



HOUSE OF COMMONS



HOUSE OF LORDS

Rules for depositing papers in the Libraries of the House of Commons and House of Lords

(April 2019)

Publishers

- Claire Catherall, House of Commons Library – April 2019
- John Greenhead, House of Lords Library – April 2019

1. Deposited papers and the Libraries

The deposited papers set comprises documents placed in the House of Commons or House of Lords Library, principally by a Minister or by the Speaker or the Lord Speaker and not laid before the House in any other way (i.e. not a command paper or House of Commons paper etc).

The commitment to place these papers in the Libraries is usually made in a written statement, in response to a parliamentary question or in the course of a debate. It is also possible to deposit material by authority of a letter from a Minister. Since 2007 there has been a single series of deposited papers, which is a collection shared between the Libraries.

Documents deposited in the Library by Members of Parliament answering questions on behalf of organisations such as the Church Commissioners or the Speaker's Committee for the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority and the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission are also treated as deposited papers, as are documents sent by the Statistics Authority. In the House of Lords, the Senior Deputy Speaker can deposit papers when acting in his or her official capacity, in the same way as the Lord Speaker or a Minister.

Shadow ministers and backbenchers are not permitted to deposit documents in the Library.

The Libraries are obliged to keep deposited papers in perpetuity and make them available to Members and their staff (as cited in Erskine May, 23rd Edition p242).

The Libraries may also be required to supply copies of deposited papers to members of the public via the House of Commons Enquiry Service or Parliamentary Archives.

If Government Departments receive requests directly and hold the material requested, they should deal with the request, referring enquirers to the Enquiry Service or Archives only if they no longer hold the material.

Papers deposited in hard copy before 2007

Requests to supply pre-2007 Deposited Papers will be considered on their merits and treated in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998. Original versions of pre-2007 Deposited Papers will always be made available to Members; they will be checked for compliance if requested by the public and any necessary redactions made before supply.

Papers deposited electronically since 2007

Papers sent electronically (see below) are available in full text on the Parliamentary website. The list of Deposited Papers can be found at <https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/business-papers/commons/deposited-papers/>

Security requirements

Please note: Papers deposited since 2007 are made available to the general public via the Parliament website as supplied by you.

You must ensure that the security of the format used reflects the sensitivity of the information contained in the documents (e.g. that redactions cannot be reversed and/or the words ‘Official – Sensitive’ removed if they no longer apply) and, to the extent that the information consists of personal data, that the publication of the information is compliant with your obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.

Withdrawing papers

We will not withdraw papers once deposited in order for the content to be changed. In exceptional circumstances where data protection or security has been breached, such as a version having been sent in which redaction can be reversed to reveal redacted information, we will on occasion agree to remove or replace electronic copies. In these instances, a copy of the original version will be retained for access by Members only.

In all other cases where Departments wish to deposit an amended or corrected version for any other reason, we will not remove or replace the original document deposited but add the new version to the record. The basic principle is that deposited papers are in the public domain and cannot be withdrawn.

Q&A portal

The Q&A portal includes the facility for departments to include up to three attachments of papers referred to in PQs and written statements, **but if there is a formal ministerial commitment to deposit a paper in the libraries it should continue to be deposited in the normal way.**

Deposited papers are completely separate from the Q&A portal. If a commitment is made in a PQ or WMS and the document has not been sent to the Libraries, the Library will contact you to arrange depositing.

2. Rules for sending documents to the Libraries for deposit

The following rules must be followed by all departments and agencies wishing to deposit material in the House of Commons and House of Lords Libraries.

- i. A document must have a ministerial commitment to deposit; without this it will be refused by the Library. By this we mean the following terminology: **“placed in the Library”** or **“deposited in the Library”**.
- ii. All deposited papers must be sent electronically to depositedpapers@parliament.uk and must include a completed Library coversheet as a separate attachment, for each deposit.

This e-mail address is to be used for both Commons and Lords deposits, which since 2007 have formed a single series. Coversheets can be downloaded from the Parliamentary website or sent out by request from the Library (or see Annex A).

The Libraries reserve the right to refuse documents not accompanied by a correct and complete coversheet.

iii. Items for deposit must be sent as one of the following file types:

- MS Word
- Excel
- PDF
- Jpg
- Tif
- Gif
- Raw
- Rtf
- PowerPoint
- Txt
- csv

Large items should be zipped using WinZip, or broken into smaller files before sending. Please send the document as an attachment rather than sending the link to an existing url.

