Guidance on Parliamentary Questions

2nd Edition, March 2014

Guidance on Parliamentary Questions

Contents   **Page**

Annexes

1. Summary of Chamber Desk Deadlines

The following are the usual deadlines for lodging questions, motions and amendments with the Chamber Desk. Any changes to these deadlines will be notified to members in advance.

Daily deadlines for receipt of written questions, motions and amendments:

- Monday to Thursday   -   4.30 pm (Recess 3.00 pm)
- Friday   -   3.30 pm (Recess 2.30 pm)

Please note, however, the following specific deadlines in relation to motions to be debated in the chamber on a Tuesday:

- Motion to be received no later than **10.00 am** on the Monday before the debate; and
- Amendments to be received no later than **4.30 pm on the same day**

All deadlines are strictly adhered to.

Oral questions:

Submission of **names** for General Questions and Portfolio Questions
- no later than 12 noon on Monday for the following week's questions

Submission of **questions** for General Questions and Portfolio Questions
- no later than 12 noon on Wednesday for the following week's questions

Submission of Topical Questions
- no later than 12 noon on Monday

First Minister's Questions (FMQ)
- no later than 12 noon on Monday for that week's FMQ

SPCB Questions
- no later than 4.30 pm eight days before SPCB Questions

Emergency Questions (note: these are distinct from questions of a local or urgent nature at FMQ)
- no later than 10.00 am on a day when the Parliament is meeting

Scottish Government and party motions for debate and amendments to these:

Motions:
- no later than 4.30 pm two days before the day on which the motion is to be debated (except for debates on Tuesday, see above)

Amendments:
- no later than 4.30 pm on the day before the motion is to be debated

2. The Chamber Desk

The Chamber Desk receives all parliamentary questions and—
- checks them for admissibility against the rules and criteria set out in the Parliament's Standing Orders and this guidance;
- edits the text of these questions in line with the rules and guidance and with house style;
- advises members on compliance with the rules and guidance;
- produces sections D, E and F for the Business Bulletin; and
- forwards approved questions to the Scottish Government, the SPCB and to the motions, questions and answers search database so that they are available for online search.

Advice or correspondence from and discussion with Chamber Desk clerks prior to a question being submitted or lodged are strictly confidential.

Clerks will make alterations to the format, wording, grammar and spelling of parliamentary questions but will not materially alter the meaning without the agreement of the submitter. Please note that, unless directed otherwise, clerks will return edited versions of questions to the person who submitted them rather than to the member in whose name they are submitted.

Although clerks will endeavour to process all questions on the day that they are received, this will not always be possible.

The Chamber Desk is in room T1.01 and is open for business—

- Monday to Thursday   -   9.00 am to 5.30 pm
- Friday   -   9.00 am to 4.30 pm

In recess these times are:
- Monday to Thursday   -   10.00 am to 4.00 pm
- Friday   -   10.00 am to 3.30 pm

However, please note the deadlines for receipt of questions on page 1.

Contact details—

Team Leader	–	(0131 34)85181
Assistant Clerks	-	(0131 34)85185
	-	(0131 34)85196
Support Manager	-	(0131 34)85199
Admin Support Staff	-	(0131 34)85193, 85250

Email: chamberdesk@scottish.parliament.uk

3. Purpose of this Guidance

This guidance clarifies the processes and requirements regarding the submission and processing of parliamentary questions for members and their staff and has been approved by the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee. Separate guidance is available on private bills, public bills, hybrid bills, committees and motions.

Additional information is available in the Parliament's Standing Orders.

4. Purpose of Parliamentary Questions

Parliamentary questions are one way in which members can obtain factual and statistical information from the Scottish Government or the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body (SPCB). They should not be used to express opinions or make political statements. **The quantity, quality and relevance of questions are the responsibility of the member in whose name they are submitted. Members should, before submitting questions, take account of the availability of all other sources of information. This will allow the system to be used in the most efficient, effective and appropriate manner to the benefit of all members and the Parliament as a whole.**

5. Admissibility Criteria

The Parliament's Standing Orders set out the following general admissibility criteria for all parliamentary questions—

Questions must—
(a) be brief, clearly worded and address specific points;
(b) relate to a matter for which the First Minister, the Scottish Ministers or the Scottish Law Officers have general responsibility;
(c) be in English;
(d) be prefaced by the name of the member asking the question;
(e) not contain offensive language;
(f) not express a point of view;
(g) not breach any enactment or rule of law or be contrary to the public interest;
(h) not contravene the sub judice rule (Rule 7.5.1); and
(i) not seek information provided in response to a question in the six months before the submission date of the question.

