government and the path to net zero
Human Rights	Joint	Cross-cutting committee: examines “matters relating to human rights within the United Kingdom, as well as scrutinising every Government Bill for its compatibility with human rights”.	Black people, racism and human rights Freedom of Expression The Government’s Independent Human Rights Act Review
Industry and regulators	Lords	Thematic committee: considers “matters relating to industry, including the policies of Her Majesty’s Government to promote industrial growth, skills and competitiveness, and to scrutinise the work of UK regulators”.	Established April 2021
International Development	Commons	Departmental committee: scrutinises “UK aid and ODA expenditure, including by the FCDO, and taking forward the work of the Independent Commission on Aid Impact”.	Future of UK aid UK aid to Pakistan The philosophy and culture of aid
International agreements	Lords	Thematic committee: “scrutinises all treaties that are laid before Parliament under the terms of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 and considers the Government’s conduct of negotiations with states and other international partners.”	UK-US trade negotiations UK-Australia trade negotiations Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)
International Relations and Defence	Lords	Thematic committee: considers “the United Kingdom’s international relations and defence policy”.	World Health Organisation The UK and Afghanistan The UK’s security and trade relationship with China
International Trade	Commons	Departmental committee: “scrutinises the spending, administration and policy of the Department for International Trade, and other associated public bodies”.	UK trade negotiations Digital trade and data UK Export Finance

Justice	Commons	Departmental committee: examines “the policies and spending of the Ministry of Justice (and associated public bodies). This includes courts, legal aid, prisons, probation and the rule of law. It also advises on sentencing guidelines”.	Ageing prison population Children and young people in custody The future of legal aid
Justice and Home Affairs	Lords	Thematic committee: considers “justice and home affairs, including the domestic criminal justice system, and international cooperation in respect of criminal justice, civil justice, migration and asylum”.	Established in April 2021
National Security Strategy	Joint	Cross-cutting committee “scrutinises the structures for Government decision-making on national security, particularly the role of the National Security Council and the National Security Adviser”.	Biosecurity and national security National security machinery Work of the National Security Adviser
Northern Ireland Affairs	Commons	Departmental and territorial committee: “examines the expenditure, administration and policy of the Northern Ireland Office and its associated public bodies”.	Brexit and the Northern Ireland Protocol Citizenship and Passport Processes in Northern Ireland New Decade, New Approach Agreement
Public Accounts	Commons	Cross-cutting committee: “examines the value for money of Government projects, programmes and service delivery” (inquiries usually follow a National Audit Office report).	Local authority commercial investment Tackling the tax gap Digital transformation in the NHS
Public Administration	Commons	Cross-cutting committee: examines “constitutional issues; the quality and standards of administration provided by Civil Service departments; and the reports of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman”.	Covid 19 Vaccine Certification The Scrutiny of International Treaties and other international agreements in the 21 st century
Public Services	Lords	Thematic committee: “considers public services, including health and education”.	‘Levelling up’ and public services Public services: lessons from coronavirus The role of public services in addressing child vulnerability

Science and Technology	Commons	Cross-cutting committee: ensures “that Government policies and decision-making are based on solid scientific evidence and advice”.	UK Science, Research and Technology Capability and Influence in Global Disease Outbreaks UK telecommunications infrastructure and the UK’s domestic capability The role of hydrogen in achieving Net Zero
Science and Technology	Lords	Thematic committee: considers “science and technology”.	Role of batteries and fuel cells in achieving Net Zero The science of COVID-10 Ageing: Science, Technology and Healthy Living
Scottish Affairs	Commons	Departmental/territorial committee: “scrutinises the expenditure, administration and policies of the Scotland Office, and its associated bodies. The Committee also examines the wider UK Government, to assess policies and legislation that lead to direct impacts on Scotland.”	Coronavirus and Scotland Universities and Scotland Renewable energy in Scotland
Transport	Commons	Departmental committee: scrutinises “the Department for Transport”.	Trains fit for the future? The roll-out and safety of smart motorways Zero emission vehicles and road pricing
Treasury	Commons	Departmental committee: examines “the expenditure, administration and policy of HM Treasury, HM Revenue & Customs, and associated public bodies, including the Bank of England and the Financial Conduct Authority.”	Jobs, growth, and productivity after coronavirus Decarbonisation and Green Finance UK’s economic and trading relationship with the EU
Welsh Affairs	Commons	Departmental/territorial committee: scrutinises “the expenditure, administration and policies of the Wales Office, and the policies of the UK Government as whole that have an impact in Wales.”	Renewable energy in Wales Railway Infrastructure in Wales Freeports and Wales

