

Making sense of Parliament, virtually

The Parliamentary Capability Team (PCT) part of the Government Skills and Curriculum Unit (GSCU) helps civil servants better understand how Parliament scrutinises the work of government and how they can effectively support their department's parliamentary work through training and learning resources. These are created and delivered with the support and advice of senior officials in Parliament, departmental parliamentary teams, the offices of the Leaders of the House of Commons and Lords, the Government Whips' Offices and the Office of Parliamentary Counsel. Making these training courses relevant to current government business and answering the questions about Parliament that civil servants actually want answered is crucial to supporting civil servants.

Given the unique challenges the Civil Service currently faces, it has never been more important that we all understand Parliament and factor it into all our decisions.

When the first lockdown was announced in March 2020, like many in the learning and development space, the PCT quickly took the predominantly face to face training courses online. Colleagues working to deliver the government's response to COVID-19 needed training and resources which were easily accessible whether they were based in the office or at home and could be completed at their own pace.

In moving to a new remote workshop format, the PCT split up their longer face to face courses (covering multiple parliamentary procedures) into 7 courses (one procedure per course). They utilised aspects of their highly-rated face-to-face training with interactive elements to engage learners and used questioning to check understanding at regular intervals to create high-quality virtual workshop content.

After testing the first workshops internally in the Cabinet Office and with trusted learning and development partners in departments such as the Department for Trade, they opened up registration wider to all civil servants.

In 2020/21 the PCT delivered over 200 events and workshops to 6,670 civil servants (up from 3,603 the previous year). With participants scoring the training on average 9/10.

Introduction to Parliament, 13 July 2020:

...this is one of the best workshops I've ever attended, inside and outside of government. It was easy to understand, delivered with confidence and clarity, and the small quizzes throughout helped to test learning...Opportunities for audience interaction/engagement were spot on and I noticed that you offered many ways for audiences to participate so that nobody felt left out.

Introduction to Parliament, 19 Oct 2020:

I found this workshop very helpful. Clear examples were given with the information which assisted understanding.

Written questions, 11 August 2020:

Really good level of detail – not too much that a newbie is overwhelmed, but enough that you walk away with a solid grasp of the topic

The team hasn't stopped improving their training and resources. Since the first redesign in March 2020, they have added [desk aids](#) and carried out a comprehensive review of the curriculum. This resulted in the launch of their [blended learning courses](#) in May 2021. These take their popular remote workshops and incorporate e-learning, consolidation tasks and suggested reading to allow civil servants accessing their resources to challenge themselves and take their understanding of Parliament to new levels.

To find out more about the Parliamentary Capability offer, visit the [learning portal](#) and sign up for the [monthly newsletter](#).