These criteria are discussed in more detail below and any other specific admissibility criteria, such as for oral questions, are dealt with in the relevant section of this guidance.

Questions—
(a) must be brief, clearly worded and address specific points

Questions should be no longer than is necessary to elicit the information sought. In editing, the clerks will consider whether questions contain any material that is not strictly necessary. Words that are intended to convey a sense of why the member is asking the question will be admitted in cases where the question would otherwise be difficult to understand.

Questions should be unambiguous and capable of being understood by those who are not specialists in the subject matter. This does not prohibit the use of technical terms, but clerks will often request further explanation when they consider that a question does not meet this criterion. **It is not sufficient that the person answering the question is likely to know what is meant.** Identifying ambiguities and any possible interpretations at the lodging stage will help members obtain the information sought as quickly as possible.

Questions should not be vague. Questions that do not seek specific pieces of information will not be admitted. For example, a question asking the Scottish Government whether it had had contact with international organisations over a given period without being specific about the subject matter of the contact or the names of the organisations would fall foul of this criterion.

(b) must relate to a matter for which the First Minister, the Scottish Ministers or the Scottish Law Officers have general responsibility

The Scottish Government does not have general responsibility for matters that are reserved to the UK Government. Questions on reserved matters are, therefore, not admissible. However, where a decision or policy on a reserved matter has a **clear impact on a matter for which the Scottish Government has responsibility**, questions can be admitted in the format—

> To ask the Scottish Government what representations it has made to the UK Government regarding [decision or policy on reserved matter].

However, for issues that *might* have an impact on a devolved area of responsibility, the question must identify the devolved area—

> To ask the Scottish Government what the implications are/impact is of [decision or policy on reserved matter] for/on [devolved matter].

Questions that seek to obtain factual information about a UK Government matter rather than about the impact of such a matter on something for which the Scottish Government has general responsibility will not be admitted.

Questions about the actions of ministers in their official capacities are admissible but questions about their activities in a personal, party or constituency capacity are not. Questions about the actions or opinions of MSPs who are not ministers are also inadmissible.

It is inappropriate to ask questions that identify Scottish Government officials by name as officials have no means by which to respond, although references to job titles are acceptable.

Questions that relate to matters that are the responsibility of private individuals or bodies or non-governmental organisations are normally inadmissible, although questions seeking the Scottish Government's position or response may be admissible **if there is an impact on an area for which the Scottish Government has responsibility**, **i.e. which is included in a Scottish Government ministerial portfolio**.

Members should not ask questions about detailed matters of a specific constituent's case. Writing directly to the minister or directorate concerned is a more appropriate way of raising such issues. Members wishing to inquire about the progress of correspondence with a minister should contact the Scottish Government Ministerial Correspondence Unit in the first instance.

(c) must be in English

Questions must be in English but members may provide a translation in any other language, which will appear in the Business Bulletin beneath the English text. **It is the member's responsibility to ensure that the translation is correct.**

(d) must be prefaced by the name of the member asking it

This enables the member who asked a question to be identified and for the response to be directed to that member.

(e) must not contain offensive language

Offensive language includes not only obscenities and swear words, but also language that is intemperate, inflammatory, sarcastic or provocative or to which those answering the question or reading it could reasonably take offence. The clerks will proceed on the assumption that questions are being asked solely to gain factual information and on that basis will assess whether the question is expressed in a way that is appropriate for eliciting that information.

(f) must not express a point of view

Questions should seek information, not give it, and must not be used as a vehicle for expressing an opinion. In particular, questions should not take the form—

>   To ask the Scottish Government whether it agrees that …

Clerks will amend such questions to—

>   To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on …

Questions should not contain implicit criticisms. This precludes, for example—

>   To ask the Scottish Government whether it will … and, if not, why not.

Such questions prejudge the answer to the first part of the question, implying that the answer should be the opposite, thus expressing an opinion. This form of words will not be allowed, although the following alternative will be admitted—

>   To ask the Scottish Government whether it will … and what the reasons are for its position on this matter.

In some cases, however, it will be appropriate for members to wait for the answer to the first question before lodging a second or follow-up question in the following format—

>   To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question [number of question] by [name of minister] on [date of answer], what its reasons are for not …

Please note that any member may ask a follow-up question to any parliamentary question.

Questions that contain critical or contentious material in the form of factual assumptions will not be admitted. **Responsibility for ensuring the accuracy of a factual assertion on which a question is based rests entirely with the member.**

On occasion, however, clerks may request further information or make changes to questions in cases where it is not clear whether a statement is a fact or an opinion. Clerks may also ask members for the source of the information in a question.

