

Writing for UK parliament

Note: This document is public and can be shared. Please note that I created this summary when submitting evidence to the [Animal Welfare \(Sentience\) Bill](#), so only information relevant to this type of bill has been captured. I also didn't originally intend to share it, so the information may be repetitive and contain grammatical errors. If you want to provide feedback, please email emilygrundy0@gmail.com

Links

Most relevant to submitting evidence for bills

- [Guide for witnesses giving written or oral evidence to a House of Commons select committee](#)
(page 5-6)

Less relevant to submitting evidence for bills (or adds little additional information beyond the Guide for witnesses link above)

- [A Short Guide to Producing Research to Support the Work of UK Parliament](#)
 - Has some Tips on producing research that is useful to the UK Parliament that might be useful in the planning phase (e.g., questions to ask yourself), but fairly basic
- [Guidance on submitting evidence to Lords select committees](#)
 - Mostly covered in Guide for witnesses
- [Guidance on submitting evidence to Commons select committees](#)
 - Provides advice on submissions (e.g., dos and don'ts)
 - Mostly covered in Guide for witnesses
- [Research, Impact and the UK Parliament](#) - one pager on who uses research in Parliament and how is it used
 - Not very relevant (Explains structure)
- [Getting your Research into Parliament](#) - infographic on how research feeds into Parliament and tips for making connections
 - Not very useful (basic information, nothing new)

I have summarised the information provided in the above links below, with submitting evidence for bills in mind.

Summary of information

What a submission should look like

To successfully make a submission via the online form on a committee's website, documents need to:

- Be less than 25 MB in size.
- Be in Word (doc, docx, rtf, txt ooxml or odt format, not PDF).
- Contain as few logos or embedded pictures as possible.
- Contain no macros.
- Comprise a single document. If there are any annexes or appendices, these should be included in the same document. It also assists the committee if those submitting evidence adhere to the following guidelines.

Each submission should:

- State clearly who the submission is from, i.e. whether from yourself in a personal capacity or sent on behalf of an organisation, for example the submission could be headed 'Written evidence submitted by xxx'.
- Be concise – we recommend no more than 3,000 words in length, or otherwise stated in the inquiry terms of reference.
- Begin with an executive summary in bullet point form of the main points made in the submission.
- Include a brief introduction about yourself/your organisation and your reason for submitting evidence.
- Have numbered paragraphs.
- Include any factual information you have to offer from which the committee might be able to draw conclusions, or which could be put to other witnesses for their reactions.
- Include any recommendations for action by the Government or others which you would like the committee to consider.
- Date the submission
- Be explicit about limitations and caveats
- Keep what you write relevant to the subject of the inquiry
- Don't just present your findings, but consider what the implications are, making policy recommendations where they follow from the research. If you are responding to a select committee inquiry, make sure your response directly answers the questions raised in the Terms of Reference.

- Consider that you are likely to be engaging with a time-poor, interested, non-expert audience. So make your communications clear, concise and accessible, front-loading recommendations and key findings, avoiding jargon and politicised language, and using graphics and images where helpful.

Those making a submission should note the following:

- Material already published elsewhere should not form the basis of a submission, but may be referred to within or attached to a submission, in which case it should be clearly referenced, preferably with a hyperlink.
- If you do not wish your submission to be published, you must clearly say so and explain your reasons for not wishing its disclosure. The committee will take this into account in deciding whether to publish. If you wish to include private or confidential information in your submission to the committee, please contact the clerk of the committee to discuss this.
- Once submitted, no public use should be made of any submission prepared specifically for the committee unless you have first obtained permission from the clerk of the committee. If you are given permission by the committee to publish your evidence separately, you should be aware that you will be legally responsible for its content.

To be most useful to Parliament, research should be:

- relevant and timely; where relevant addressing the issue in hand or responding to the question posed in a timely manner
- credible; from a well-known or trusted source, and/or produced with credible or appropriate methods
- independently produced and/or transparent about amounts and sources of funding or support
- presented clearly and concisely, in an accessible manner

Ten top tips: how to write really useful evidence

Committees receive a lot of written evidence, and we read it all. But there are some things you can do to make your evidence even more useful to the Committee and its inquiry.

These tips are especially for anyone who is writing evidence on behalf of an organisation or in another professional role.

- Keep your evidence short and to the point.

- Write in plain English and explain any technical terms.
- Use section headings and numbered paragraphs.
- We can't accept evidence that has already been published, or that is intended to be published elsewhere, but you can quote from or refer to published material.
- Include factual information you think the Committee will find useful, particularly if it comes from you or your organisation's own knowledge, work or research.
- Set out the actions you would like Government or others to take, and explain why these actions would improve things.
- Include your thoughts about the most important questions that the Committee should ask the Government.
- Think about what you or your organisation can bring to the debate that others might not. What is your unique perspective or expertise?
- Send us your evidence as early as you can—this gives the Committee more time to take it into account.
- Re-read all the information on this page to make sure your evidence meets our requirements and doesn't include any material that might cause us to reject it.

Other information

- Evidence syntheses are particularly useful to Parliament, as they enable the research user to quickly gain a good understanding of consensus and disagreement in an area of evidence.
- The Committee doesn't have to publish what you send us. We'll e-mail you to let you know what's happening to your evidence.
- We'll read your evidence and we'll use it to help the Committee's inquiry. For example, the Committee might use your name and your evidence in a report.
- If you want to publish your evidence yourself, you must ask us first. If we agree that you can publish your evidence, you are legally responsible for what it says.