



Political Studies Association

PSA/House of Commons Committee Office Placement (2020/21)

Person Specification

The person we are looking for will be able to demonstrate:

- An excellent command of the English language both verbally and written
- Academic knowledge in a field related to politics, parliament, public policy, social science or public expenditure
- An ability to research and prepare written briefing suitable for non-expert audiences and to tight deadlines
- High level drafting skills
- Good general IT skills
- Strong interpersonal skills and the ability to work as part of a team

A demonstrable interest or experience of the context in which policy is made would be an advantage but detailed knowledge of Westminster's parliamentary procedures is not required.

The successful candidate must:

- Be a member of the PSA
- Be studying part-time or full-time for a PhD
- Be prepared to submit to and clear security checks to Counter Terrorist Check level before taking up the placement (the Scrutiny Unit will arrange this)
- Sign and adhere to a confidentiality agreement governing the use that can be made of information gained during the placement
- At all times during the placement work and act with tact, discretion and absolute political impartiality
- Be a citizen of the EU or have the right to work in the UK full-time

Role Description

We are ideally looking for an intern who can join us for **4 months between November 2020 and the Summer Recess (August 2021)**. Consideration will be given to tailoring the allocated hours and duration of the placement to fit around academic or other commitments.

This is a paid internship, offering remuneration of £1000/month. We expect this to be used in addition to any regular research council or university funding that you may receive.

Those undertaking work placements are placed either within a team of staff supporting a specific select committee or in the Scrutiny Unit.

Working arrangements for Committees have altered significantly in the last few months, with most staff mainly working from home as part of the measures to combat Covid 19, and it remains to be seen whether these changes will still be in place in 2021.

The Scrutiny Unit is part of the Committee Directorate which is in turn part of the House of Commons Service. It provides select and joint committees, and their secretariats, with expert advice and guidance on Government expenditure, performance and draft legislation in a range of policy areas as required.

Tasks undertaken by staff in the Unit can vary in length between a few hours work to several weeks' commitment. Interns are expected to contribute to the full range of the Unit's activities but are likely to be assigned to at least one longer work stream.

Whether placed with a Select Committee or in the Scrutiny Unit, the successful candidates will be assigned to a specific project which is likely to involve one or more of the following:

- Policy and evidence analysis
- Research using both primary and secondary sources
- Preparation of written briefing materials for Members Serving on a Committee
- Briefing MPs orally, and responding to their questions

Following or toward the end of your placement, successful candidates will be asked to report on their experience, in a variety of formats e.g. long report (3,000 words), magazine article, blog post.

Examples of recent work undertaken by interns include:

- Identifying specialist witnesses who could offer insightful oral evidence for reports on devolution across the UK
- Organising committee visits to Welsh Prisons for research purposes during an ongoing inquiry
- Drafting questions for Members to ask during oral evidence sessions
- Collating oral and written evidence and drafting Committee reports
- Arranging evidence sessions for the Scottish Affairs Committee's inquiry into Blacklisting in Employment
- Researching and writing briefing notes for Committee Members on the Impact of the Bedroom Tax in Scotland
- Analysing evidence obtained and drafting Committee reports on the Referendum on Separation for Scotland (Pensions and Benefits)
- Suggesting changes to policies within the Department of Chamber and Committee Services at the House of Commons
- Researching procedural issues shaping Parliament's legislative and scrutiny activities
- Analysing policy options for the 'HS2 and the environment' report
- Attending a diverse range of activities in order to get a feel for how parliament works: debates, meetings of other committees – even Prime Minister's Questions.