(g) must not breach any enactment or rule of law or be contrary to the public interest

The wording of a question should not disclose any information that is protected by an interdict or court order, that is commercially sensitive or confidential or the publication of which may cause personal distress or loss. Particular care should be taken regarding questions that name individuals since they may be people whose identity needs to be protected.

(h) must not contravene the sub judice rule (Rule 7.5.1)

Questions should not refer to **any** matter in relation to which legal proceedings are active except with the express permission of the Presiding Officer. When clerks are in any doubt about the application or effect of this criterion, they will seek advice from the Parliament's legal advisers. Please note that any legal advice received by clerks cannot be shared with members or their staff.

(i) The six month rule (Rule 13.4.1(b))

In addition, a question is inadmissible if it seeks information that has been provided in response to a question in the last six months. When a question is lodged, clerks will check for previous answers on the topic and draw the member's attention to answers that provide the information requested. Clerks can assist in amending the wording to produce an admissible question. Members may, for example, wish to ask for an update or to ask a follow-up question.

While Chamber Desk clerks can assist members in phrasing or rephrasing questions, they have no responsibility for the answers provided.

6. Question Structure and Wording

The following rules apply to the structure and wording of questions—

- Questions should be worded *To ask the Scottish Government whether [not "if"] it has assessed/considered etc.*
- The Scottish Government is referred to in the singular i.e. *To ask the Scottish Government whether **it is/has** etc.*
- Questions are in indirect speech without a question mark.
- Long-winded forms of words are avoided and clerks will try to reduce the wording to the minimum necessary.
- Questions should not ask the Scottish Government to act in particular ways, but should seek information. Questions worded *To ask the Scottish Government to detail/to provide etc …*, for example, will be reworded to *To ask the Scottish Government what/how many* etc.
- When it is necessary to divide a question into numbered sections for clarity, these sections will be numbered (a), (b), (c) etc, followed by (i), (ii), (iii) etc, followed by (A), (B), (C) etc, for example—

    To ask the Scottish Government how many (a) NHS boards and (b) local authorities received (i) fines and (ii) awards in (A) 2007-08, (B) 2008-09 and (C) 2009-10.

- When a series of questions is seeking the same or related information regarding, for example, a number of different bodies, clerks will, as far as is practicable, amalgamate the questions into one.
- It is not normally necessary to include the phrase, *in Scotland,* or *Scottish* in a question as this is implicit in most questions.
- It is not necessary to include the phrase, *if any,* in questions.

7. House Style

Chamber Desk clerks edit questions not only to comply with the rules and guidance but also in line with house style, with the aim of ensuring that questions published by the Parliament are consistent, unambiguous, searchable and accessible.

House style encompasses a number of points of language and format, including date format, spelling, choice of terminology and presentation of names of reports and other publications. Examples include:
- dates are presented in the format 29 March 2012;
- *organization* will be changed to *organisation* unless it is the correct spelling of a name, such as the World Health Organization;
- *people who suffer from* will be changed to *people with* a given condition;
- *the elderly* will be changed to *older people;*
- *the disabled* will be changed to *disabled people*;
- *the LGBT community* will be changed to *LGBT people*; and
- the names of reports and other publications, where possible, are always shown in full and italicised.

References such as *today*, *yesterday* and *this month* can be confusing in published documents and will be changed for clarity.

8. Role of the Clerks

Chamber Desk clerks check questions for admissibility and edit them in line with the rules, guidance and house style. Clerks will notify the submitter when questions do not meet the admissibility criteria and, where possible, they will assist in making adjustments to enable questions to be admitted, including suggesting alternative forms of wording. In such cases, however, it is not the job of the clerk to formulate questions for the submitter. In some cases, it will not be possible to adjust a question to make it admissible.

Clerks will not make substantial changes that they consider would materially alter the sense of the question without the approval of the submitter.

Advice or correspondence from and discussion with Chamber Desk clerks prior to a question being submitted or lodged are strictly confidential.

9. Resolution of Disputes on Admissibility

Where clerks have been unable to resolve a dispute with a member on admissibility, the final decision rests with the Presiding Officer.

10. Submitting a Question

10.1 Authorisation
A question may be submitted by—
- the member in whose name it is to appear; or
- someone whom the member has authorised to submit on his/her behalf.

In order to authorise someone to submit on their behalf, members must provide the Chamber Desk in advance with a signed copy of the authorisation form contained in Annexe A. Copies of this form are available from the Chamber Desk. Without such authorisation, Chamber Desk clerks will not accept a question from anyone other than the member. The authorisation applies for the whole parliamentary session and can be altered or revoked only by the member personally, not by another authorised person.