Women and Equalities	Commons	<p>Cross-cutting committee: “examines the work of the Government Equalities Office (GEO). It holds Government to account on equality law and policy, including the Equality Act 2010 and cross Government activity on equalities. It also scrutinises the Equality and Human Rights Commission.”</p>	<p>Changing the perfect picture: an inquiry into body image Reform of the Gender Recognition Act Take up of the COVID-19 vaccines in BAME communities and women</p>
Work and Pensions	Commons	<p>Departmental committee: “looks into the policies and spending of the Department for Work and Pensions, including benefits for people in and out of work, state pensions and how private pensions are regulated. It also scrutinises DWP’s public bodies and other regulators”.</p>	<p>Children in poverty: Measurement and targets Disability employment gap Universal Credit: the wait for a first payment</p>

When should I engage?

Your research needs to reach policy makers at a time when they can take action, so you'll need to be prepared. For select committees, you need to engage at the right point in the inquiry cycle: the committee will not be able to act on your research if they receive your evidence too late. Keep an eye on the relevant Twitter account for the select committee in your policy area to ensure you are up to date on their current inquiries (see below for lists of select committee and other parliamentary Twitter accounts). However, you'll be most effective if you've already established relationships with parliamentarians and their staff (and the staff of relevant select committees), so focus on building your networks early and add policy engagement to your impact planning from the start of each research project. If your work has strong relevance for government policy in a particular area, try making contact with the relevant select committee staff. A generic contact email is on each committee webpage, and you can find the staff names at the start of each report. The "committee specialist" or "senior committee specialist" is likely to be the main contact for researchers. Don't assume that they will know your work or profile: they are unlikely to have access to academic journals or the time necessary to keep up with the latest research developments in the policy area. Instead of sharing a full article, it is usually better to share a summary of key points or blog post covering the main themes.

Remember that select committees are governed by the parliamentary timetable. Meetings usually do not take place during recesses for example, but you may find that committee staff have more time for introductory meetings during these periods (you can find a calendar of parliamentary recess dates for the [Commons](#) and [Lords](#) online). In addition, when Parliament is dissolved for a general election, select committees cease to exist. Active inquiries may be concluded and a report published, but if the election is earlier than planned (for example, the 2017 and 2019 general elections) the inquiry may fall without a final report. When Parliament returns after an election, it may take some weeks for select committees to be re-established. This is due in part to the time it takes to allocate chairs between the parties, elect chairs, and appoint members. Furthermore, there is no requirement on a select committee in a new parliament to continue the work of its predecessor committee.

Table 1 Select Committee Twitter accounts

@CommonsHomeAffs Commons Home Affairs Committee	@CommonsSTC Commons Science and Technology Committee
@CommonsEd Commons Education Committee	@CommonsPAC Commons Public Accounts Committee
@CommonsTrans Commons Transport Committee	@CommonsPACAC Commons Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee
@CommonsBEIS Commons Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee	@CommonsNIAC Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee
@CommonsHCLG Commons Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee	@CommonsScotAffs Commons Scottish Affairs Committee
@CommonsDefence Commons Defence Committee	@CommonsWelshAff Commons Welsh Affairs Committee
@CommonsEFRA Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee	@JointCtteNSS Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy
@CommonsHealth Commons Health and Social Care Committee	@HumanRightsCtte Joint Committee on Human Rights
@CommonsJustice Commons Justice Committee	@LordsSTCom Lords Science and Technology Committee
@CommonsEAC Commons Environment Audit Committee	@LordsPublicSCom Lords Public Services Committee
@CommonsForeign Commons Foreign Affairs Committee	@LordsCommsCom Lords Communications and Digital
@CommonsWorkPen Commons Work and Pensions Committee	@LordsIRCom Lords International Relations and Defence
@Commonswomequ Commons Women and Equalities Committee	@LordsEconCom Lords Economic Affairs Committee
@CommonsIntTrade Commons International Trade Committee	@LordsEUCom Lords EU Committee
	@HLConstitution Lords Constitution Committee

