

Case Study Portfolio

Applying Parliamentary Material in Teaching



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Guide produced for project *Parliament as a Teaching Resource*, funded by the Higher Education Academy and developed in partnership with the UK Parliament's Outreach Service.

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The contents of this Portfolio draw on research conducted as part of the *Parliament as a Teaching Resource* project, analysing the use of parliamentary resources by students and lecturers, through a series of focus groups and an online survey. The authors are grateful for the very helpful support given by the UK Parliament's Outreach Service throughout the study. We also thank Mark Stuart, University of Nottingham, for his advice and research assistance.

The Portfolio is intended to be used by lecturers for the purposes of effectively engaging students through the use of parliamentary sources in teaching. It has been designed to be read online so that the reader and so includes links to relevant parliamentary material in each section.

This Portfolio is complemented by two other documents:

- *Parliament as a Teaching Resources: a Guide for Lecturers*
- *The Referencing Parliamentary Material* guide

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Using this portfolio

Parliamentary resources can be of great value to students when they are used by lecturers to support the teaching process. This portfolio contains a series of ten detailed examples to illustrate how material available on the UK Parliament website (www.parliament.uk) can be utilised effectively in teaching. The examples detailed here utilise different types of parliamentary resources, including text, video, photographic and audio material and focus on different student skills such as primary research, communication, critical analysis and teamwork.

The examples presented here cover a variety of topics taught across political science and range from those more suited to introductory or first year modules to those at a more advanced level. Each case study includes a detailed description of how a typical session would run, with specific details of the location and use of the relevant parliamentary resource. Support material and further reading are also supplied.

When using these case studies it is important to remember that the content or topic being covered can be easily adapted to suit the specific lecture or seminar being delivered. As such **each case study aims to demonstrate how a different type of parliamentary resource can be utilised effectively by those teaching in any area of political science and at any level.** Most can additionally be adapted to suit different types of teaching session (lecture, seminar, distance-taught or VLE).

This Portfolio is complemented by two other documents:

- The ***Parliament as a Teaching Resource: A Guide for Lecturers***, which offers a basic introduction to the range of resources available on the UK Parliament website. This guide demonstrates how to access and keep up to date with parliamentary material and includes information on supporting students in their use of parliamentary sources and advice on referencing.
- The ***Referencing Parliamentary Material*** guide, which includes detailed instructions on how to reference a wide range of parliamentary material (expanding on the referencing section included in this main guide). The guide conforms to the style of referencing used by the House of Commons Library and was completed in consultation with its staff.

1. Indicators of Economic Performance

Type of Activity: Small Group Work in Seminar

Aims: To introduce students to the range of data used to assess national economic performance and to develop critical analysis skills



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Preparation: The tutor selects a short video of the Budget Statement in the House of Commons which focuses on economic performance along with response of the Leader of the Opposition.

Teaching Session: At the start of the seminar the tutor gives a brief overview of the Budget Statement, explaining that it is made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the House of Commons every year and that this is followed by a response from the Leader of the Opposition. The tutor then shows the class the selected video clips.

A series of key questions is given to students to think about in the form of a handout and the videos are played a second time.

- How do the responses of the Chancellor and Leader of the Opposition differ?
- What indicators of economic performance are being cited? Are they government, non government or supranational statistics?
- How are these indicators being used?

Students are divided into small groups (3/4) and asked to consider these questions in detail before reporting back to the class. The tutor expands on the answers given by students, discussing and reflecting on the different institutions and indicators noted by the students (such as the Office of Budget Responsibility and the IMF) and how interpretations of both indicators and the national economic situation can differ.

Benefit to Students: Students are introduced to the political and parliamentary aspects of economic policy making. By the end of the teaching session they will be aware of the very wide variety of institutions publishing data on economic performance. The activity allows students to develop skills of critical analysis, considering the different uses and interpretations of economic indicators and their reliability.

Support Material: A short video of the Budget Statement accessed from [Parliament TV archive](#). Paper copies or links to the report of the debate could also be distributed to students. For example, the 2012 Budget Statement is available on the Parliament TV archive. Search for 21 March 2012. When the video appears, simply scroll along to the Budget Statement (beginning at 57 mins, 40 secs) with the Leader of the Opposition's response (beginning at 1hr, 58 mins, 30 secs). The Official Report (Hansard) of the statement can be found [here](#).

Students could be directed to more specialised academic literature on the topic.

Possible Adaptations: This activity could be adapted to suit any policy based discussion, with similar questions being posed by the tutor. It could include clips of Prime Minister's Question Time, Oral Questions to other Government departments or other statements in the House. The teaching session could be adapted for use as part of lectures, seminars or both, with students being asked to watch the video clips prior, in or after class through a VLE. The activity could be completed within one teaching session or could be used as part of both a lecture and an accompanying seminar.

