

# Advocacy training

## Session 1: Parliamentary Processes

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# Agenda

What's the difference between the Parliament and Government?

Holyrood vs UK: What's reserved and what's devolved?

Overview of the Scottish Parliament Committees and what they do

Tools for influencing parliamentary processes



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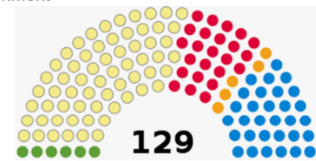
## What's the difference between the Parliament and Government?

The Scottish Parliament:

- Is made up of all 129 elected Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs)
- Is the law making body for devolved matters
- It considers any proposed legislation and scrutinises the activities and policies of the Scottish Government through debates, parliamentary questions and the work of committees
- A Presiding Officer chairs the proceedings in the Chamber.

The Scottish Government:

- Is responsible for implementing laws and policy
- It is normally formed from the party or parties holding most seats in the Scottish Parliament
- It introduces most of the bills, including the Budget Bill which proposes how the budget will be allocated, that are considered by the Scottish Parliament
- The FM is the head and they choose the Cabinet from their own party (the party with the most seats)



**1**

First Minister

**11**

Cabinet Secretaries

**16**

Other ministers



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## Holyrood vs UK: What's reserved and what's devolved?

### Holyrood (Devolved issues)

#### **Agriculture, forestry and fisheries**

Education and training

#### **Environment**

Health and social services

Housing

Law and order

#### **Local government and Planning**

Sport and the arts

#### **Tourism and economic development**

Many aspects of transport

### Westminster (Reserved issues)

Benefits and social security

Immigration

Defence

Foreign policy

Employment

Broadcasting

Trade and industry

#### **Nuclear energy, oil, coal, gas & Electricity**

Consumer rights

Data protection

#### **The Constitution**



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Your MSPs issues represent on devolved issues and MPs represent you on reserved it.

## Overview of the Scottish Parliament Committees and what they do

The Committees scrutinise Parliament

There are 19 committees, including one on Covid-19

The committees that are most relevant to us are:

- Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee (RECC)
- Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee (ECCLR)



Let's take a look on the Scottish Parliament website:

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/committees.aspx>

And you can always follow committee and chamber proceedings here:

<https://www.scottishparliament.tv/>



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## Tools for influencing parliamentary processes

PQs, motions, amendments to legislation, evidence, written briefings



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## Questions (sometimes shortened to PQs)

### What are they?

### When to use them

Written questions

Good for getting more detailed information or clarification

Oral questions

Get information into the public domain



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Written questions can be submitted any time by any MSP.

The Government then have 10 working days, or 20 during recess, to answer them

There are also oral questions, where cabinet secretaries get grilled by MSPs on topics related to their portfolio every 6 weeks.

MSPs and staff often appreciate being fed questions, within reason. If there is an issue you want to know more about, you can raise it with a friendly MSP who can submit a written question on your behalf, forcing the Government to answer.

Oral questions require a bit more strategy as only a few MSPs get a slot. If you see questions coming up in the business bulletin then you can ask MSPs if they or someone else in their party has a slot to ask a question, and if they'd ask your question.

When to use - a bit like an FOI in a way but quicker and more politicised, so we've used them to check whether the Scottish Government are publishing a review of the energy strategy. Written Qs best for this

Sometimes you know something that you want in public, either for a journalist or for your campaign - you can use them to get these details out in the public. For example, often we suspect the Government have delayed implementing schemes, so we'll ask if they've done it.

Oral questions are much better for putting Government on the spot, or if you want to corner them into committing to something

Motions	
What are they?	When to use them
Written statements highlighting issues, achievements, or campaigns to other MSPs	To raise awareness of your cause or an activity
Topics for a debate	To celebrate a success
Setting out a position on an issue	To identify MSPs who support an issue



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Motions are written statements that MSPs lodge. They appear online, and get circulated for other MSPs to sign up for.

In normal times MSPs can use these as the basis of a debate, either setting out the Parliament's position on a topic or setting a course of action the Parliament believes the Scottish Government should take.

Like questions, you can suggest motions for MSPs to submit.

You might want to do this to raise awareness of a cause or an action/report. For example if there is a specific development you think needs attention. FoES have put in motions of solidarity with activists who were arrested, also to raise awareness of global events linking them to climate change.

Because MSPs are invited to sign up to motions to support them, this is also a useful way to find MSPs who support an issue - just pulling them from the signatories to the motion.

## Amendments

### What are they?

Proposed changes to draft legislation

Submitted by MSPs at stage two or three of a Bill

### When to use them

To change specific sections of legislation

To provoke the Government into making a commitment



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Amendments are a way of changing proposed legislation.

