Individual Submissions to Parliamentary Select Committee Inquiries

Individuals and organisations may submit written evidence in response to inquiries and calls made by Parliamentary select committees of the Lords and Commons, joint committees, and public bill committees (see current list of open calls for evidence). Each inquiry has its own terms of reference, outlining the key questions that should be addressed in submission responses – but the below offers a summary of published Parliamentary guidelines for written submissions, the advice of clerks, and best practices from the body of research on impact.

General Advice for Impact

- **Be clear.** Forego jargon and convey key points in simple precise language.
- **Be concise.** Decision-makers work on short time scales with many demands on their attention. Brevity is key to ensuring a policymaker can read and digest your main points in a few minutes.
- **Focus** your submission on answering the key questions in the terms of reference. You may choose to limit your response to one or two questions in your area of expertise.
- **Provide a 'takeaway' point.** Highlight the importance of a new or significant fact or piece of research for the committee. Explain how an existing body of research evidence might answer the inquiry's questions – or that the body of evidence is unclear, points in different directions, or is incomplete.
- **Make a recommendation**. Decision-makers prefer recommendations for action (by themselves or others). But recommendations may also highlight the need for new evidence, analysis, or evaluation.
- **Provide a summary** of your key takeaway points at the start of your submission.

Submission and Formatting Guidelines

- **Method**
  - Submissions are usually made online at the address specified in the Inquiry's terms of reference. These submissions should conform to the parliamentary formatting guidelines (below).
  - Committees will accept submissions in alternative formats or through other means, but you will need to contact the committee staff or clerk if you wish to do so.
- **Length**
  - Commons submissions should be kept under 3,000 words, unless otherwise stated
  - Lords submissions are also best kept short, but should include a 1-page summary if over 6 pages
- **Format**
  - A single Word document of less than 25 MB in size (no PDFs).
    (Note: summaries and appendices must be part of the same file, if included).
  - This document should not contain macros and have as few pictures and logos as possible.
- **Style**
  - Date your submission
  - State your name (if acting in a personal capacity) or the name of your organisation (if making a submission on behalf of an institution) and provide a brief bio (~ 50 words).
  - Number all paragraphs
  - A Summary should be included at the start of any submission, bullet-pointing recommendations and key takeaway points from your research (or the wider body of evidence being referenced).
- **Content & Publishing**
  - Committees will usually publish your submission online if it is accepted as evidence. If you do not wish them to do so, you must provide a good reason and may need to contact the committee clerk.
  - Your submission must comprise new content and not be previously published elsewhere, or it will not be accepted as evidence. You may, of course, provide citations or hyperlinks to previous publications or works you are referencing.
  - If you wish to publish your evidence, you may only do so *after* your submission has been formally accepted by the committee as evidence and you have obtained the permission of the committee's clerk. If you publish (or even publicise your evidence on social media) before this point, it will not be accepted as evidence by the committee.

For further guidelines and notes on submitting written evidence to Parliamentary inquiries, see Parliament's Guidance on giving evidence to a Select Committee of the House of Commons and of the House of Lords.