2. “*Hunt the Hansard*” Treasure Trail

Type of Activity: Individual Research Activity

Aims: To use a treasure trail activity to familiarise students with the layout and navigation of material related to environmental politics which is available on the UK Parliament.



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Preparation: The tutor must prepare the ‘treasure trail’ questions for students in advance. A suitable PC room will need to be booked in advance.

Teaching Session: The activity could take place in a computer room or a lecture theatre/seminar room. The tutor will provide students with an overview of the UK Parliament website. In particular, the tutor will demonstrate the location of the Official Hansard Report of parliamentary proceedings (Parliamentary Business > Publications and Records > Commons Debates by Date) and how to use the index of daily debates and column numbers.

Students will be given the ‘treasure trail’ handout, containing a series of debates, questions and votes to locate in Hansard. If the session is taking place in a computer room, they will then work through the handout to complete the treasure trail. The tutor must be on hand to assist students if they are struggling to find the material. In the latter part of the session the tutor can demonstrate some or all of the questions to the class, ensuring that all students know how to locate the material. If the session is taking place in a seminar room or lecture theatre, the handout could be given to students to complete at a later date.

Benefit to Students: The activity provides students with a general introduction to the UK Parliament website. It allows them to familiarise themselves with the layout and navigation of the website and increases their proficiency in the use of Hansard. They are able to practise locating information which will be useful to them when

undertaking their own dissertation research or when writing essays. The exercise will help to develop their primary research and IT skills.

Support Material

- Parliament as a Teaching Resource: A Guide for Lecturers and Teaching Staff
- Hunt the Hansard (Environmental Politics), Handout for Students (see below)

Possible Adaptations: The activity could be modified so that the students find information related to any area of political science. The activity could be used following a visit from the Regional Parliamentary Outreach Officer regarding the use of the Parliament website. The treasure trail can be completed in the teaching session or at home. The full activity could also be run solely through a VLE, with the tutor providing brief instructions and links to students before asking them to complete the handout activity.

“Hunt the Hansard” Treasure Trail (Basic)

Select Committees

There are two House of Commons select committees relevant to this topic: the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee and the Environmental Audit Committee.

1. Find the page of the Select Committee on Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
2. Open the committee’s ‘inquiries’ page.
3. How many current inquiries are there?
4. Go to the committee’s ‘publications’ section and find the report “Greening the Common Agricultural Policy”.
5. How many recommendations/conclusions does the committee make?
6. Find the page of the Environmental Audit Select Committee and go to the ‘role of the committee’ page.
7. What is the committee’s remit described as?

Oral Questions and Debates

1. Go to the ‘Parliamentary Business’ section and then ‘Publications and Records’.
2. Open Commons debates (by date) and search for 7 March 2013. Open the Hansard of ‘debates and oral answers’.
3. Find the oral questions asked to the environment, food and rural affairs ministers. How many questions are asked in this session?
4. Go to Question 5. How many EU regulations relating to farmers have been passed in the last two years?

Topics Pages

The Parliament website also organises research information by topic.

1. Go to the ‘topics’ page at the bottom of the UK Parliament homepage.
2. Find the ‘energy and environment’ section and select ‘environmental protection’.
3. The most recent library Research Paper is on which bill?

“Hunt the Hansard” Treasure Trail (Advanced)

Select Committees

There are two House of Commons select committees relevant to this topic: the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee and the Environmental Audit Committee.

1. Find the page of the Select Committee on Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and open the committee’s ‘inquiries’ page.
2. How many current inquiries are there?
3. Go to the committee’s ‘publications’ section and find the report “Greening the Common Agricultural Policy”.
4. How many recommendations/conclusions does the committee make?
5. Find the page of the Environmental Audit Select Committee and go to the ‘role of the committee’ page.
6. What is the committee’s remit described as?
7. Find the Government’s Response to the report “Protecting the Arctic” (2012-13).
8. How did the government respond to the Committee’s recommendation for the development of an Arctic Strategy (recommendation 13)?
9. Which three organisations gave oral evidence to the committee in its follow up to the government’s response on 23 January 2013?

Oral Questions and Debates

Oral questions and parliamentary debates are a good way to find out about contemporary events in environmental politics.

1. Go to the ‘Parliamentary Business’ section and then ‘Publications and Records’.
2. Open Commons debates (by date) and search for 7 March 2013. Open the Hansard of ‘debates and oral answers’.
3. Find the oral questions asked to the environment, food and rural affairs ministers. How many questions are asked in this session?
4. Go to Question 5. How many EU regulations relating to farmers have been passed in the last two years?
5. Open Commons debates (by date) and search for 18 November 2010 (this is in the 2010-12 session). This time select ‘Westminster Hall’ and open the first link to the debate.