If deposits include figures or statistical tables please could they be provided in xls or csv as far as possible. This will enable public data to be published in reusable, machine-readable form.

- iv. Items that originate from outside of the issuing department, for example from an agency, should be requested in electronic form from that source. These agencies however, are not permitted to deposit themselves directly, and the documents in question should still be sent to the Libraries via the department.
- v. Items for deposit that did not originate electronically, for example older typed or printed documents, should be scanned and sent as an attachment. If this is impossible then the rules set out in section 3 must be followed.
- vi. As good practice please phone and check with us, on 020 7219 3666, if you think we might have a document already.
- vii. Deposited papers must be sent to the Libraries on the day of answer of the question, or the day of the statement.

Deposits can be sent in advance of the question or statement, but this information must be entered on the coversheet along with the parliamentary question number (the UIN number as appears in Hansard). If the UIN is not yet known, please do not send the document until it is.

- viii. **The wording of the written answer or statement must use the phrase “placed in the Library” or “deposited in the Library”; it should *not* use the word “laid”. These phrases must also be used in Ministerial letters. The terms “available in” and “put in the Library” will also not be accepted.**

If a written statement is referring to the publication of a Command paper then the statement should refer Members to the Vote Office or Printed Paper Office, and not the Library. However, on the rare occasion that you wish to both lay and deposit a document (i.e. if the document is particularly prolific), then the Library can also deposit.

- ix. All letters from Ministers should be saved as individual files, especially if the text of each is different, even if they relate to the same issue, e.g. a debate on a particular Bill. If a letter is sent to numerous Members, but with exactly the same text, we only need one copy of the letter.
- x. **The commitment should cover all documents you wish to deposit.** For example, if a letter is sent regarding the depositing of a report and it contains *any additional information* on the report, the commitment must commit to depositing the letter itself, also.

Equally, if an attachment/annex is mentioned in a document to be deposited, please ensure either of the following options:

- a) That the attachment/annex is also specified in the commitment (as detailed above) **or**
 - b) That it is included as part of the document to be deposited (i.e. so that they form one complete document), **or**
 - c) That a further commitment is provided for the attachment via a separate letter.
- xi. Commitments contained within Explanatory Notes to a Bill or in the text of any other document that does not have Ministerial commitment alongside it, will not be accepted as a deposit and will require a further commitment for us to proceed.

3. Non-electronic items

We expect departments to go to every effort to send us material electronically, but where this is impossible the following exceptions are permitted:

- Items that are, or would be, very large in size
- Items that did not originate electronically and are too large to scan
- 'Artefacts' such as CD-ROMs and DVDs

Before sending a hard-copy document telephone the Deposited Papers Clerk on 0207 219 3666

In these exceptional circumstances hard copies should be sent to the libraries with a printed Library cover sheet; an electronic coversheet must still be e-mailed to depositedpapers@parliament.uk with a brief explanation of why the item is not available electronically.

Delivery arrangements for hard copy

Two copies need to be supplied to the following addresses:

The Deposited Papers Clerk
Members' Library
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA
Tel: 020 7219 3666

The Deposited Papers Clerk
The Library
House of Lords

SW1A 0PW
Tel: 020 7219 1215

These addresses should only be used in exceptional circumstances when electronic format is impossible. Please call the above numbers if you have any queries about this.

If a CD-ROM is being supplied (the preferred route for depositing if an electronic version cannot be supplied, normally for reasons of length), it is only necessary to send one copy of the disk to the Commons Library, informing us in advance as above. The content will be downloaded and treated as a normal electronic receipt.

4. 'Will write' letters

Following a statement by the then Leader of the House, Peter Hain, on 21st July 2004 (c35-6WS), Ministers have been directed to minimise the use of "will write letters" in response to Parliamentary questions. The statement says:

"On those occasions where an "I will write" answer is necessary, a copy of the subsequent substantive response will be sent to Hansard and to the Library, and will be printed with the written answers in the next edition of Hansard. If the subsequent response is longer than Hansard would normally publish, notification will be printed that the response is available in the Library of the House.

The response will be available to Members in the Library and to the public via the Deposited Papers database.

If Ministers wish to provide, in response to a question, personal or confidential information that would not be appropriate for publication, this will be made clear in the answer. The "I will write" formula will not be used and copies will not be sent to Hansard or the Library".

Particularly in the House of Lords, follow-up letters to debating points are always included in the Deposited Papers collection when promised by Ministers.