10.2 Electronic Submissions
Members may lodge questions electronically via the self-service application or from any of their email addresses if they have provided the Chamber Desk with the necessary authorisation form (Annexe B) in advance, stating the full email addresses to be authorised. Emailed questions will be accepted only from these addresses. Details of how to submit items via self-service are provided in Annex D.

Specific arrangements for the Scottish Government are set out in Rule 17.4.2 of the Parliament's Standing Orders.

Questions will not be accepted orally, by telephone or by fax.

10.3 Timing
The deadline for receipt of questions is 4.30 pm from Monday to Thursday and 3.30 pm on Friday during term time. Questions received after this time will not appear in the following day's Business Bulletin. Chamber Desk clerks will record the time of receipt of questions in hard copy. For those received by email, the time of receipt will be the time that they are delivered to the Chamber Desk email inbox.

Questions are dealt with on a first-come first-served basis. The Chamber Desk will try to process all questions received before 4.30 pm but this will not always be possible. **Questions received before 4.30 pm will not appear in the following day's Business Bulletin if a decision on admissibility cannot be made before that time.**

10.4 Declaring a Registrable Interest
Members with a registrable interest in relation to a question must declare that interest when lodging the question. When an interest is declared, the question is printed in the Business Bulletin with an **R** against it. Chamber Desk clerks cannot advise on declaring an interest but advice can be sought from the clerks of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee and detailed guidance can be found in the Code of Conduct for Members of the Scottish Parliament.

11. Written Questions

Members are expected to exercise responsibility in relation to the quantity of their questions.

11.1 Answers to Questions
The Scottish Government should provide answers to written questions within 10 counting days, i.e. days on which the Parliament is open for business and excluding public holidays.

In the case of a question lodged during the 10 counting days before a recess of more than four days or during such a recess, an answer should be given within 20 counting days. The Scottish Government will send the answer to the member in whose name the question is lodged and to the Chamber Desk.

A list of questions and answers is published on the Parliament's website on the day after the answers have been received from the Scottish Government (http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/39875.aspx).

11.2 Holding Answers
In certain cases, the Scottish Government may issue holding answers, such as "I will reply to the member as soon as possible". These are not printed in the daily Written Answers Report but the numbers of the questions that have received a holding answer appear in the report. **Chamber Desk clerks are not responsible for following up late answers.**

11.3 Questions Initiated by the Scottish Government (Inspired Questions)
Written questions initiated by the Scottish Government in order to provide information to the Parliament are identified in the Business Bulletin by a **Δ** symbol appearing next to the question number. The answers to any inspired questions received before 4.00 pm will be posted on the Parliament's website on that day.

Inspired questions are subject to the same admissibility and editing criteria as other written questions to the Scottish Government.

11.4 Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body (SPCB) Questions
The SPCB is responsible for ensuring that the Parliament is provided with the property, staff and services that it needs. Questions to the SPCB must relate to the issues for which it is responsible. Questions on the procedures of the Parliament are therefore not admissible.

12. Oral Questions

Oral questions are subject to the same admissibility criteria as written questions but, as they are to be read out in the chamber, members may wish to additionally consider—

- making the question as brief as possible;
- not asking for detailed breakdowns of information, which a minister cannot reasonably be expected to provide in an oral answer in the chamber;
- whether the question may be difficult to read out in the chamber.

An oral question can be one of the following—

- First Minister's Question
- Topical Question
- General Question or Portfolio Question
- SPCB Question
- Emergency Question

Members are responsible for ensuring that questions sent electronically are received by the Chamber Desk before the relevant deadlines. Please note that it is the time of receipt by the Chamber Desk that determines whether a question has been submitted on time, not the time when it is sent, even if it arrives late as a result of technical difficulties beyond the member's control. The Chamber Desk cannot be responsible for questions submitted very close to the deadlines and not received before the deadlines because of IT or internet problems.

12.1 First Minister's Questions
Questions for First Minister's Questions (FMQ) can be lodged at any time from the end of the preceding FMQ until 12 noon on the Monday before the FMQ for which it is being submitted. Any alternative arrangements will be announced in advance in the Business Bulletin.

Please note that the 12 noon deadline is strictly adhered to.

A member may lodge only one question for FMQ. **Members should ensure that they, or somebody on their behalf, are available to respond to inquiries from clerks about the wording of questions.** This is important because, as soon as possible after the 12 noon deadline, the Chamber Desk prepares the list of all the questions submitted, which is sent to the Presiding Officer for selection purposes. **For this reason, members are requested to finalise any edits or changes with the Chamber Desk clerks by no later than 1pm.**

Questions selected by the Presiding Officer will appear in section D of the next Business Bulletin.