6. What climate change conference was the focus of the backbench debate?
7. Scroll down to Column 325WH. Why does Alan Whitehead think the UK can play a 'leading role' in the international capture of aircraft and shipping emissions?

Topics Pages

The Parliament website also organises research information by topic.

1. Go to the 'topics' page at the bottom of the UK Parliament homepage.
2. Find the 'energy and environment' section and select 'environmental protection'.
3. The most recent library Research Paper is on which bill?
4. Scroll down and find the most recent 'Early Day Motion' in this subject area.
What is its title and how many signatures does it have so far?

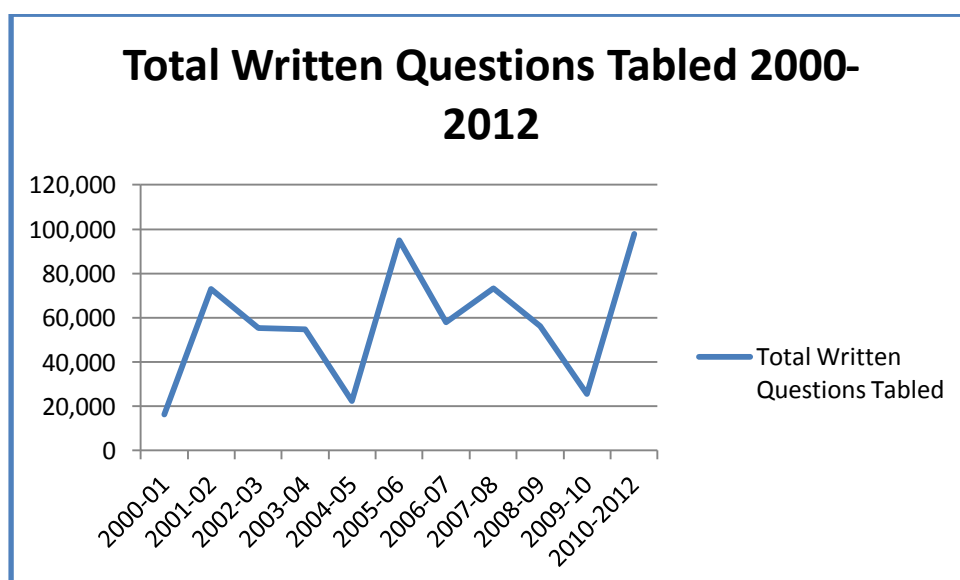
3. Collating Primary Research through a VLE

Type of Activity: Individual Primary Research, Critical Analysis, VLE¹ Activity

Aims: To introduce students to the collection of primary research material using the Parliament website and to illustrate how this material can be collated and analysed.

Preparation: The tutor should be familiar with the location of the [Sessional Information Digest](#) on the UK Parliament website.

Prior to the Teaching Session: Before the seminar, the tutor must have demonstrated the location of the Sessional Information Digest to students and explained that it holds detailed information summaries of every parliamentary session and that it covers sittings of the House, legislation, committee work, policy documents and information on Members. This could be done during a lecture or through a VLE. The tutor will have allocated each student with a parliamentary session (e.g. 2010-12, 2009-10 etc) and ask them to use the Sessional Information Digest to find out how many written questions (priority and non-priority) were answered during that parliamentary session. They should post their results onto a message board/discussion forum within the VLE prior to the seminar. As the students locate their material and post their answer to the VLE the tutor will collate the results and display a graph showing if/how the number of written questions tabled has changed (see example below).



Teaching Session: The teaching session would involve a basic introduction to written parliamentary questions and their use as a scrutiny tool. The tutor will display the graph to students which illustrates their research findings. The students

¹ Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) include Blackboard, Moodle, WebCT among others

should be divided into small groups (2/3) and asked to consider why the number of written questions is so high and why the frequency of written questions may have changed over the period in question. The groups will then feed back their thoughts to the class.

Benefit to Students: Students are able to develop their independent primary research skills, using the Parliament website to find their own data. They are then able to observe how this data can be collated and used to assess the use of written questions over the last decade (or however many sessions have been studied). In addition, they will have the opportunity to develop critical analysis skills as they consider why the frequency of written questions may have changed.

Support Material: The following material on written parliamentary questions may be useful as reading material to students:

HOUSE OF COMMONS, Procedure Committee, [Written Parliamentary Questions](#), Third Report, Session 2008-09, HC 859.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, [Parliamentary Questions: recent issues](#), Library Standard Note SN/PC/04148 (particularly pages 6-7)

Students could additionally be directed to more specialised academic literature on the topic.