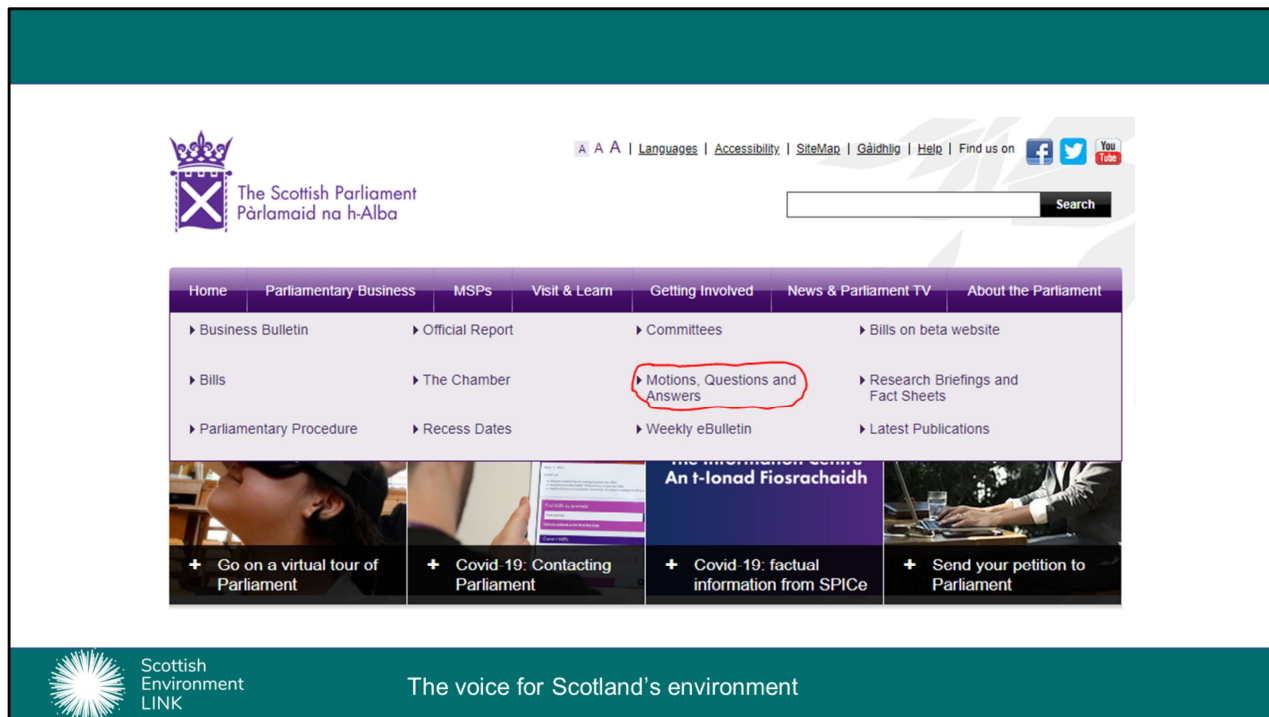
Any MSP can submit an amendment, but at stage two it's useful to get a member of the relevant committee to submit the amendment.

You can ask friendly MSPs to submit them, but it's worth building a relationship with that MSP and making them fully informed on the issue rather than just sending it out of the blue.

Obviously use it to change specific sections of draft legislation. Example - Climate Change Bill target example - opposition MSPs

You can also use these to provoke the Government into making commitments.

*Different example* During the Climate Change Bill we submitted a few policies that the Government didn't want to put into legislation, knowing that when voting them down the Government would meet with MSPs to discuss how the same aims could be achieved elsewhere.



You can find a searchable list of existing motions, questions, and answers here. If you put in a keyword it will show you which MSPs are interested in your issue. Can be useful for identifying allies

## Committee Evidence

### What is it?

Feed into legislative scrutiny or inquiries

You can submit written evidence

May be asked to give oral evidence

### When to use it

To influence inquiries or legislation you have an interest in

Good way to feed MSPs detailed information

Influence committee recommendations



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- When committees do an inquiry or are scrutinising evidence they will publish a call for evidence
- Can be found on Committee website or often on social media etc
- You write evidence, allows you to be quite detailed. They set questions but you can ignore them
- The committee do oral evidence sessions which you might be invited to

This is best used to influence inquiries or legislation on topic you have an interest in.

Lay foundations for legislative changes

Good way to feed MSPs quite high level information on your topics

## Written briefings

### What is it?

Document with a concise set of arguments and evidence outlining your position

Shorter is sweeter

Aiming to influence content or outcome of a debate

### When to use it

When Parliament or a committee have a session relevant to your work

When you want MSPs to vote a particular way on something



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Ahead of debates or parliament debates or committee sessions we'll circulate a written briefing - either to all MSPs for a debate, or to all members of a committee.

This usually outlines our views and issues we want addressed in the debate, or the outcome we want from a vote.

Don't make these long. You want a concise set of your best arguments and evidence for MSPs to quote.

Best used when Parliament or a committee have a session relevant to your work

Thank you for listening

Any questions?

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That was a bit of a whistlestop tour, and ultimately if you find an MSP who is supportive of your issue they will know what they can do.

Generally, any support you can offer an MSP who shares your views can be really appreciated. Don't be put off if you don't know what these things are