The Presiding Officer considers the following criteria when selecting FMQs—

- Questions should be topical and suitable for supplementary questions;

- A reasonable political balance between the parties is maintained over time;
- Other than for party leaders, diary questions are avoided;
- There should be no duplication with questions to be asked at Topical, General or Portfolio Questions in the same week;
- Members' record of selection for FMQ.

Chamber Desk clerks do not provide explanations for the Presiding Officer's selection or non-selection of FMQs.

Each FMQ begins *To ask the First Minister* but does not otherwise refer to the First Minister specifically unless it deals with a matter that is the sole responsibility of the First Minister. For that reason, the wording is most commonly—

> To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government is doing/has done/will do …

Questions not reached or not asked will receive a written answer.

12.1.1 Questions of a Local or Urgent Nature
The Presiding Officer may decide to call questions of a local or urgent nature following one of the party leaders' questions. This is not to be confused with an emergency question, which is discussed below.

Members wishing to ask a question of a local or urgent nature during FMQ should give notice of the question by emailing it to the Presiding Officer's email box and copying it to the Chamber Desk email box.

During FMQ, members must press their request to speak button to alert the Presiding Officer that they wish to ask the question.

12.2 Topical Questions
The Presiding Officer may select Topical Questions to be taken on Tuesdays. The deadline for submitting a Topical Question is 12 noon on Monday, **which is strictly adhered to**. **Members should ensure that they, or somebody on their behalf, are available to respond to inquiries from clerks about the wording of questions.** This is important because, as soon as possible after the 12 noon deadline, the Chamber Desk prepares the list of all the questions submitted, which is sent to the Presiding Officer for selection purposes. **For this reason, members are requested to finalise any edits or changes with the Chamber Desk clerks by no later than 1pm.**

In making a selection, the Presiding Officer will consider—

- whether the subject has arisen since the Parliament last sat or there have been significant developments to a subject that has already been discussed**;**
- whether a question is, in fact, topical;
- duplication of questions already lodged or business to be debated in the chamber that week;
- duplication of oral questions answered in the last seven days;

- whether questions on the same issue have been lodged by a number of members.

To be topical, questions should—
- clearly deal with a specific issue in relation to which there has been a recent development;
- address an issue of national relevance for which the Scottish Government has general responsibility;
- if addressing a local issue, have wider than local significance, e.g. relate to national policy, have an impact on the Scottish economy and have the potential to generate supplementary questions from other members;
- be accompanied by a note from the member providing background information on the question and its topicality.

To be topical, questions should not address an issue that has not yet been reported but which a member believes may become topical.

Members may submit only one Topical Question. Whether any Topical Questions are selected in any given week is entirely at the discretion of the Presiding Officer.

Chamber Desk clerks do not provide explanations for the Presiding Officer's selection or non-selection of Topical Questions.

12.3 General Questions and Portfolio Questions
The process for General Questions and Portfolio Questions is as follows—

Week 1
Monday   members submit their names by 12 noon for inclusion in the electronic random selection that day for questions the following week; and

Wednesday   members selected submit their question by 12 noon.

Week 2
Wednesday/Thursday   members ask their question in the chamber.

The 12 noon deadline is strictly adhered to.

12.4 Submitting Names
The random selection of names is carried out by computer. Once the names have been selected, the Chamber Desk informs by email those members who have been selected and the names are published in the next Business Bulletin.

Names sent by email to the Chamber Desk from outside the parliamentary estate cannot be assumed to arrive instantly. If names are sent by email, the time at which they are deemed to have been submitted is the time at which they are delivered to the Chamber Desk email inbox. Names submitted via self-service arrive more quickly than those submitted by email.

Names that are not submitted on time will not be included in the random selection.

12.5 Submitting Questions
Members may lodge a question only for the particular period of questioning for which they have been selected (e.g. General or Portfolio Questions). In addition to the admissibility criteria set out in section 5, questions must relate to the ministerial portfolio of the Portfolio Questions for which a member has been selected. Questions for General Questions must not concern the portfolios taken at Portfolio Questions that week.

Oral questions may be lodged at any time from the time of the random selection of names until 12 noon on the Wednesday in the week before the question is asked in the chamber. All questions are checked against the admissibility criteria by the Chamber Desk clerks, including to ensure that they relate to the portfolio for which the member has been selected to ask a question.

Members should ensure that they, or somebody on their behalf, are available to respond to inquiries from clerks about the wording of questions. This is important because, as soon as possible after the 12 noon deadline, the Chamber Desk prepares the list of all the questions submitted, which is sent to the Scottish Government and published in the next Business Bulletin. **For this reason,**

members are requested to finalise any edits or changes with the Chamber Desk clerks by no later than 1pm.