Possible Adaptations: The focus of the activity can be changed to suit any seminar topic in the field of British Politics or Parliament. The example used here is perhaps suited to more specialised courses, but could be made very simple and include the counting of select committee reports on the [committee pages](#) of the Parliament website or the number of bills introduced in a parliamentary session from the [Bills and Legislation](#) pages. Additionally the Sessional Information Digest holds information on topics of interest to other modules such as white/green papers and Church of England measures.

Although the activity presented here involves the use of a VLE prior to a module seminar, the activity could be completed solely through the VLE for distance-taught or large group modules. A discussion forum would allow the tutor to pose questions regarding the students' research findings and facilitate the critical analysis of the material posted by students. Students could be asked to undertake further research, such as researching the content of written questions or the quality and content of the ministerial response.

4. Politics and the Media

Type of Activity: Using a podcast to structure seminar discussion.

Aims: To consider the impact of the media on politics



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Preparation: None

Teaching Session: At the start of the session the tutor will play the audio recording '[24 Hour Media: Parliament, Politics and the Public](#)' to the class. This recording lasts approximately ten minutes. The tutor should ask students to note down anything that they strongly agree or disagree with. When the recording has finished, students should work in small groups (3/4 students) and brainstorm the impact of the media on politics and more specifically on Parliament. Each group should feed back their ideas to the rest of the class. The tutor should then ask students if there were any comments made during the podcast that they strongly agreed or disagreed with. These comments can be used to structure the remaining seminar discussion. Key questions to cover could include:

- Is 24 hour media a problem?
- Can the media be beneficial to democracy and to the political process?

Students could then consider how the interview would have proceeded if it had been a Member of Parliament rather than a member of the press. Working in small groups

the tutor should ask students to consider the response of MPs to the questions posed in the podcast.

Benefits to Students: Students are able to listen to an interview with a well known political commentator on the impact of the media on politics. It allows them to gain an insight into the perspective of a media insider. They are able to use their skills of critical analysis to assess the answers given in the podcast and consider whether they agree or disagree with the points made and to consider the different arguments that would be put forward by those on both sides of the debate (the press and politicians).

Support Material: The following material regarding the podcast may be useful:

ROBINSON, N, BBC [Blog](#) (BBC Political Editor)

SOLEY, Lord C '[Interview with Nick Robinson](#)', Lords of the Blog, 19 January 2010.

Students could additionally be directed to more specialised academic literature on the topic.

Possible Adaptations: The use of this podcast would work well in a lecture, seminar or through a VLE. A range of [podcasts](#) are available on the Parliament website and could be used in a similar way in a lecture or seminar. For example, teaching sessions for UK Parliament modules could utilise the [select committee](#) or [Private Members' Bills](#) podcasts, whilst political economy modules may wish to use the podcast discussing the [Budget](#).

5. Debating Ceremony and Ritual in Parliament

Type of Activity: Class “line up” and debate

Aims: To consider the use of ceremony and ritual in the UK Parliament and debate whether there is still a place for these traditions in a modern parliament.



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Preparation: Prior to the seminar, students are asked to view the photographs of the [State Opening of Parliament](#) on Parliament’s Flickr stream and to consider the following questions:

- What ceremonies or rituals did you identify from these pictures?
- What purpose do they serve?

Teaching Session: At the start of the session the tutor can brainstorm the key ceremonies or rituals identified by students from the Flickr photographs and explore the purpose of some of these rituals (e.g. Black Rod knocking three times on the door of the House of Commons).

The tutor should then ask students to consider their own opinion about the use of ceremony in the UK Parliament. Students should form a line across the room on the basis of whether ceremony still has a role in a modern parliament. Those who strongly agree should be at one end of the line and those who strongly disagree should be at the opposite end of the line. Students must discuss their views with others in order to find their appropriate place in the line.

The class can be divided into two groups on the basis of this line up exercise, forming one group of students who agree with the statement and another group who disagree. Those students who were in the centre of the line may choose which side they are allocated. Each group should be given 5-10 minutes to consider the key arguments supporting their viewpoint and the session will end with a short debate on the use of ceremony and ritual in Parliament.

Benefit to Students: Students are able to examine photographs of the State Opening of Parliament and use these photographs to critically analyse the role of ceremony and tradition in Parliament. They are encouraged to reflect on their findings and develop their communication skills, listening to other students' views and considering how closely related they are to their own personal views. The debate encourages team working and communication skills.

Support Material: There is a 'State Opening of Parliament' page in the 'About Parliament' section of the Parliament website which may be of use to students. There is also a House of Lords information booklet – '[State Opening of Parliament](#)' which contains useful information. Students could additionally be directed to more specialised academic literature on the topic.

Possible Adaptations: This activity could also be used to create a short break in a lecture. The lecturer could scroll through a series of these images and ask students to note some of the key rituals they see displayed. The UK Parliament Flickr pages contain a number of photographs including [Arts in Parliament](#), [historical documents](#) and the [House of Commons](#) and [House of Lords Chambers](#).