Will Write letters in relation to a proceeding on a Bill are published by the Library on the relevant Bill pages online under 'Bill Documents': <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/>

5. Boundary Commission material

Please send any Boundary Commission material to the Library Resources Section in the House of Commons Library. They no longer form part of the Deposited papers collection.

Delivery arrangements:

Library Resources Section
House of Commons Library
7th Floor
13, Tothill Street

London
SW1H 9LH
Tel: 020 7219 3909

6. Impact Assessments

Impact Assessments relating to primary legislation (i.e. Bills) should be sent electronically to the Public Bill Office at all stages.

Please email electronic copies and any enquiries to: impactassessment@parliament.uk

7. Standing instructions

On occasion, Ministers can make a standing instruction to commit to a series of deposited papers under one commitment (and on occasion form their own sub set series of deposited papers), where this is fitting and logical. Please note that the House Libraries have the right to refuse a standing instruction. Any document outside of the exact specifications of a standing instruction must have an additional commitment.

Examples of current standing instructions are below:

i. Relevant Older Papers

Under the Speaker's commitment made in 1966 (HC Debate 21/02/1966 vol 725 c34 '*...Departments should supply to the Library in advance a list of all those older papers which appear to it to be relevant to a forthcoming debate*') departments can send lists of 'relevant older papers' which are related to a forthcoming debate on a Bill, most commonly, the Second Reading.

The department does not need to send a further commitment to deposit.

The list can come in various forms i.e. a document with links, or a spreadsheet, but it must be a *list*; the House Libraries will not accept the documents themselves and if you wish to deposit the full content of the documents, this will require a further commitment.

The House Libraries will not advise on the contents of lists of relevant older papers.

ii. Treasury Summary Memorandums

Treasury departmental memorandum containing summary assessments of projects in the government's major projects portfolio, are to be deposited following a standing instruction made in the Treasury Minutes Progress Report dated October 2017 (Cm 9506, page 98), whereby the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury confirmed "...that these summary memorandums will be deposited in the House of Commons Library".

Any additional or supporting documents related to the memorandums require an additional commitment.

iii. Criminal Offences Statements

Criminal Offences Statements relating to the UK's Withdrawal from the European Union allow for "...statements of "good reasons" for creation of and penalties for any criminal offences under the key powers in the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018". This standing instruction was made by a Written Statement by the Department for Exiting the EU on 03/07/2018.

iv. Northern Ireland Audit Office

As committed in HC Debate 13/11/2017 this is a standing instruction to deposit "...all Northern Ireland Audit Office audits and value-for-money reports of the Northern Ireland Departments, and correspondence with the NIAO Comptroller..." in the House Libraries.

8. Frequently Asked Questions

- **Do deposited papers have to conform to a standard format?**

Unlike laid papers, deposits do not have to be in a particular format (they may for instance be pamphlets, tables, letters, sample documents etc). However, we do have specific file criteria which we ask departments to adhere to regarding the sending of electronic documents (see section 2.iii)

- **Can we deposit in recess?**

Yes. We accept deposited papers throughout recesses.

- **Can we withdraw a document once it has been deposited?**

No, items cannot be withdrawn, although a replacement document can be sent for deposit **as well as** the original. We will only agree to replace electronic copies where data protection or security has been breached, such as in the case of a reversible redaction, with a copy of the original version retained for access by Members only.

- **Will the document be in the public domain once it has been deposited?**

Yes. Deposited papers from 2007 onwards are all in the public domain on www.parliament.uk at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/business-papers/commons/deposited-papers/> They are not subject to any embargoes, nor can any be placed on them once they have been deposited (See Section 1 for subsequent requests for alterations). Pre- 2007 Commons and Lords deposits can be requested by members of the public via the Parliamentary Archives, or directly to the issuing department. Requests will be considered on their merits and treated in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998. See Section 1 for procedures relating to any potential redaction. Enquirers will be able to view material in the Parliamentary Archives, or request a copy from them.

Deposited papers are kept in perpetuity.

- **We think the deposit is already in the Library, do we have to deposit it again?**

If the document you wish to refer to has already been deposited in the Libraries in response to a previous question or statement, then you do not need to send it to us again. However, you *must* check with the Library to confirm that it is already here. If it has been confirmed that we do hold the document then the deposited paper number should be obtained from the Libraries and referred to in the answer.