Members are responsible for ensuring that questions sent electronically are received by the Chamber Desk before the relevant deadlines. Please note that it is the time of receipt by the Chamber Desk that determines whether a question has been submitted on time, not the time when it is sent, even if it arrives late as a result of technical difficulties beyond the member's control. The Chamber Desk cannot be responsible for questions submitted very close to the deadlines and not received before the deadlines because of IT or internet problems.

Where a question has not been received by the Chamber Desk by the deadline, the Business Bulletin will show the question as *not lodged*.

The 12.00 noon deadline is strictly adhered to.

Questions must be asked in the chamber **as they appear in the Business Bulletin.**

Questions not reached or not asked will receive a written response.

Members selected to ask an oral question in the chamber may ask a supplementary question. Additionally, at the discretion of the Presiding Officer, any member, including the member who asked the question, may ask further supplementary questions. Supplementary questions must be on the same subject matter as the original question and should otherwise comply with the admissibility criteria.

Members who are unable to attend the chamber to ask their question should inform the Business Team and Chamber Desk and withdraw the question, giving an explanation for the Presiding Officer.

12.6 SPCB Questions
SPCB Questions takes place during a 15-minute period decided by the Parliament. An announcement will be made in the Business Bulletin.

A member can lodge an oral question for answer by the SPCB from the time when the Parliament agrees to hold the question time until 4.30 pm eight days before it takes place, unless otherwise notified. Members may submit only one question for SPCB Questions.

The Presiding Officer determines the number of questions to be selected and the questions are selected electronically on a random basis to determine their order. The list of questions selected is published in the Business Bulletin one week before SPCB Questions. Questions that are not selected will not appear in the Business Bulletin and are not answered. The member may, however, wish to resubmit the question as a written question.

Selected questions not answered in the chamber receive a written response.

12.7 Emergency Questions

When a member considers that a question is urgent, he/she may request that it be answered that day. This is an Emergency Question. Emergency Questions are subject to the same admissibility criteria as other questions (see section 5) and must be lodged with the Chamber Desk by 10.00 am on a day on which there is a meeting of the Parliament.

Chamber Desk clerks will pass the question to the Presiding Officer, who will decide whether it is sufficiently urgent to allow it to be put as an emergency question during that day's meeting of the Parliament and, if so, at what time. If the Presiding Officer decides that it should be taken, the member who lodged the question and the Scottish Government will be notified immediately and all members will be informed by means of a revised Business Bulletin.

The member who lodged the emergency question may ask the question at the time allocated by the Presiding Officer and ask one supplementary question. The question must be asked as printed in the revised Business Bulletin. Other members may, at the discretion of the Presiding Officer, ask a further supplementary question.

If the Presiding Officer does not allow the question to be put as an Emergency Question, the question falls. The member who lodged the question will be notified of this decision by the Chamber Desk. Such questions that are not allowed by the Presiding Officer will not appear in the Business Bulletin and are not answered. The member may, however, wish to resubmit the question as a written or oral question.

Given the range of other options available to members, such as Topical Questions and questions of a local or urgent nature at FMQ, Emergency Questions are not common.

Chamber Desk clerks do not provide explanations for the Presiding Officer's selection or non-selection of Emergency Questions.

13. Withdrawing Questions

Members wishing to withdraw questions should notify the Chamber Desk in writing, in person, by post or by email, subject to the same authorisation procedures as for lodging questions (see section 10.1). Please note also the specific arrangement for withdrawing oral questions noted in section 12.5.

14. Searching for Questions and Answers

There is a search facility on the Parliament's website for questions that have received written answers and for motions and amendments at the following address: http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance.

Annexe A - Authorisation Form to Sign on Behalf of MSP

Name of MSP (Please Print)………………………………………………………………….

Signature of MSP ……………………………………………………………………………

Date …………………………………………………………………………………………..

I hereby authorise the people listed below to lodge in writing and in person on my behalf:

Parliamentary questions
Motions, amendments to motions and support for motions
Amendments to Bills
Support for Bills
Support for a proposal for a Member's Bill

Name of Authorised Person	Authorised Person's Signature

The Chamber Desk can arrange for an induction meeting which provides a better understanding of the procedures and systems for lodging parliamentary questions, motions and amendments to motions.

Would you like to make an appointment for an induction?
Yes/No (delete as appropriate)

If yes, a member of the Chamber Desk team will contact you to arrange a suitable appointment.

Please return completed forms to the Chamber Desk, Room T1.01, Tower 4.

Annexe B - MSP Email Authorisation Form

Name of MSP (Please Print) ……………………………………………………………….

I authorise the Chamber Desk to accept from my parliamentary email address and the home/constituency email address(es) listed below any of the following documents:

Parliamentary questions
Motions, amendments to motions and support for motions
Amendments for Bills
Support for Bills
Support for a proposal for a Member's Bill

My constituency email address is:

……………………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………………….