6. Was the UK's Involvement in the Iraq War Justified?

Type of Activity: Role Play scenario

Aims: To consider the reasons behind the UK's decision to invade Iraq in March 2003 and to understand the need for a parliamentary debate on the proposed military action.



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Teaching Session: This activity is best suited for use in a lecture, with a more detailed discussion taking place in the following seminar.

During the Lecture: In the lecture the tutor should play students the video of Tony Blair's speech in the House of Commons on 18 March 2003 where he made the case for war in Iraq following the failure of the government to secure a second UN Security Council resolution authorising the invasion. Either the full video clip (48 mins) could be shown, or students could listen to a shorter part of the speech to complement a lecture on the UK's involvement in Iraq. Following the video the tutor should ask students to recall the justifications given by the Prime Minister for the invasion and to consider how persuasive they found these arguments. The accompanying [Hansard text](#) of the debate should be made available to students or listed in the seminar reading list. Students are required to read more of the debate

prior to the seminar. The seminar reading list should also include the contributions made by other key Members of Parliament on the Iraq war (see support material).

During the Seminar: The seminar discussion aims to enhance students' knowledge of the arguments for and against the invasion of Iraq through a role play situation. The tutor should inform students that they are to role-play the parliamentary debate on the Iraq War and that they will be considering the arguments posed by key parliamentary figures.

The students should be divided into small groups (ideally with 3 or 4 students per group), with each group asked to focus on one of the following Members of Parliament:

- Group 1: Iain Duncan Smith, Leader of the Opposition (supporter of military action)
- Group 2: Robin Cook, Leader of the House of Commons (opponent of military action who resigned the day before)
- Group 3: Clare Short, Secretary of State for International Development (opponent of military action who resigned in May 2003 following the commencement of military operations in Iraq)

The groups are required to pretend they are sitting in the House of Commons during the Iraq debate and that they must write a short parliamentary speech (between 3-5 minutes). Around 15 minutes should be given for preparation before one student from each group delivers their speech. The tutor may decide to allow other students in the class to intervene during the speech – as demonstrated in the video clip shown in the lecture. The tutor should help students to summarise the session by summarising the main arguments for and against the invasion and considering what these political figures would argue today, with the benefit of hindsight.

Benefit to Students: Students are able to observe the parliamentary debate on the invasion of Iraq and to consider the views of politicians on both sides of the argument. The role play scenario enables them to develop their team work and communication skills and encourages them to consider the justification of the Iraq war in detail.

Support Material:

COOK, R, [Personal Statement](#) (Resignation from Government), HC Debates, 17 March 2003, cols. 726 -727.

COOK, R, *The Point of Departure*, London: Simon & Schuster, 2004.

SHORT, C, [Personal Statement](#) (Resignation from Government), *HC Debates*, 12 May 2003, cols. 36 – 40.

SHORT, C, *An Honourable Deception? New Labour, Iraq and the Misuse of Power*, Free Press, 2004.

Students could additionally be directed to more specialised academic literature on the topic

Possible Adaptations: This activity is related to a lecture and seminar on foreign policy, but could easily be adapted to suit other topics. An [archive](#) of all parliamentary debates is available on the UK Parliament website from July 1999 – present. Other debates which may be of interest to students include:

- [Emergency Budget](#), 22 June 2010
- [Second Reading debate on the Terrorism Bill](#), 26 October 2005 (includes proposed 90 day detention of terrorist suspects)
- [Second Reading debate on the Fixed Term Parliaments Bill](#), 13 September 2010.
- [Second Reading, Parliamentary Voting and Constituencies Bill](#), 6 September 2010

7. Parliamentary “News at Ten” Presentations

Type of Activity: Individual student presentation

Aims: To develop students’ skills in using parliamentary information and to ensure that they keep up to date on parliamentary business

The screenshot shows the homepage of www.parliament.uk. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Accessibility, Cookies, Email alerts, RSS feeds, and Contact us. Below this is a search bar. The main navigation menu includes Home, Parliamentary business (highlighted), MPs, Lords & offices, About Parliament, Get involved, Visiting, and Education. A secondary menu lists House of Commons, House of Lords, What's on, Bills & legislation, Committees, Publications & records, Parliament TV, News (highlighted), and Topics. A breadcrumb trail reads: You are here: Parliament home page > Parliamentary business > News.

