



ACCA Parliamentary Guide

Guide to Parliamentary terms

Context

ACCA engages with MPs and Peers in various ways, as Parliament provides a forum for us to communicate our views and influence key opinion formers. We engage in order to:

- Raise ACCA's profile
- Inform and engage with influential MPs
- Influence the development of legislation and public policy
- Protect ACCA's reputation (where necessary)

Terms and definitions

- **Act** – a law passed by Parliament.
- **Adjournment debate** – a debate that is introduced by an individual MP, with the intention of raising a specific issue to the relevant Minister. Either takes place at the end of the parliamentary day in the Chamber, or throughout the day in Westminster Hall.
- **All Party (Parliamentary) Group (APG/APPG)** – informal committees of MPs and peers of all parties who meet to discuss common interests. There are c500 such groups in Parliament. ACCA acts as secretariat to the All Party Parliamentary Small Business Group.
- **Back benchers** – MPs who hold no official position either in the Government or in his/her party. The majority of MPs are back benchers.
- **Ballot (for Private Members' Bills)** - drawn on the second Thursday that the House sits in each session. The 20 successful members put their bills down for discussion on particular days (Fridays).
- **Bill** – a draft Act of Parliament that is debated by both Houses of Parliament.
- **Bill Committee** - a temporary committee that is set up to consider a new Bill clause by clause and accept or reject proposed amendments to it.

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- **Cabinet** – the team of MPs and peers chosen by the Prime Minister to head the government departments.
- **Chamber** – the room in which MPs and peers sit for debates.
- **Committees** – groups of MPs and peers who meet to discuss, research and scrutinise key issues. There are two main types of committee: Select Committees and Bill Committees.
- **Constituency** – a geographical area of the country represented by an MP. The population of this area are known as constituents. There are currently 646 UK Parliamentary constituencies.
- **Delegated legislation** - legislation made by ministers under powers granted to them in acts of parliament, usually by means of a statutory instrument.
- **Dissolution** - parliament is dissolved by a royal proclamation issued when a general election is to be called or when five years has expired (the maximum life of a parliament is five years).
- **Early Day Motion** - this is a kind of parliamentary petition. An MP can table a motion drafted according to particular rules. Other MPs can sign it to show their support. Technically, the motion calls for a debate on the subject 'at an early day', but they are rarely debated. Instead, their purpose is to allow MPs to express their opinion on a subject and to canvass support for their views. ACCA and other organisations use this as a tool to raise the profile of a campaign or issue such as legal protection for the term 'accountant', see EDM 1949:
<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=36272&SESSION=891>
- **Green paper** - consultation document that contains a series of proposals that a Minister is considering putting into a new Bill, which invites responses from either selected groups or from anyone with an interest.
- **Hansard** – a full report of what was said in parliament (including written questions and their answers) is published in the official report, daily and weekly, and in bound volumes. It is also put on the parliamentary website.
- **House of Commons** – the Lower House of the legislature, made up of elected Members of Parliament. This house is considered the more powerful of the two Houses of Parliament.
- **House of Lords** – the Upper House of the legislature, made up of appointed and hereditary peers. Often considered to be the more measured House, as

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it does not have either the political 'point-scoring' element or the necessity for members to represent a particular constituency.

- **Manifesto** – the document produced by political parties during a general election. Each manifesto describes what a party would do if it won the election and formed the Government.
- **Members of Parliament (MP)** – there are currently 646 MPs, 521 male and 125 female, each representing one constituency.
- **Minister** – MPs or Peers who are given extra jobs leading or assisting in one of the government departments, such as the Treasury. Most departments have several Ministers, led by a Secretary of State who sits in the Cabinet.
- **The Opposition** – the second largest political party in Parliament, currently the Conservatives, forms the official Opposition. All parties other than the Government are considered the Opposition, and they check the work of the Government by asking questions and suggesting alternative ways of doing things.
- **Opposition days** - 20 days are allotted in each session for proceedings on opposition business, of which 17 are at the disposal of the leader of the opposition, and three are at the disposal of the leader of the second-largest opposition party. The Opposition use these days to hold debates in which they try to raise the profile of policies in their manifestos and hold the Ministers to account.
- **Oral questions** - questions must be tabled by a member in person or by another member acting on his or her behalf.
- **Parliamentary Private Secretary** – Appointed by Secretaries of State and some Ministers of State from among their own backbenchers to act as the day-to-day liaison between them.
- **Parliamentary Questions (PQ)** – These are used by MPs to ask Government Ministers for information for reply at the daily 30 minute ministerial Questions Time. Each Department Minister is allocated slots to answer questions on issues concerning their Department. Questions can only be tabled by an MP, but most are asked on behalf of outsiders.
- **Peer** – a member of the House of Lords.
- **Prime Minister** – the Prime Minister is the leader of the political party that wins most seats in a General Election. He or she is chosen by the party, not the electorate.