Table 2 Other parliamentary Twitter accounts

@UKParliament Main Parliament account	@Commonslibrary House of Commons Library.
@UKHouseofLords House of Lords main account	@UKParlOutreach Parliament's outreach service
@HouseofCommons House of Commons main account	@POST_UK Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology

How should I communicate?

Submitting evidence to a select committee may seem daunting, but there is a lot of guidance available. Links for the Commons and Lords guidance is below, as are our key tips:

Key tips for submitting written evidence

- ⇒ Respond to the questions in the call for evidence. Evidence must be tailored and original: you cannot simply submit a journal article or blogpost (for reasons of parliamentary privilege, select committees cannot accept anything that has been published previously).
- ⇒ But you do not need to answer all the questions in the call for evidence. If the committee asks 10 questions and your research only covers one? That's fine! Just make it very clear which question or questions to which you are responding.
- ⇒ If you are convinced that the committee has missed a key point in the call for evidence, flag it up—but with a clear explanation of why they should cover this issue, supported by evidence. It is possible this will steer the inquiry into a new direction. But this must be done carefully: if you submit evidence for a totally different topic, it is very unlikely to be accepted and won't help your reputation.
- ⇒ Explain who you are and the research on which your evidence draws at the start of the submission (Your evidence should be informed by your research. While anyone is entitled to submit evidence, you want to highlight the credibility of your submission).
- ⇒ Keeping your evidence short (usually under 3,000 words but individual committees may have lower limits) and written for a non-specialist audience. You can include footnotes to published evidence.
- ⇒ Focus on recommendations for changing policy and any key questions you think the committee should ask the Government.
- ⇒ Note that the committee is not required to accept your submission. Evidence will be rejected if it discusses any live court cases, includes anything that may be defamatory or has been published before being formally accepted by the committee.
- ⇒ If your evidence is accepted, it will usually be published online with your name and institution. Note that it cannot be removed or amended once published.
- ⇒ Include a summary at the start, number your paragraphs and use sub-headings. This will make your evidence easier to read for staff and members.

Key tips for providing oral evidence to select committees

- ⇒ Congratulations! Only a small percentage of those who submit written evidence get invited to provide oral evidence. Remind yourself that the committee want to hear from you and learn more about your research. This should be an 'information-gathering' evidence session, rather than the 'holding to account' sessions that you may have seen on television.
- ⇒ The committee staff should offer you a telephone briefing on likely lines of questioning before the session. It is unlikely that you will have an opportunity to make an opening statement, If you think it is absolutely necessary, mention this to the staff in your briefing.
- ⇒ You will be asked questions by the Chair and other committee members. Answer honestly and as fully as you can.
- ⇒ Don't try to answer beyond your expertise. It is fine to say that you don't know.

- ⇒ Similarly, if you are asked something unexpected, feel free to say that you will provide further written evidence to answer that question.
- ⇒ All oral evidence sessions are broadcast live on the internet (and sometimes on television) and a transcript is produced.

- ⇒ Guidance for submitting evidence to a Commons select committee: <https://www.parliament.uk/get-involved/committees/how-do-i-submit-evidence/commons-witness-guide/>
- ⇒ Guidance for submitting evidence to a Lords select committee: <https://www.parliament.uk/get-involved/committees/how-do-i-submit-evidence/lords-witness-guide/>

Devolved legislatures

If your research has a direct geographic relevance to Scotland, Wales, or Northern Ireland—and is in a policy area that is devolved, you may want to consider engaging with the legislatures in each nation, as set out below. This is also true for wider research which may offer valuable insights for the devolved nations. As in Westminster, each of the devolved legislatures have select committees covering a wide range of policy areas, as set out below.