The main content area is titled "News from UK Parliament" and features several news items:

- Foreign Secretary to make statement on Syria:** William Hague made statement in the Commons. Accompanied by an image of the Syrian flag.
- Lords examines Welfare Benefits Up-rating Bill:** Accompanied by an image of a pen and a document.
- Prime Minister's Questions: 6 March 2013:** Catch up on David Cameron answering questions from MPs. Accompanied by a photo of David Cameron.
- Estimates day debates: Universal Credit and Regulation of Medical Implants:** Accompanied by a photo of a hand holding a pen.
- POST staff feature in new podcast series:** POST is helping to make a monthly podcast for the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Accompanied by an image of a mosquito.

On the left side, there is a "News" menu with categories such as Agriculture, animals, food and rural affairs; Asylum, immigration and nationality; Business, industry and consumers; Communities and families; Crime, civil law, justice and rights; Culture, media and sport; Defence; Economy and finance; Education; Employment and training; Energy and environment; European Union; Health services and medicine; Housing and planning; International affairs; Parliament, government and politics; Science and technology; Social security and pensions; Social services; and Transport.

On the right side, there is a "Stay up to date" section with links for Parliamentary News RSS and Subscribe by email. Below this is a "Top news stories" section listing several headlines, including "Lords scrutinises Succession to the Crown Bill" and "Debate on the 25th anniversary of the Kurdish genocide".

source: www.parliament.uk/business/news/

Prior to Teaching Session: This activity is designed to take place at the start of each weekly seminar in place of a traditional seminar paper. Each student should be allocated one week during the course of the semester in which they are to present a short (3-5 minute) ‘round up’ of parliamentary business over the previous week in the style of a television news broadcast. The information displayed in the ‘[news](#)’ and

[‘what’s on’](#) sections of the Parliament website should form the starting point for this activity, with students encouraged to read the news stories and use the related links in order to research some further details for their report. This may include finding short quotes from MPs, extracts or recommendations from committee reports and questions asked by MPs during question time.

Teaching Session: At the start of every seminar one student will deliver their news round up. Following the presentation other students in the class will have the opportunity to ask questions relating to the topics raised. The tutor may wish to keep the presentation as a stand-alone activity or may wish to develop the discussion further, linking any relevant parliamentary business to the weekly seminar topic.

Benefit to Students: Students are able to develop their knowledge of the Parliament website and make use of primary research material (committee reports, parliamentary debates etc). By subscribing to email alerts and following the UK Parliament on Twitter, students will be exposed to a regular supply of information about parliamentary business and current affairs. The activity also allows them to develop their communication skills, conveying the weekly events in Parliament to an informed audience and responding to questions.

Support Material: Whilst all necessary parliamentary material is available through the news section on the Parliament homepage, students could additionally follow some of the parliamentary Twitter accounts (such as [@UKParliament](#), [@HouseofCommons](#) and [@UKHouseofLords](#)) or Facebook (such as [UK Parliament](#) and [UK House of Lords](#)) and may find it useful to subscribe to parliamentary [email alerts](#). Students should additionally be encouraged to consult high quality newspapers and watch relevant current affairs programmes in order to establish the topical parliamentary issues of the week.

Possible Adaptations: The activity could be amended so that students research the work of Parliament over a particular period of time (such as key events in a parliamentary session). They could also be asked to focus on one specific area of parliamentary business such as bills and legislation, select committee work or question time.

7. MP “Speed Dating” Workshop

Type of Activity: Individual Research Activity

Aims: To introduce students to the role and function of Members of Parliament.



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Preparation: Each student should be allocated a Member of Parliament to research. This could be their local MP or one specifically assigned by the tutor. When researching their MP they should consider:

- Their positions and interests (e.g. backbencher, Government Minister, Deputy Speaker, Chair of APPG)
- Membership of select committees
- Participation in debates and question time

In order to prepare their research they should be directed to the [MP profile pages](#) on the Parliament website and to the [Advanced Search](#) tool, where they can search for parliamentary activity by their MP. Searches should take the form of SURNAME, FIRST NAME e.g. “Hague, William”.

Teaching Session: At the start of the session students will discuss the work of their allocated Member of Parliament. This will take the form of a ‘speed dating’ session. The class will therefore be asked to sit in two lines, facing each other. They will have

2 minutes to play the role of their MP, discussing their interests, positions and recent parliamentary work with the student sitting opposite them. When the time has elapsed one row of students will move one place along the line so that they are having a conversation with a different student. The process is repeated until students have moved from one end of the line to the other.

At the end of the exercise the students should be asked to consider the different roles played by MPs. These can be listed by the tutor. As different roles are suggested by students, the tutor should ask them to group themselves according to whether or not the MP they researched is engaged in this role/activity. For example, if one student refers to participation in a select committee, the tutor should ask the class to divide into two groups – those MPs who are members of select committees and those who are not. This will provide a visual representation of the many roles undertaken by Members of Parliament and illustrate the proportion of MPs engaging in different forms of parliamentary activity.