My home email address is:

……………………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………………….

Signature of MSP ………………………………………………………………………….

Date ……………………………………………………………………………………… ..

Please note: Only emails from a member's mailbox are acceptable. If a member of an MSP's staff wishes to lodge any submissions on behalf of a member to the Chamber Desk, they must send this under delegate access permissions. Instructions may be obtained from IT Services or the Chamber Desk.

Please return completed forms to the Chamber Desk, Room T1.01, Tower 4.

Annexe C - Giving Delegated Access to a Parliament Email Account

To give delegate access permissions to another person in Microsoft Outlook

1. Open Microsoft Outlook;
2. From the Tools menu, select "Options";
3. In the box that appears, select the "Delegates" tab;
4. Select "Add" and, from the address list that appears, select the name of the person to whom access is to be delegated and click the "Add ->" button;
5. Click "OK";
6. In the "Delegate Permissions" box that appears, set the permissions for this user as required. To enable a user to send and receive emails on your behalf, set the "Inbox" permissions to "Editor".

To send an email "on behalf of" another user using delegated inbox editor permissions in Microsoft Outlook

1. Open Microsoft Outlook;
2. Create a new mail message;
3. From the "View" menu, select "From Field";
4. At the head of the message, a "From" field will now have appeared above the "To" field. Click on the "From" button to call up the address list;
5. From the address list, select the name of the person on whose behalf the message is to be sent and click "OK". The person's name will now be displayed in the "From" field.

Proceed with creating and sending the message as normal; the recipient will be able to see that the message has been sent by you from the mailbox of another user.

Please return completed forms to the Chamber Desk, Room T1.01, Tower 4.

Annexe D – Chamber Desk Self-service Application

The Chamber Desk self-service application allows you to submit questions, motions, amendments and support without using the email system.

Benefits

The key benefits are—

- it allows you to keep track of submitted items;
- it allows for multiple motion support and the support goes live immediately;
- it is easy to use;
- items go directly into the processing system and do not need to be transferred from email so it reduces the scope for human error; and
- items arrive in the processing system more quickly.

Chamber Desk staff will be happy to show you how to use self-service. Contact details for Chamber Desk staff are provided on page 3 of the guidance. Detailed user guidance is available via http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/msps/56603.aspx

Authorisation

Members are automatically authorised to use self-service and the members of staff who are authorised to sign on their behalf are also authorised to use the application.
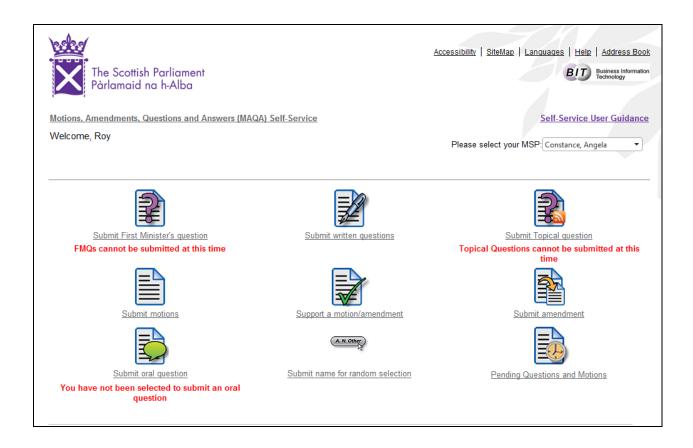
Access

The web address is http://intranet/maqa/menu.aspx

Self-service is available 24 hours a day with the exception of pre-planned downtime. It is accessed via the internet and is available, through Internet Explorer, on any Parliament pc, laptop or blackberry. Blackberry users will be prompted for their Parliament username (e.g. m800999) and password and may have to enter the domain name.

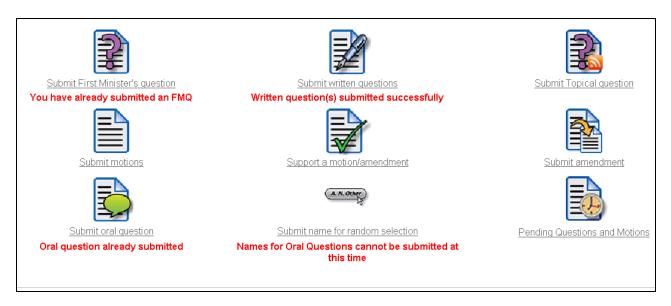It is also available on iPads/other tablets, but only if logging into SPArk first.