Scottish Parliament	Senedd	Northern Ireland Assembly
COVID-19 Committee	Business Committee	Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
Committee on the Scottish Government Handling of Harassment Complaints	Children, Young People and Education Committee	Communities
Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee	Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee	Economy
Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee	Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee	Education
Economy Energy and Fair Work Committee	Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee	Executive Office
Education and Skills Committee	Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee	Finance
Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee	External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee	Health
Equalities and Human Rights Committee	Finance Committee	Infrastructure
Finance and Constitution Committee	Health, Social Care and Sport Committee	Justice
Health and Sport Committee	Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee	
Justice Committee	Llywydd's Committee	
Justice Sub-Committee on Policing	Petitions Committee	
Local Government and Communities Committee	Public Accounts Committee	
Public Audit and Post-legislative Scrutiny Committee	Committee on Senedd Electoral Reform	
Public Petitions Committee		
Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee		
Social Security Committee		
Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee		

How should I engage?

In addition to submitting evidence to select committees, there are a number of other ways to engage with parliamentarians.

Select committee specialist advisers

UK Parliament select committees will often recruit specialist advisers for particular inquiries, who will work alongside committee staff for a daily honorarium (usually 1-2 days a week). Academics are often appointed to these roles, which require detailed and specific expertise alongside an understanding of the political and parliamentary environment: see a recent advert for a [specialist adviser for the Environmental Audit Committee's Water Quality in Rivers inquiry](#). To find out when a specialist adviser is being recruited in your policy area, keep an eye on the website and Twitter feed for the relevant committee.

Select committee visits

If your research is particularly visually interesting (for example, a research lab or new equipment) and relevant to an upcoming or current select committee inquiry, consider contacting the committee staff to invite the committee members to visit. Prior to the pandemic, UK Parliament committees were keen to get out of Westminster and see first-hand the issues they are hearing about and it is likely that this will resume later in 2020; visits can help bring the inquiry to life. Committees are often also keen to hold evidence sessions outside of London (or Cardiff, Edinburgh or Belfast): do you have a meeting room that could be arranged in a horseshoe formation and would have space for the public to attend? If so, consider whether you could offer space for an evidence session hosted by your department. This can be a great way to bring a large number of researchers and parliamentarians together, for example through a lunch before the session, in addition to raising the profile of your research.

The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology

The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) is a bicameral department of the UK Parliament which provides "impartial, balanced and peer-reviewed briefings that make research evidence accessible to the UK Parliament. Researchers can get involved in multiple ways: take a look at [Contributing to a POSTnote as an expert - POST \(parliament.uk\)](#) <https://post.parliament.uk/contributing-to-a-postnote-as-an-expert/>

Scottish Parliament Academic Fellowships

The Scottish Parliament runs an Academic Fellowship programme through the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe). The scheme aims to:

- give the Parliament specialised resources to let it undertake and communicate analysis, which would otherwise not be possible
- increase the use of academic knowledge, skills and research within the Parliament
- promote knowledge and understanding of the Parliament within the academic sector

The scheme is open to researchers with a PhD in all disciplines. Keep an eye on the [Academic Fellowship page](#) for details of the next call for applications: calls may be open, allowing you to propose a project, or seeking for applications on a specific project proposed by parliamentary staff.

The Senedd Academic Fellowships

The Senedd runs an Academic Fellowship scheme for researchers with a PhD who are employed at higher education institutions in Wales or the rest of the UK. Take a look at the [Academic Fellowship page](#) for details of calls for applications.

General committees

Separate to select committees, in the Commons there are also a number of “general committees” which are established specifically to examine proposed legislation: Public Bill Committees for primary legislation and Delegated Legislation Committees for secondary legislation (such as Statutory Instruments). Depending on the proposed legislation, there may be opportunities for researchers to engage with Public Bill Committees (PBCs) through oral or written evidence: keep an eye on the News section of the Parliament website for details of any calls for evidence. Public Bill Committees operate very differently to select committees: for example, timescales are extremely short and there is no flexibility on deadlines. Additionally, they do not publish a report, but use written evidence to inform line-by-line scrutiny of the Bill. Take a look at the Call for Evidence on the [Advanced Research and Invention Agency Bill](#) for an example). The House of Commons Scrutiny Unit has published a [guide about engaging with Public Bill Committees](#).