Benefit to Students: The activity serves as a good introduction to the work of MPs, with students able to gain experience in undertaking basic research through the Parliament website. They have the opportunity to develop their communication skills, discussing their findings with other students on a one to one basis. The intimacy of the seminar discussions will encourage participation by those who may otherwise feel unable to contribute to whole class discussions. By encouraging students to move around the room, the seminar will become more lively and engaging and all students will be able to participate.

Support Material: In addition to the material available on the Parliament website, students can be encouraged to visit the MP's personal or constituency website and to view any local press coverage of their work. An online [countdown timer](#) can be used by the tutor. Other material includes:

UK PARLIAMENT, [Members of Parliament](#) (selection of pages)

UK PARLIAMENT, [MP for a Week Game](#) (designed for Key Stage 3 and 4 but may be useful for very introductory modules)

Students could additionally be directed to more specialised academic literature on the topic.

9. Select Committee Role Play: The UK's National Security Strategy

Type of Activity: Select committee role play session².

Aim: To introduce students to the key issues in national security strategy through a select committee role play.



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Preparation: The session will need to take place in a room which can be easily rearranged to resemble a select committee session (i.e. with a committee chair and MPs facing a panel of witnesses). The tutor will need to prepare or adapt the attached handout explaining the different roles to be played (witnesses to be called and MPs asking questions).

Teaching Session: The session will involve a basic introduction regarding recent issues in the UK's security policy and the structures in place to coordinate it. This may include for instance the creation of the National Security Council in 2010, the

² This example is based on a more detailed role play developed by Parliament's Outreach Service.

Strategic Defence and Security Review and the National Security Strategy. This may have been the focus of the lecture preceding the seminar, or may simply be a topic which is presented in the seminar itself.

At the start of the seminar, the tutor should explain that they will be taking part in a role play exercise based on a House of Commons select committee. The committee has launched an inquiry called 'Assessing national security policy in the UK' and will be taking oral evidence from witnesses. The class should be divided into two groups, with one group playing the members of the Defence Select Committee and another playing the role of witnesses coming before the committee. Each group will receive a list of roles to be allocated, with a brief description of these roles.

The tutor should allow the groups 10 minutes to prepare for the session. The group representing committee members should put together a list of questions for the witnesses, whilst the witnesses should consider what issues they would be concerned about or have experience of. It is important that the tutor stresses to the students playing the role of the witnesses that it is not a problem if they do not know the answer to a question asked in the session and that they should simply give what they feel would be the appropriate response. They may also defer to another witness if they are better able to respond. Students may find it useful to consider the following questions:

- Who has responsibility for national security policy?
- What are the main aims and challenges for national security policy in the UK?
- What is the role of the National Security Council?
- How effective is the UK's defence and security strategy?

The furniture in the seminar room should be re-arranged so that the MPs are sitting at one side of the room (in a horse-shoe shape if possible) and the witnesses should face them. When both groups have been given time to prepare, the session can begin. It is the Chairman's responsibility to run the session, though the tutor should step in if/when required to keep the session on track or to clarify statements which may be incorrect. Every committee member should ask a question, which can be posed to one or all of the witnesses. When the session has been running for 15 minutes or when students have asked all of their questions, the tutor should stop the session and ask both groups to reflect on what they have learnt. Both groups should be asked to consider the key strands of the UK's defence and security strategy and the key challenges for the future. Both groups should feed back to the class before the tutor sums up the session.

Benefits to Students: The students are able to work together to discuss general issues of national security and by role playing a select committee session they will have the opportunity to consider the UK's current strategy from a number of different angles, critically analysing the material they have read in preparation for the seminar. The exercise also develops students' communication, debating and team work skills and introduces students to the parliamentary oversight of defence and security policy.

Support Material:

HM Government, [A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The National Security Strategy](#), October 2010, CM 7953.

HM Government, [Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review](#), October 2010, CM 7948.

Defence Select Committee, [The Strategic Defence and Security Review and the National Security Strategy](#), Sixth Report of Session 2010-12, HC761.

Public Accounts Committee, [The Major Projects Report 2010](#), Twenty Third Report of Session, February 2011, HC 687.

Students should also be encouraged to look at the work and publications of the [Joint Select Committee on the National Security Strategy](#) as well as other more specialised academic literature.

Possible Adaptations: The handout can easily be adapted to suit different seminar topics and the number of witnesses and committee members can also be amended, depending on the class size. Although the activity described here is very short and designed to be carried out within the usual 1 hour seminar, it could be extended so that students were briefed on the role play in a previous lecture or seminar and were able to go away and conduct further research into their allocated roles.

The select committee used can be changed to suit any topic. For instance, UK Parliament modules could use model the session on recent inquiries by the [Political and Constitutional Reform Committee](#), considering issues such as the [quality of legislation](#), with students able to consider the evidence which would be put forward by witnesses representing the Government and Opposition as well as smaller parties.