- **Do annual/regular deposits need a Ministerial commitment each time they are sent to the Library?**

Yes, a public commitment is needed from the Minister each time the document is to be placed in the Library. However, there are some occasions where it can be arranged for a standing instruction to be made, where a *series* of papers may be deposited under one commitment. A recent example is Criminal Offences Statements related to the UK's Withdrawal from the EU (statements of "good reasons" for creation of and penalties for any criminal offences under the key powers in the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018]. WMS (DExEU 03/07/2018). The Libraries have the right to refuse a standing instruction if it is not deemed suitable.

- **We want to deposit a document that has not yet been mentioned in a PQ or statement but may be in the future.**

We request that documents are sent to us with the PQ number or statement that triggers the deposit, so we ask that the document is not sent until this information is known and can be entered on the cover sheet.

- **What happens to documents that do not meet the criteria and are not official deposits?**

The Library is not obliged to keep items that have not been placed by a Minister, although we do sometimes keep material for the information of Members and Peers in other collections. We must stress that if a document is deemed of sufficient importance to Members and Peers then it should be formally deposited by a Minister to ensure that it is made available in perpetuity. As well as the ways outlined above, the Minister could write to a relevant Select Committee or another Member as a useful method for depositing.

- **Do we still need to send hard copies to the Vote office and Printed Paper Office?**

If you anticipate that a document is going to be in high demand then you should also send hard copies to the VO and PPO *as well as* sending an electronic version to depositedpapers@parliament.uk. If in doubt, please feel free to contact us.

- **Can you explain the relationship between Library deposits and the file attachments in the House Q&A system for electronic submission of PQs?**

The Q&A portal is entirely separate from the deposited papers. While up to three documents can be attached to answers in the portal, documents referred to in parliamentary questions and written statements as being **placed in the Library** should continue to be submitted as deposited papers to the Libraries.

Further information

- Annex 1 – copy of the cover sheet
- Annex 2 – quick guide to depositing in the House Libraries
- Annex 3 – 'Laying vs depositing'

Annex 1 copy of the cover sheet

Document for deposit in the House of Lords or House of Commons Libraries

Email to: depositedpapers@parliament.uk

Department / Agency:

Parliamentary Question

Statement

Debate

Committee

Letter

Deposit details – e.g. UIN of PQ / Statement No. / Name of debate / Letter details

Date of commitment to place in the Library:

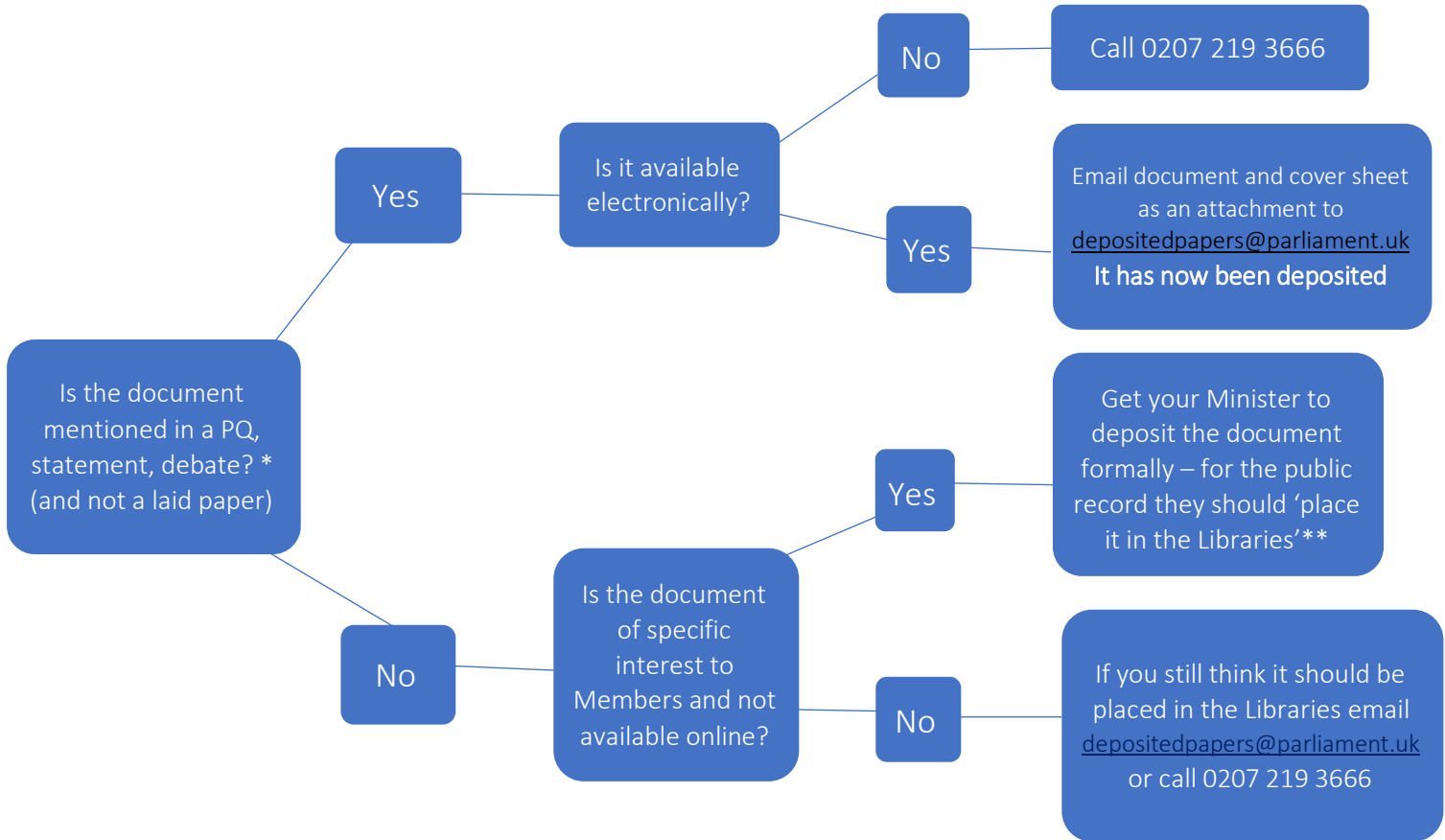
Please ensure that the security of the format used reflects the sensitivity of the information contained in the documents (e.g., that redactions cannot be reversed) and, to the extent that the information consists of personal data, that the publication of the information is compliant with your obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.

