

Parliamentary Questions: Answering & Tabling

For delegates who regularly need to answer or ask/table parliamentary questions, it is crucial for them to have an overall understanding of the system of Parliamentary Questions but as well to know the specificities of drafting briefings for, and answers to, the questions themselves. This programme will provide delegates with the knowledge and skills they need to maximise the effectiveness of their input in answering and tabling parliamentary questions.

Aim

To provide participants with a clear understanding of:

1. The varying types of Parliamentary Questions in the Commons and the Lords
2. How questions are tabled – what is in and out of order
3. Timings for tabling and for answers
4. Why questions are asked and what the questioner may do with the answer
5. How ministers see questions and what they try to achieve with the answers
6. Ministerial statements – written and oral.

Methodology

The training approach to be used, which governs the design and delivery of the training is based on the following principles:

- To actively involve the participants throughout the training
- To enable participants to share their thoughts and enquiries

- The training is designed based on the needs and expectations of the participants that are reflected in the pre-training questionnaire.

Workshop methods and tools

In order to achieve the objectives of the training, the following tools and methods will be utilised:

- **Presentations:** presentations will be used in order to provide the background of each subject and create discussion and questions.
- **Discussions:** throughout the training, participants will be encouraged to contribute to discussions and share their experiences and thoughts with the rest of the group. The discussions will be facilitated and coordinated by the facilitator in order to maintain the focus in the key areas of interest.
- **Case studies:** case studies will be used so as to facilitate and trigger discussion, as well as allow external benchmarking so as to achieve competitiveness.
- **Group work:** group work will be used in order to facilitate practical understanding of the issues and in order to enhance team working, team building and cooperation amongst participants.

Sample programme

Agenda

10.00 Welcome and Introductions

- Aims and learning objectives of the day. Participants' aims and experience.

A brief introduction to the composition of both Houses of Parliament

An overview of Parliamentary Questions

- Why MPs and Peers ask questions
- Why Ministers have to answer Parliamentary Questions
- Different types of Parliamentary Questions
- Rules and conventions of asking Parliamentary Questions
- The Order Paper, Hansard and some real examples
- What do Ministers want in the answer?
- Some facts and figures

Refreshment Break

Written PQ exercise

- This session will introduce the participants to the process of commissioning and drafting answers to PQ's. The participants will be asked to draft a reply to a real PQ and afterwards will be shown the Minister's actual reply

13.00 Lunch

Who's who and what do they do?

- Role of the Speaker, The Whips, Parliamentary Private Secretaries, Special Advisers

At the Despatch Box: Oral Questions in action

- This session will introduce participants to the regular oral question time for departmental ministers. Participants will observe clips on Departmental Oral Questions, Prime Ministers Questions and Questions in the House of Lords.

Refreshment Break

Oral PQ Exercise

- Participants will be asked to provide briefing for possible supplementary questions for a real question tabled by an MP for answer by a Minister.

Review of the day

- Final questions
- Evaluation

17.00 Close