All Party Parliamentary Groups/ Cross-Party Groups

In each of the four legislatures you can find parliamentarians gathering together in groups to consider a specific policy area or country. These groups—known as All Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) in Westminster. All Party Groups in the Northern Ireland Assembly, and Cross-Party Groups in the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Senedd—must be formally registered with the legislature and, as the names suggest, include members from more than one political party. While they will meet and often hear from members of the public or key stakeholders, they do not have any formal status or role in the legislature: the respective government or executive is not required to respond to any reports they produce and time is not routinely made available to discuss their findings. Unlike select committees which are staffed by employees of the legislature, the secretariat of APPGs/APGs/CPGs is usually provided by an outside organisation (often a public affairs company or charity related to the subject under consideration). Sharing your research with these groups can help you build relationships with parliamentarians with a policy interest in your area and raise your profile.

- [List of All Party Parliamentary Groups in the UK Parliament](#).
- [List of Northern Ireland Assembly All Party Groups](#).
- [List of Scottish Parliament Cross-Party Groups](#).
- [List of Welsh Senedd Cross-Party Groups](#).

Individual meetings with parliamentarians

It may be valuable to meet with a Member of Parliament—or Member of the House of Lords or one of the devolved legislatures—individually, as they are more likely to highlight your research (or open to the possibility of doing so). They may be the constituency representative for your institution and thus more likely to highlight the great research being carried out in their area. They may have a specific policy interest for which your research is particularly relevant and your work may inform their contributions on the issue. Your research may involve a specific area, group of people, or wildlife in their constituency or local area and they may be willing to meet with you to learn more. Whatever the reason, it is vital to remember that parliamentarians—whether they’re MPs, Peers, MSPs, MSs or MLAs—all suffer from the same thing; a lack of time. They need to be able to identify and understand your key messages quickly. They are unlikely to be specialists in your research area, and will be looking for practical ideas and recommendations for changes to policy or legislation.

Useful links

Take a look at the links below to learn more about how the UK's legislatures operate and explore the key parliamentarians and committees for your research area. Use this to start thinking about which thinking about individuals, organisations and/ or committees might benefit from your research. It's often useful to map out the potential stakeholders to help you decide where to focus your efforts.

- ⇒ Guidance for submitting evidence to a Commons select committee: <https://www.parliament.uk/get-involved/committees/how-do-i-submit-evidence/commons-witness-guide/>
- ⇒ Guidance for submitting evidence to a Lords select committee: <https://www.parliament.uk/get-involved/committees/how-do-i-submit-evidence/lords-witness-guide/>
- ⇒ How to submit evidence to a Public Bill Committee: <https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/offices/commons/scrutinyunit/written-submissions/>
- ⇒ Find out which inquiries are accepting written evidence: <https://committees.parliament.uk/inquiries/?showadvanced=true&acceptingwrittenevidenceonly=true>
- ⇒ UK Parliament: Research impact at the UK Parliament <https://www.parliament.uk/get-involved/research-impact-at-the-uk-parliament/>
- ⇒ Scottish Parliament: Academic engagement in the Scottish Parliament <https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/100471.aspx>
- ⇒ Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/about/>
- ⇒ Senedd Cymru Welsh Parliament: How can academics get involved with the Senedd's work? <https://research.senedd.wales/knowledge-exchange/how-can-academics-get-involved-with-the-senedd-s-work/>
- ⇒ Northern Ireland Assembly <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/>
- ⇒ Economic and Social Research Council: Working with Westminster <https://esrc.ukri.org/research/impact-toolkit/influencing-policymakers/guide-to-influencing-public-affairs/parliament/>
- ⇒ The UK Parliament glossary: <http://www.parliament.uk/site-information/glossary/>
- ⇒ Parliament Explained podcast <http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentexplained>
- ⇒ Science in Parliament Podcasts <http://www.parliament.uk/about/podcasts/scienceinparliament/>