Please phone the Deposited Papers Clerk in either Library if you are making a HARD COPY deposit.

- Commons: 020 7219 3666
- Lords: 020 7219 5242

Notes:

Annex 2 quick guide to depositing in the House Libraries



*Or a letter from a Minister that says in the text "a copy of this letter has been placed/deposited in the Libraries of the House"

**Provide a covering letter addressed to the Deposited Papers Clerk signed by a Minister stating that the Minister wishes to place/deposit the material in the Libraries

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Non-illustrated version of Annex 2

- Is the document mentioned in a PQ, statement, debate?* (and not a laid paper) **YES:**
- Is it available electronically? **YES:**
E-mail document as an attachment along with completed Library cover sheet to depositedpapers@parliament.uk. It has now been deposited
- Is the document mentioned in a PQ, statement, debate?* (and not a laid paper) **YES:**
- Is it available electronically? **NO:**
Call 020 7219 3666 to arrange depositing in hard copy
- Is the document mentioned in a PQ, statement, debate?* (and not a laid paper) **NO:**
- Is the document of specific interest to Members and not available online? **YES:**
Get your Minister to deposit the document formally – for the public record say in Hansard it has been placed in the Libraries**
- Is the document mentioned in a PQ, statement, debate?* (and not a laid paper) **NO:**
- Is the document of specific interest to Members and not available online? **NO:**
If you still think it should be in the Libraries email depositedpapers@parliament.uk or call 020 7219 3666

*Or a letter from a Minister that says in the text “a copy of this letter has been placed in the Libraries of the House”

** Or provide a covering letter addressed to the Deposited Papers Clerk signed by a Minister stating that the Minister wishes to deposit the material in the Libraries.

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Annex 3 ‘Laying vs depositing’

Laid papers are a separate collection to deposited papers, they are part of the ‘Official Publications’ collection, and essentially have an elevated status as they provide a legal record of a document. Deposited papers *do not* have the same status in terms of legal record.

The Journal Office are responsible for the laying of papers (laid papers).

The Journal Office do not hold a comprehensive list of papers that must be laid, though there are documents that Government are obliged to provide which are covered by Act papers (numbered or unnumbered). Command papers (with some exceptions such as Treaties and Estimates) are papers which Government is not required by law to lay but chooses to lay. It may be that there is political common sense in doing so, with the added benefit of putting it onto the legal record of the House. White papers are a good example of where pragmatism and convention rather than obligation results in laying.

To ensure that Government has provided something to the House in its complete and final form, it is advisory that such a document should be laid. However, there are many documents that would not be appropriate for laying, where depositing in the Library is extremely useful to the House.

For further details, the Journal Office can be contacted on 0207 219 3310.

Journal Office guide to laying papers: <https://www.parliament.uk/documents/upload/laying-papers.pdf>