



HOUSE OF LORDS

Procedure Committee

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1st Report of Session 2017–19

# **Procedural changes arising from the two-year session**

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### *Contact details*

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# First Report

## PROCEDURAL CHANGES ARISING FROM THE TWO-YEAR SESSION

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1. The Government announced on 17 June that the current session would last for two years, instead of the usual one year. This Report recommends how the House should adapt its approach to a number of procedural matters in the light of this longer than normal session.

### Limit on oral questions

2. The limit on the number of oral questions allowed for each member is currently set at seven oral questions per member per session (*Companion*, paragraph 6.26).
3. **We recommend that, for the duration of the current session, the limit on the number of oral questions per member should be reset at the point of any Whitsun recess or on 1 June 2018, whichever comes first. This would allow each member to ask a total of 14 oral questions during the current session.** It should be noted that the limit of seven oral questions in the first half of the session relates to when the question is asked and not when it is tabled. Therefore, a member who has reached their limit for the first half of the session may table a further oral question before Whitsun recess/1 June 2018, provided that the question will be asked after the reset date.

### Topical oral questions

4. The limit on the number of balloted topical oral questions allowed for each member is currently set at four topical questions per member per session (*Companion*, paragraph 6.35).
5. **We recommend that, for the duration of the current session, the limit on the number of balloted topical oral questions per member should be reset at the point of any Whitsun recess or on 1 June 2018, whichever comes first. This would allow each member to ask a total of eight topical oral questions during the current session.** As with oral questions, the limit will relate to when the question is asked, rather than when it is tabled.

### Thursday debates

6. Since the 2012–13 session, every Thursday from the beginning of a normal session until the end of January is set aside for general debates (*Companion*, paragraph 6.53). Within this period, one Thursday each month until the end of December is set aside for two balloted debates. Members may initiate one balloted debate per session (*Companion*, paragraph 6.62).
7. **We recommend that in the current session:**
  - (a) **general debates should run from the start of the session (June 2017) to the end of January 2018, and from the first sitting Thursday in June 2018 until the end of January 2019;**

- (b) **balloted debates should run from the start of the session (June 2017) to the end of December 2017, and from the first sitting Thursday in June 2018 until the end of December 2018;**
- (c) **the limit on the number of balloted debates per member should be reset at the point of any Whitsun recess or on 1 June 2018, whichever comes first. This would allow each member to initiate two balloted debates during the current session, with the limit applying to when the debate takes place, and not when it is tabled (as with oral and topical questions above);**

In addition, the Government have provided an undertaking to offer any spare Thursdays, outside the general debate period, for balloted debates, subject to being able to provide three weeks' notice.

#### **Topical questions for short debate**

- 8. In a session of the usual length, on every Thursday from the beginning of the session until the end of January there is a topical question for short debate. Members may initiate one topical question for short debate per session (*Companion*, paragraphs 6.48–6.49).
- 9. **We recommend that in the current session:**
  - (a) **a topical question for short debate on every Thursday should run from the start of the session (June 2017) to the end of January 2018, and from the first sitting Thursday in June 2018 until the end of January 2019;**
  - (b) **the limit of one topical question for short debate per member should be reset at the point of any Whitsun recess or on 1 June 2018, whichever comes first. This would allow each member to initiate two topical questions for short debate during the current session.**