

THE FORUM

Engaging with Parliamentary Select Committees

Select Committees in the House of Commons are charged with overseeing the work of a government department. Departmental Select Committees examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the principal government departments. They do this through inquiries on selected topics. They will set the terms of reference for each inquiry and then invite written submissions from interested parties.

Once these submissions have been read, the Committee will draw up a list of people to give oral evidence at a Committee session so that they can be questioned on the points raised by their written paper. Following each inquiry, Select Committees publish a report to which the government must respond. The work of the following Committees may be particularly relevant to researchers and academics:

- [Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee](#)
- [Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee](#)
- [Health and Social Care Committee](#)
- [Science and Technology Committee \(Commons\)](#)
- [Transport Committee](#)

Lords Select Committees do not shadow the work of government departments. They consider specialist subjects, taking advantage of the Lords' expertise and the greater amount of time (compared to MPs) available to them to examine issues. Committees in the House of Lords concentrate on six main areas: Europe, science, economics, communications, the UK constitution and international relations. The [Lords Science and Technology Committee](#) is particularly well respected, not only by peers and the government, but by academia and industry. Its reports will invariably be debated in the House and receive a written response from the government.

You can look at all [open inquiries](#) that are currently taking evidence. The [individual Select Committee sites](#) will also provide information on what the Committee is currently working on. If you think a Select Committee should be considering a particular issue, get in touch with [The Forum](#) team.

How to prepare an evidence submission

- The terms of reference of the call will usually set out the required format for the response. There are also [parliamentary guidelines](#) for submitting evidence to Select Committees. You will not need to answer every question set in the call for evidence. Think about what your key argument is and how your research findings underpin it.
- Good submissions start with a short key messages section that summarises the argument and conclusion. Be aware the many readers will only read this section so make sure it covers your main messages succinctly. You can set out your argument and its underpinning evidence in more detail in the main body, followed by any recommendations if you wish to make them.
- Committees usually receive many written submissions, so you need to get your main points across in an accessible and memorable format. It is helpful to focus on a limited number of key points in response to the questions they are asking that you want the Committee to understand and remember. Bear in mind that they will not be topic experts so keep it simple and provide additional explanation to complex issues.
- All evidence submitted to inquiries will be made available on the Committee website. Witnesses called subsequently will also be listed so it is a good idea to look at their submissions to get a sense of what Committees find helpful. You can also read [Imperial's submission](#) to the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee's inquiry into Life Sciences and the Industrial Strategy.
- Share a draft of your response with [The Forum](#) team to get further bespoke advice.

If your written submission has generated interest among the MPs, you may be invited to give oral evidence. Contact [The Forum](#) team to get bespoke support for this.

Let us know how you get on and if we can help

the.forum@imperial.ac.uk

imperial.ac.uk/the-forum

[@imperial_forum](#)