



Job Description

Research Assistant

Department: Political Science

Specific Unit: The Constitution Unit

Location: London – Bloomsbury

Grade: 6B/25

Salary: £36,832 per annum including London allowance

Hours: Full time

This is a fixed-term post from 01 November 2023 to 24 December 2024.

Reports to:

Dr Thomas Fleming

Main purpose of the job

The Politics of Parliamentary Procedure is a new three-year research project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). The Principal Investigator (PI) is Dr Thomas Fleming. We wish to recruit a full-time research assistant to work on this project for just under 14 months.

Context

University College London (UCL) is among the world's top universities. Its Department of Political Science, which was among the top-ranked departments in the UK in the 2021 Research Excellence Framework (REF), conducts teaching and research in all fields of politics, including British and comparative politics, international relations, political theory, human rights, public policy-making and administration.

[The Constitution Unit](#) is the Department's longest-established research centre. Created in 1995, it conducts timely, rigorous, independent research into constitutional change and the reform of political institutions. Its outputs include scholarly publications, policy reports, a popular blog, and a newsletter. It is led by [Professor Meg Russell FBA](#), a specialist on parliament. Its Deputy Director is [Professor Alan Renwick](#), an expert on electoral systems, referendums and deliberative democracy. Other areas of interest include the judiciary, monarchy, central government, political parties and devolution. Major recent projects have included research into parliament's role in the Brexit process, the hosting of a citizens' assembly on UK democracy in 2021, and the organisation of a working group focusing on how any future referendums on Irish unification would best be conducted.

The project will examine the politics of procedural reform in the UK House of Commons. It will particularly focus on understanding the extent, causes, and consequences of the government's influence on parliamentary procedure. It will trace how proposals for reforming the Commons' rules are drafted, considered, and voted on, and will analyse the role of different actors in that process. The project will provide an overview of more than a century of Commons reform, as well as a detailed analysis of developments in the last 25 years. It will also review other parliaments' approaches to changing their internal procedures, to understand what lessons they might hold for Westminster. Research methods will include content analysis of committee reports, parliamentary debates, rules of procedure and constitutions, as well as interviews with relevant political elites.

The successful candidate will work with the PI in assisting all parts of the research process, including reviewing relevant scholarly literatures, collating data from original parliamentary documents, analysing the resulting data, and arranging interviews. They will also contribute to writing up the research findings, particularly working on two policy reports planned for publication in 2024.

Duties and responsibilities:

The Research Assistant will be expected to undertake duties in connection with the project as directed by Dr Fleming, including the following:

- gathering and analysing data from the UK parliamentary record: e.g. debates, votes and committee reports;
- gathering and analysing data from a range of other countries' constitutions and parliamentary rules of procedure;
- organising, documenting, and analysing research interviews;
- ensuring that appropriate ethical procedures and standards are maintained at all stages of the research process;
- reviewing scholarly literature relevant to the project's core research questions;
- contributing to the writing of two Constitution Unit policy reports;
- contributing to wider project dissemination through preparing materials for its webpages, blogposts, etc.
- contributing more widely to the work of the Constitution Unit, for example through attending team meetings and assisting in the planning of events.

Job descriptions cannot be exhaustive and so the post holder may be required to undertake other duties which are in line with the scope, spirit and purpose of the job as requested by the line manager.

As duties and responsibilities change and develop the job description may be reviewed and be subject to amendment in consultation with the post holder.

Person specification

Criteria	Essential or Desirable
Qualifications, experience and knowledge	
A first-class Bachelor's degree in political science or a related field, or a high 2.1 (in which case please provide detail of grades).	Essential
Clear and demonstrable understanding of the key institutions in British politics.	Essential
A keen interest in, and demonstrable knowledge of, the UK parliament.	Essential
A Master's degree in political science or a related field at Merit or Distinction.	Desirable
Knowledge of academic literatures in legislative studies.	Desirable
Experience of organising and conducting political research using parliamentary sources.	Desirable
Experience of working in an academic research centre, think tank, or similar environment.	Desirable
Skills and abilities	
Well-developed quantitative and qualitative research skills.	Essential
Ability to gather and systematically organise complex material from a range of sources.	Essential
Excellent organisational skills, including the ability to deal with competing priorities, meet tight deadlines, manage a varied workload and work with limited supervision.	Essential
Ability to work effectively as part of a team.	Essential
Excellent written communication skills, including in writing fluently and without errors for both specialist and non-specialist audiences.	Essential
Personal attributes	
Commitment to promoting high standards in research.	Essential
A good eye for detail.	Essential

Apply

To apply for this position visit:

ucl.ac.uk/jobs

Please ensure that you do **all** of the following:

- Complete the required sections of the online form.
- Upload a CV, including details of your educational qualifications (with full details of grades) and your prior work experience.
- Upload a covering letter (maximum two pages) setting out clearly why you are interested in the position and how you meet the essential (and, where relevant, desirable) criteria.

Please do **not** upload other documents (e.g. samples of written work or degree certificates).

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to the next stage of the process, which will involve the submission of a short piece of written work. The final stage will be an online interview.

Any queries regarding the vacancy or the application process should be directed to Tom Fleming at tom.fleming@ucl.ac.uk.

Information about the Constitution Unit can be found at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/>

Our department is proud to have received an Athena SWAN Bronze Award in August 2022, demonstrating its commitment to advancing gender equality.

This appointment is subject to UCL Terms and Conditions of Service for Research and Support Staff.

Please use these links to find out more about [UCL working life](#) including the benefits we offer and [UCL Terms and Conditions](#) related to this job.