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- **Prime Minister's Questions** – every Wednesday at 12pm the Prime Minister answers questions from MPs about the work of the Government.
- **Private Members Bills** – Follow the same stages as other public Bills and can be introduced by any MP or Peer. Very few of them ever become law.
- **Prorogation** - event that marks the end of a parliamentary session.
- **Royal assent** - the monarch's assent to make the bill an act of parliament.
- **Scrutiny** – the standard term to describe the close monitoring and examination of the work and actions of government.
- **Secretary of State** – an MP or peer who is a member of the Cabinet and is in charge of a department, such as health or education.
- **Select Committee** - appointed for the duration of a parliament to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the main Government departments and amendments to bills, by holding enquiries, and produces reports.
- **Shadow Ministers** – a shadow minister is a member of the Opposition who has the job of checking on what one of the government departments does, and also outlining what the Opposition thinks ought to be done.
- **Speaker of the House of Commons** – the Speaker or one of his or her deputies chairs debates in the main Commons chamber, sees that the rules of business are observed, selects members to speak and maintains order.
- **Special Adviser** – Gives advice to Secretary of State. May also write speeches and act as their ministers' personal media manager.
- **Surgery** – a time allocated by MPs for their constituents to air views and grievances. Surgeries are usually held on a Friday or Saturday in the MP's constituency.
- **Swearing of members** - at the start of a new parliament or after a byelection, members take the oath holding the New Testament (or in the case of a Jew or Muslim, the Old Testament or Koran) and say the words of the oath (which are on a card held by a clerk). Members may also take the oath in the Scottish manner - take an alternative form of oath or make a solemn affirmation instead of an oath.
- **Ten Minute Rule Bill** – One of the ways a back bench MP (private Members) can introduce legislation. They have 10 minutes to present,

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however used more as a means to highlight the need to change the law on a particular subject.

- **Westminster Hall** – a smaller debating chamber that allows for lower profile debates to take place when the main chamber is in use.
- **Whips** – MPs who coordinate the timetabling of business through Parliament, and who try to ensure that backbench MPs of their own party vote with the leadership on key votes.
- **White paper** - offer a detailed outline of a policy, which gives Parliament and outside organisations the opportunity to comment on future legislation. White papers will often become the basis for the actual Bill.

PAMR

ACCA's Public Affairs and Media Relations (PAMR) department is based in the UK, co-ordinating with colleagues in local offices. We also have an office in Brussels and a permanent staff member in Ukraine, focussed on Central and Eastern Europe.

The PAMR team aims to ensure that the views of our global membership are reflected in the world's media, and that issues of concern to finance professionals and the wider business community are raised with governments and regulators in order to protect and enhance ACCA's reputation and to increase our influence.

The Public Affairs team exists to protect and enhance the reputation of ACCA with government, policy advisers, key civil servants and other political and business stakeholders. It aims to build positive relationships with key decision makers, and to influence and inform legislation and policy ensuring the best possible outcomes for ACCA's work. We lead on all engagement with Parliament, monitoring Parliamentary activity and providing advice to colleagues.

The Media Relations team works to provide timely and useful comment to the world's media on key issues affecting not only the accounting profession, but business and personal finances. Our global network of offices engaged in communications ensures that every day of the year ACCA is offering wide ranging responsible advice or commentary on key issues on every continent.

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