



Routes for contributing to public policy in the UK

Overview

There are a number of routes through which researchers and academics can contribute to public policy formation. These vary in terms of how direct the input is; whether contributions are invitation-only, specifically sought, or open to all; and whether contributions will be cited or published.

Please subscribe to the monthly **UCL Public Policy Update**¹ for staff, which gathers together information about current opportunities through these and other routes.

Parliament

Select Committee inquiries

House of Commons and House of Lords Select Committees hold inquiries throughout the parliamentary year into a wide range of policy issues under their respective remits. Calls for evidence are issued at the beginning of an inquiry; see open calls for evidence².

Submissions should focus on research findings and conclusions which are relevant to the inquiry. All submissions are published online and in hard copy, and may be cited in Committee reports.

The best contacts are Clerks or Committee Specialists; see individual Committees³.

Public Bill Committee inquiries

Public Bill Committees are formed to scrutinise legislation after the second reading of a Bill in Parliament (the first significant Parliamentary debate on a piece of legislation). They receive written evidence from outside organisations (as well as taking oral evidence) as part of their scrutiny process.

Evidence should be relevant to the particular legislation being considered and as specific as possible. Written evidence is published online and in hard copy. See open calls for evidence⁴.

Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST)

POST provides scientific advice to MPs, peers and parliamentary staff. It regularly produces briefing notes on particular scientific issues with relevance for policy and seeks academic input into these. Input may be cited in published POSTNotes or other documents.

The best contact is the relevant scientific adviser⁵. Ask to join the POST mailing list⁶ to receive news on current and future projects.

All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs)

APPGs vary hugely but the most active will hold regular meetings on specific issues, which it may be possible to attend or speak at. The best contacts are the Secretariat or Chair; see the complete list of APPGs⁷.

House of Lords Library

The Lords Library⁸ prepares research briefings for debates and at the request of peers. Getting on its radar as a useful source of expertise can be helpful.

House of Commons Library

The Commons Library⁹ provides research services for MPs and staff and produces a series of research briefings on particular issues and legislation. It also produces briefings in response to requests from individual MPs.

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There may be scope to engage with subject specialists to help them draw on academic knowledge in developing briefing notes.

House of Commons Outreach service

Get on their mailing list¹⁰ for latest news and events about Parliamentary activity.

Government

Advisory Committees

Many government departments maintain scientific or social science advisory committees, which seek to draw together academic expertise to inform policy development. Details are on individual department websites¹¹.

A current list of UCL members of such advisory committees will be available on the UCL Public Policy webpages in the early summer of 2016.

You may wish to consider applying to become a member of such a committee (opportunities are advertised by Government departments as they become available) or whether you may be able to attend seminars organised by the committees.

Government consultations

The Government routinely runs consultations on new policy proposals; and on green and white papers. (Green papers are the first iteration of a policy document that will be developed into legislation; white papers are a more final version that will closely inform the development of the relevant Bill.) The consultations are open to anyone; see open consultations¹².

Chief Scientific Advisers (CSAs) and their networks

CSAs provide scientific advice to their department which can help to inform the development of policy.

Making contact with CSAs at the right time (i.e. when a particular policy issue is being considered and evidence being sought) can be a useful way of feeding into the process. Establishing a relationship can lead to future opportunities for input. See the current CSAs¹³.

CSAs operate within a network of science and engineering professionals in Government; again it can be useful to establish contacts with those professionals working in relevant areas and on relevant issues. See the current science and engineering professionals¹⁴.

The Government Office for Science (GO-Science)

GO-Science works across the whole of Government to provide scientific advice and evidence to policy teams and ministers. It does not develop policy but synthesises research and evidence, and supports the work of the CSAs. The best contacts are the individual area specialists¹⁵; see also the organisational chart¹⁶.

Foresight

The Foresight team sits within GO-Science and has a remit for examining longer-term policy challenges and horizon-scanning. Its inquiries have small permanent advisory committees, largely made up of academic experts, but also draw ad hoc from relevant academic advice. See current projects and policy areas¹⁷.

What Works Centres

The What Works initiative aims to support the use of evidence in policy and decision-making. The network includes seven centres, which collate evidence, conduct systematic reviews and undertake policy evaluations.

There are different ways to get involved with each of them:

- Health and social care – NICE¹⁸
- Improved quality of life for older people – Centre for Ageing Better¹⁹
- Early intervention – Early Intervention Foundation²⁰
- Educational achievement – Educational Endowment Foundation²¹
- Crime reduction – What Works Centre for Crime Reduction²²
- Local economic growth – What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth²³
- Wellbeing – What Works Centre for Wellbeing²⁴.

Learned societies / professional bodies

Many learned societies and professional bodies (e.g. Royal Society, Institute of Physics, British Academy) also conduct policy work (generally within their remit). Some will have academic expert committees but also be interested in other contributions from academia. Significant contributions or advice should be cited in written reports.

Third sector / Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

Charities

Charities will often be interested in academic evidence, either to feed into their work or for specific projects. Any significant contributions or advice given should be cited in written reports.

The best contact will usually be the policy officers or policy advisers working in your area of interest.

Think tanks

Think tanks will often seek academic input into particular pieces of work or as part of bigger projects. Any significant contributions or advice should be cited in written reports. A think tank may also have an advisory board which includes academics, so joining that may be another option to consider. The best contact will usually be research fellows or policy advisers working in relevant areas.

LINKS

- ¹ <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/public-policy/for-researchers/newsletter/>
- ² <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/inquiries-a-z/current-open-calls-for-evidence/>
- ³ <http://www.parliament.uk/about/how/committees/select/>
- ⁴ <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/inquiries-a-z/current-open-calls-for-evidence/>
- ⁵ <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/offices/bicameral/post/about-post/contacting-post/post@parliament.uk>
- ⁶ <http://www.parliament.uk/about/mps-and-lords/members/apg/>
- ⁸ <http://www.parliament.uk/business/lords/work-of-the-house-of-lords/lords-library/>
- ⁹ <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/offices/commons/commonslibrary/>
- ¹⁰ https://ukparliament-self.achieveservice.com/AchieveForms/?form_uri=sandbox-publish://AF-Form-969f5739-5be2-4f0e-9be6-624e2b5660dc/definition.json&redirectlink=%2FService%2FServiceRating%3Fserviceid%3DAF-Form-969f5739-5be2-4f0e-9be6-624e2b5660dc%26service%3DR4%26postRatingRedirectUrl%3D%2Fmodule%2Fservices&cancelRedirectLink=%2F&category=AF-Category-1b9447b2-be2a-4b60-b0db-be7731a5541f
- ¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations>
- ¹² https://www.gov.uk/government/publications?publication_filter_option=consultations
- ¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/government-office-for-science/groups/chief-scientific-advisers>
- ¹⁴ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/475684/gs-15-35-gse-directory.pdf
- ¹⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/government-office-for-science/about>
- ¹⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-office-for-science-organisation-chart>
- ¹⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/foresight-projects>
- ¹⁸ <https://www.nice.org.uk/get-involved>
- ¹⁹ <http://www.ageing-better.org.uk/get-involved/collaboration/>
- ²⁰ <http://www.eif.org.uk/get-involved/>
- ²¹ <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/>
- ²² <http://whatworks.college.police.uk/Partnerships/Pages/Partnerships.aspx>
- ²³ <http://www.whatworksgrowth.org/about-us/contact/>
- ²⁴ <https://whatworkswellbeing.org/>