

Guidance on timescales for committee consultations

Introduction

1. Committees will often seek written views from individuals and organisations that may have an interest in a particular piece of committee business. This guidance has been agreed by the Conveners Group and sets out how committees should approach setting the timescale for any call for evidence.

Setting consultation timescales

2. Committees should always try to give a reasonable timescale for the submission of written material. Wherever possible, a minimum of 8-10 weeks should be allowed between the launch of any call for evidence and the deadline for written submissions.
3. Committees should, where possible, allow for a longer period if the consultation will fall over a holiday period, particularly Christmas.
4. However, there are circumstances in which it may be necessary for the consultation period to be shorter than 8-10 weeks. There are a number of factors which may result in a shorter consultation period. For example, shorter consultation periods will be necessary in relation to subordinate legislation (where committees are required to report within a certain timeframe; typically within 20-40 days). When seeking written views on a Bill at Stage 1, the consultation period may be shorter depending on the date the Bill is introduced and the proposed Stage 1 deadline. Other demands on a committee's workload, or unplanned changes to a committee's business, may also result in a shorter consultation period.
5. Where a consultation period will be less than the recommended 8-10 weeks, committees should explain the reasons for this when issuing the call for evidence.
6. Individuals and organisations with an interest in the Committee's work can contact the committee clerks to discuss timescales for upcoming work in advance of the launch of any call for views. If this would prove useful, clerks may also wish to consider discussing proposed timescales with interested parties before any deadline is set.

**Committee Office
April 2018**