

Commission on Parliamentary Reform

Call for written views

The Commission on Parliamentary Reform was launched by the Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament on 26 October 2016.

The remit of the Commission is to consider how the Scottish Parliament—

- can increase its engagement with wider society and involve the public;
- can clarify its identity, as distinct from the Scottish Government; and
- can be assured that it has the right ‘checks and balances’ to enable effective conduct of parliamentary business.

The Commission wants to hear your views about how the Scottish Parliament is performing in these areas. It plans to engage with people across Scotland in a number of ways.

Further information can be found on the Commission’s web pages—

<https://parliamentaryreform.scot/>. These web pages will be updated regularly.

As part of its engagement activities, the Commission is launching a call for written views on a number of questions. **You do not need to respond to every question and can focus your comments on one part of the Commission’s remit if you wish.**

Responses should preferably be provided in MS Word format and be no longer than 4 sides of A4. The closing date for written views is **15 February 2017**.

All written views received will help to inform the Commission before it considers its conclusions and recommendations. The Commission may invite individuals/organisations to discuss their written views with Commission members at a later stage.

Further information for people who want to engage in a language other than English can be found on [the Scottish Parliament’s web pages](#).

Further information is available on the [Commission’s policy on publishing written views](#): Please read this before sending us your comments.

Engagement

By ‘engagement’ we mean how the Scottish Parliament involves people in holding the Scottish Government to account.

1. Has the Scottish Parliament engaged effectively with the people of Scotland so far? Has it engaged better with some groups or on some issues better than others? What are the reasons or evidence for your views?

2. What has been your experience of direct engagement with the Scottish Parliament?

In your answer, you may want to consider—

- how and why you engaged with the Parliament;
- how easy you found it to get involved;
- whether you received the right information to get involved;
- how the way you engaged suited you;
- whether you felt you were listened to;
- whether you felt you influenced the decision the Parliament took; and
- how well the Scottish Parliament kept you informed of developments, after your engagement.

3. How can the Scottish Parliament increase its engagement with the people of Scotland, especially those who are less likely to be interested in the Parliament?

Distinct identity

4. Is it important that the Scottish Parliament is seen as separate from the Scottish Government [or from the UK Parliament (House of Commons and House of Lords), UK Government and local government]? What are the reasons or evidence for your views?

In your answer, you may want to consider—

- Do you think the Scottish Parliament is confused with the Scottish Government, and do terms such as 'Holyrood', commonly used to refer to the Parliament and/or Government, add to this confusion?
- Do you think the Scottish Parliament is confused with the UK Parliament (House of Commons and House of Lords), UK Government or local government?

5. What should the Scottish Parliament do to strengthen its distinct identity?

Checks and balances

The term 'checks and balances' refers to rules and procedures designed to prevent one institution – whether the government, parliament or judiciary – from becoming too powerful. Some examples of the checks and balances in the Scottish political system include the 'check' of First Minister's Questions and parliamentary committees which hold Scottish Ministers to account for their policies and bills.

6. Do any of the checks and balances need strengthening to better enable the Scottish Parliament to hold the Scottish Government to account? What are the reasons or evidence for your views?
7. At what stage of the policy or legislative process is the Scottish Parliament likely to have the greatest influence or impact in terms of improving Government policy or legislation? What are the reasons or evidence for your views?

In your answer, you may want to consider—

- Whether the parliamentary process allows enough time to effectively scrutinise policies or legislation;
- Which part of the parliamentary process the Parliament should focus its scrutiny on (such as before legislation or a policy is introduced, during parliamentary consideration or after it has been implemented).

8. What other factors impact on the effective conduct of parliamentary business and how these can be addressed?