Defence Select Committee Role Play: *Student Handout*

Witnesses

The select committee is to take evidence from four witnesses. You will need to try to anticipate the questions you are likely to be asked and how you will answer them. What message/s will you be trying to convey?

Witness 1: Secretary of State for Defence. You were instrumental in setting up the National Security Council and now play a key role within it. As a government minister you are very supportive of the strategies currently in place.

Witness 2: Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change. You are also a member of the National Security Council and believe that it is important that defence and security issues are considered by all government departments, not just by the ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs. Energy in particular is an important feature of national security policy.

Witness 3: Chief of the General Staff. You are the head of the British Army and so will be knowledgeable about military operations. You work closely with the First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff and with the Chief of the Air Staff.

Witness 4: Director of the Cyber Security Programme, Cabinet Office. You are responsible for all issues relating to cyber security and view this as one of the key challenges for the future security of the UK.

Committee Members (MPs)

Chair of the Committee: Your role is to run the session and to facilitate the questioning of the witnesses called before the committee. You are responsible for making sure that every committee member has a question to ask the witnesses. You will determine the order of these questions and may intervene in the responses if you feel that answers are too long or are not answering the question satisfactorily. It is up to you to decide whether committee members may ask follow up questions to the witnesses.

MP One: A loyal Government MP who supported the creation of the National Security Council and feels that it is a vital part of the UK's defence and security strategy. This MP feels that the current national security strategy is excellent.

MP Two: A more rebellious Government MP who thinks that the UK really needs a Department for National Security, with its own Cabinet Minister instead of the National Security Council.

MP Three: A backbench Opposition MP who has received a lot of letters from constituents about national security issues, particularly regarding the replacement of

Trident. This MP is more critical about the lack of transparency in national security decisions within the government.

MP Four: A backbench Opposition MP and former Secretary of State for Defence who is generally supportive of the measures taken by the government but is concerned that more should be done to tackle the risks of cyber security.

MP Five: A frontbench Opposition MP who has many service personnel and their families within his constituency. This MP is concerned about the future of the armed forces and in particular, military capability and equipment.

10. Debating the Lisbon Treaty

Type of Activity: Student led evidence session

Aim: To introduce students to the Lisbon Treaty and its impact on the UK



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Preparation: Prior to the seminar the tutor should encourage students to read the work of the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Union. In particular, students should be asked to read its 2007-08 report “[The Treaty of Lisbon: An Impact Assessment](#)” and the accompanying volume of published [evidence](#) alongside other academic material about the European Union.

Teaching Session: At the start of the teaching session the tutor should place three signs around the room. These should read ‘Positive’, ‘Negative’, ‘No Effect/Not Sure’. Students should be asked for their initial reaction to the question “What impact has The Lisbon Treaty had on the UK?” and told to stand by the sign that fits best with their response. This is used to divide the students into three groups. Those students who were unsure of their response or who felt that there had been no effect on the UK will play the role of the House of Lords EU Select Committee. The committee is launching an inquiry into the long term impact of The Lisbon Treaty on the UK. Those students who felt that The Lisbon Treaty had a ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ effect will play the role of witnesses coming before the committee.

Each group should be given 10 minutes to consider their arguments and the students playing the part of the select committee must think of 5 questions to ask each group of witnesses. The class should then sit in a select committee format, with the 'positive' and 'negative' groups taking it in turns to form a witness panel. The tutor should allow 10 minutes for each group to be asked questions by the committee members. At the end of the session the tutor should ask the witnesses to consider the key points of their argument whilst the select committee members should be asked to come up with a conclusion, with 2/3 main points on the basis of the evidence they have heard.

Benefit to Students: Students are encouraged to read a range of primary sources from the House of Lords EU Select Committee. They are able to learn about how the UK Parliament scrutinises EU affairs whilst at the same time deepening their understanding of the impact of the Lisbon Treaty. Those students who did not have a strong opinion on the impact of the Lisbon Treaty on the UK will be encouraged to consider the evidence put before them and to come to a more decisive conclusion.

Possible Adaptations: This activity could be adapted to use the reports and evidence of any parliamentary select committee and so could potentially cover any topic. See the [committee pages](#) of the Parliament website for a full list of select committees and their publications.

Support Material:

House of Lords EU Select Committee [pages](#)

House of Lords, The Treaty of Lisbon An Impact Assessment [Volume I: Report](#), HL Paper 62-i, 13 March 2008.

House of Lords, The Treaty of Lisbon An Impact Assessment [Volume II: Evidence](#), HL Paper 62-ii, 13 March 2008.

Students can additionally be directed to more specialised academic literature on the topic.