Using Self-service

The self-service opening screen (see below) provides important announcements, a link to the user guidance document and links to the various actions that you can take. It additionally provides information on whether First Minister's Questions and Topical Questions can be submitted and whether the member whose name appears in the drop-down box on the right of the screen has been selected to submit an oral question.
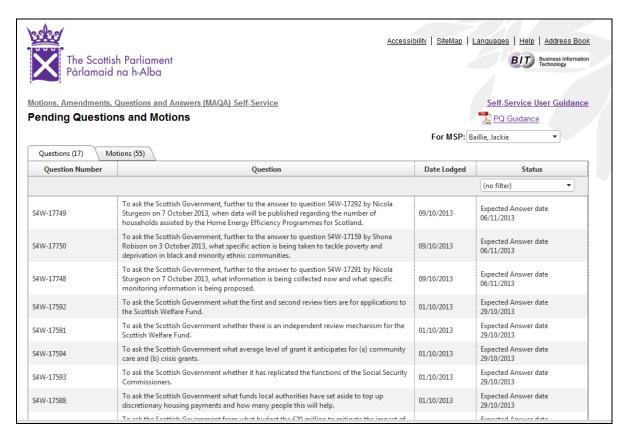
Checking what you have submitted

There are two key ways to check whether you have successfully submitted an item in self-service. Firstly, once you have submitted an item, the system returns you to the opening screen and displays a successful submission message, such as below:

This also shows that you have already submitted an FMQ and, as each member may submit only one FMQ, you cannot submit another question. The message against the *Submit Oral Question* option shows that you have already submitted your oral

question. In these circumstances, if you wish to change the question submitted for any reason, you must contact the Chamber Desk. Contact details are provided on page 3 of the guidance.

The other way to check whether and what you have submitted is to click on the *Pending Questions and Motions* option, which will take you to the following screen:

This allows you to check on the status of questions and motions/amendments that you have submitted. The *Questions* page shows the number of the question, the text, the date lodged and the expected answer date. Once a question is answered, it will no longer appear on this page. If the number is not shown, that means that the question is still being processed by the Chamber Desk.

The *Motions* page (see below) shows the number of the motion, the title, the date lodged, who has supported the motion and the status of the motion. As for questions, if the number is not shown, this means that the motion is still being processed by the Chamber Desk. New support is shown in bold until the following day and the status column shows whether motions to be considered for members' business debate have achieved cross-party support.

Motions remain on this page until they fall or, in the case of motions that have been selected for members' business debate, they are taken in the chamber.
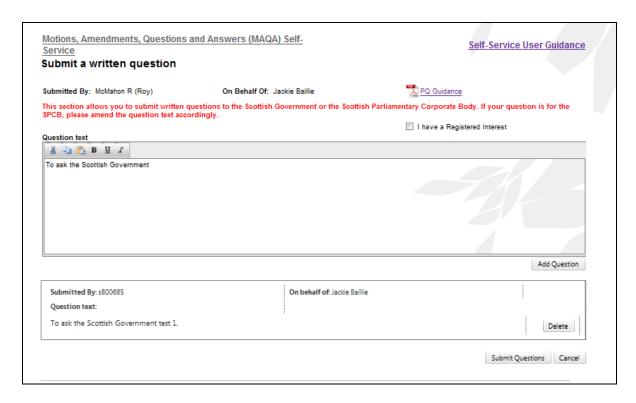
Submitting Written Questions and Motions

It is important to note that, for items that can be submitted in multiples, i.e. written questions and motions, there is a two-stage process for submission:

Firstly, you type in the text of your question or motion and click on the *Add question/motion* box to the bottom right of the text box:

Motions, Amendments, Questions and Answers (MAQA) Self-Service

Submit a written question

Submitted By: McMahon R (Roy)   On Behalf Of: Jackie Baillie   PQ Guidance   Self-Service User Guidance

This section allows you to submit written questions to the Scottish Government or the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body. If your question is for the SPCB, please amend the question text accordingly.

☐ I have a Registered Interest

Question text

To ask the Scottish Government

Add Question

Submitted By: s800685   On behalf of: Jackie Baillie
Question text:
To ask the Scottish Government test 1.   Delete

Submit Questions   Cancel

This creates a list of the questions/motions that you have entered so that you can check the list before you submit it. While you cannot edit items in this list, you can delete any that you do not wish to submit.

To submit the final list of items to the Chamber Desk, you click on the *Submit Questions/Motions* box underneath the items.

If you are submitting only one written question or motion, you must still click firstly on *Add Question/Motion* and then on *Submit Questions/Motions.*

If you have any concerns at any stage while using the self-service application, please contact the Chamber Desk. Contact details are provided on page 3 of the guidance.

As indicated above, Chamber Desk staff will be happy to show you how to use the self-service application.