



Academic Engagement

The academic engagement project, which began in 2016, aims to enable access to academic experts and research to improve parliamentary scrutiny.

The project is managed within SPICe, the Scottish Parliament Information Centre. SPICe provides research and information services to MSPs, their staff, and Parliament staff.

For every SPICe researcher there are around 75 university professors in Scotland. We want to ensure the Scottish Parliament has access to this expertise.



We work to three
principles

Be open to all –
to attract the
best expertise

—
Add value to
parliamentary
business

—
Be agile and
pragmatic

We work to three
strands

People

—
Networks

—
Events



People

PhD Placements

SPICe hosts several PhD students each year recruited via the [UK Research and Innovation Policy Internships Scheme](#).

SPICe works together with the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) at the UK Parliament, the Research and Information Service (RaISe) in the Northern Ireland Assembly, and the National Assembly for Wales Research Service, to select and interview potential candidates. Placements are hosted by each of the four parliaments/assemblies. During their three months placement in SPICe, students are expected to produce a briefing related to parliamentary business.

Previous PhD students have included Gareth Thomas from Rothamsted Research Institute who produced a briefing on [Risk Management in Agriculture](#), and Fiona Coyle from the University of Edinburgh who produced a briefing on the [Regulation and Governance of Medical Devices in Scotland](#).

Academic Fellowship Scheme

The Academic Fellowship Scheme enables academics to work on projects with the Parliament to:

- undertake and communicate analysis which would otherwise not be possible
- increase the use of academic knowledge, skills and research within the Parliament
- promote knowledge and understanding of the Parliament within the academic sector.

Previous Fellows have included Dr Kirsteen Shields, Lecturer at the School of Law, University of Dundee. Kirsteen produced [SPICe briefing paper on Human Rights in Scotland](#)

Dr Paulina Trevena from Glasgow University examined whether Scotland would benefit from introducing a social integration strategy as a way of attracting and retaining migrants post - Brexit. Her work culminated in a [SPICe briefing on Attracting and Retaining Migrants in post-Brexit Scotland: Is a Social Integration Strategy the Answer?](#)



Networks

Knowledge Exchange Network

This network includes knowledge exchange staff from universities and research institutes throughout Scotland. SPICe and the Scottish Futures Forum manage the network together with the Beltane Public Engagement Network and the Scottish Universities Insight Institute.

As a result of this network, the 'Ask Academia' email service has been established. Ask Academia is available via JISCMail which hosts discussion lists for the UK Education and Research communities. The service allows any member of parliament staff to contact relevant academics in Scotland. SPICe manages the service and sends requests on behalf of parliament staff. Requests are sent directly to knowledge exchange staff, who in turn forward it to relevant academics for a response.

Previous requests have included:

- dissemination of Committee work programmes and calls for evidence for Committees
- calls for proposals for the Fellowship Scheme and Brexit Seminar Series
- notification and promotion of knowledge exchange events and activities

SPICe Framework Agreement

The Framework Agreement was established in 2017 to provide the Parliament with quick access to experts across a number of Brexit related sectors.

The Framework enables us to commission, by way of call-off contracts, academics and other experts from across Scotland, and the UK, to inform the Parliament on Brexit related issues and provide short, focused inputs such as research papers, peer review of SPICe analysis, or short blog articles.

At September 2018 we have a pool of 32 academic experts (a combination of individuals and academic departments including the Fraser of Allander Institute) from across Scotland and the wider UK.

JISCM@il



Events

Brexit Breakfast Seminars

SPICe has organised a programme of early morning seminars for Members, their staff, and parliament staff. The aim of this is to develop understanding and awareness of issues and encourage engagement and debate among a spectrum of attendees.

Academics are invited to submit proposals to speak at seminars, most often on the impact of Brexit for different policy areas.

As of May 2018, there have been 17 seminars, at which 33 academics briefed Members. Total attendance across all the seminars was nearly 800, including 136 Members.

Positive outcomes for SPICe and Committees include:

- SPICe experts have been promoted alongside academic experts
- Committees have invited new academics as witnesses to inquiries
- MSPs, their staff and parliament staff have questioned experts
- SPICe connect with new contacts to review briefings and help with enquiries

Scottish Parliament and Universities Knowledge Exchange Seminars

As part of the Knowledge Exchange Network we organise six monthly seminars which we hold at both Holyrood and externally at one of the Scottish universities. SPICe staff, together with Committee Clerks, and other Parliament staff have the opportunity to engage face-to-face with academic colleagues from across Scotland and discuss opportunities for collaborative working.



September 2018

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