



House of Commons
Procedure Committee

**Written Parliamentary
questions:
Departmental
performance in the
2017 Parliament**

Fifth Report of Session 2019–21



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*Report, together with formal minutes relating
to the report*

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Procedure Committee

The Procedure Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to consider the practice and procedure of the House in the conduct of public business, and to make recommendations.

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Publications

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Committee reports are published on the [Committee's website](#) and in print by Order of the House.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Martyn Atkins (Clerk), Zoë Backhouse (Second Clerk), Paul Connolly (Media Officer), and Jim Lawford (Committee Operations Officer).

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Summary

The Procedure Committee publishes, with this report, the performance data on timeliness of Ministerial answers to written Parliamentary questions in the two sessions of the 2017 Parliament: 2017–19 and 2019. An accompanying dataset has been published online in open data format.

The Committee plans to continue the work of its predecessors in the last three Parliaments. It will be undertaking regular and systematic monitoring of Departmental performance in the timely provision of answers to written questions tabled by Members.

The Committee will continue to provide an avenue for appeal where a Member believes that the answer given has been inadequate and has exhausted other means of redress.

The Committee will also seek to ensure that timeliness is not being achieved by Departments at the expense of the quality of answers provided.

1 Written Parliamentary questions: Departmental performance in the 2017 Parliament

1. The Procedure Committees in the 2010, 2015 and 2017 Parliaments each assumed a role in monitoring the answering of Parliamentary questions for written answer by Government departments. Those Committees undertook two tasks: investigating complaints from Members about answers which they considered to be unsatisfactory, and receiving and evaluating statistics setting out the performance of each department in answering questions for written answer to the generally accepted standards for timeliness of answering.¹

2. The purpose of the Committee's work in this regard to date was set out by the Procedure Committee in the 2005–10 Parliament:

It is in order to uphold [the] system of WPQs and reiterate the responsibilities of those involved in it that we have put our Committee forward to act as a monitoring body. Not only will this allow us to gauge the extent of any problem, it will also send a clear signal to Government that apparently inadequate answers to questions will not go uninvestigated. [...] We are determined to ensure that the WPQs system is treated with due respect by Government departments and that the questions asked by the public's elected representatives receive the answers they deserve.²

Timeliness of answers

3. In this report we publish data on the performance of Departments in providing timely answers to questions in each of the two sessions of the 2017 Parliament. The 2017–19 session ran from 13 June 2017 to 8 October 2019 and the 2019 session ran from 14 October 2019 to 5 November 2019.

4. From the start of the 2015–16 Session, data on the timeliness of answering has been captured from the Q&A system. This system transmits the text of questions tabled by Members and processed by the Table Office to Government departments, and transmits the texts of answers to Members and to the House for publication. The system can be used to generate data for the tabling and answering of questions between specific date ranges.

5. We have received data on the timeliness of answering in the 2017 Parliament directly from the Table Office. Tables indicating departmental performance in each session, listed by number of questions tabled and timeliness of answering, are annexed to this report. We

1 Second Report of Session 2010–12, *Improving the effectiveness of parliamentary scrutiny: (a) Select committee amendments; (b) Explanatory statements on amendments; (c) Written parliamentary questions*, HC 800; Seventh Report of Session 2012–13, *Monitoring written Parliamentary questions*, HC 1095; Fourth Report of Session 2013–14, *Written Parliamentary questions: monitoring report*, HC 1046; First Report of Session 2016–17, *Monitoring of written Parliamentary questions: progress report for Session 2015–16*, HC 191; Second Report of Session 2017–19, *Written Parliamentary questions: progress report for Session 2016–17, monitoring in the 2017 Parliament, and electronic tabling*, HC 661.

2 Third Report of Session 2008–09, *Written Parliamentary Questions*, HC 859, paras 104, 103.

publish alongside this report the cumulative dataset from which our figures are drawn, giving Table Office data on the performance of Departments since the 2015–16 Session, in .odt format.

6. Table 1 sets out the overall performance of all Government departments in answering questions to the timeliness standard set by the Committee since the beginning of the Committee’s monitoring exercise in the 2010–12 Session.³ The standards set by the Committee have been as follows:

- For questions for ordinary written answer: an answer given at the latest five working days after the date of tabling of the question
- For questions for named day answer: an answer given on the day named.

7. Up until the end of the 2014–15 Session the data on timeliness of answers was provided by the Cabinet Office on the basis of information provided by Departments; since the 2015–16 Session it has been provided by the Table Office on the basis of records in the Q&A digital tabling system. Care should be taken in drawing direct comparisons between the data from each source.

8. We note with approval the continued overall maintenance of the standards of timeliness in answering. In the 2017 Parliament on average over nine out of ten questions for ordinary written answer received a response within five sitting days, and well over eight out of ten received a response on the day named. This is on a par with the overall standard set by Departments in the 2015 Parliament.

Table 1: Overall rates of timeliness in written answers from Government departments, Session 2010–12 to 2015–16

	Ordinary written	Named day
2010–12 Session	69%	69%
2012–13 Session	76%	73%
2013–14 Session	85%	78%
2014–15 Session	87%	81%
2015–16 Session	92%	86%
2016–17 Session	92%	87%
2017–19 Session	92%	89%
2019 Session	91%	85%

Sources: 2010–12 to 2014–15: memorandum from the Leader of the House of Commons, November 2015
2015–16 to 2019: data drawn from Q&A system operated by House of Commons Table Office

9. Table 2 gives the average number of questions tabled per sitting day in the sessions since Procedure Committee monitoring began. This provides an overall indication of the use of the questions system. Not all questions submitted to the Table Office are necessarily tabled.

3 The locations of the datasets on timeliness of answering in Sessions 2010–12 to 2014–15 are listed in the Committee’s First Report of Session 2016–17, *Monitoring of written Parliamentary questions: progress report for Session 2015–16*, HC (2016–17) 191, para 9, footnote 10.

10. We note a continuation, in 2017–19, of the consistent upward trend in the number of questions tabled for written answer per sitting day since the 2015 Parliament: over 280 questions were tabled per sitting day in that session, the longest of modern times. The number of questions tabled per day in that session still fell short of the average of 333 per day tabled in the long 2010–12 Session.

Table 2: Number of questions successfully tabled to all answering bodies per sitting day, Session 2010–12 to 2015–16

	Number of sitting days	WPQs tabled per sitting day
2010–12 Session	295	333
2012–13 Session	145	299
2013–14 Session	162	260
2014–15 Session	134	226
2015–16 Session	158	237
2016–17 Session	142	249
2017–19 Session	349	282
2019 Session	15	231

Sources: Sessions 2010–12 to 2014–15: memorandum from the Leader of the House of Commons, November 2015
Sessions 2015–16 to 2019: data drawn from Q&A system operated by House of Commons Table Office

Monitoring activity in the 2017 Parliament

11. As a rule our predecessors have considered that persistent failure to answer more than 80% of questions to time (within five working days for ordinary written questions, and by the day named for named day questions) would lead the Committee to require an explanation for the poor performance and evidence of an improvement plan.

12. In the course of its in-session monitoring, the Committee in the 2017 Parliament identified worrying trends in the performance of four Departments—the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the Department for Exiting the European Union, the Department for International Trade and the Ministry of Justice—which led to correspondence with their respective Secretaries of State.⁴

13. In the case of the Department for Exiting the European Union, repeated poor performance resulted in an invitation to the then Parliamentary Under Secretary, Mr Robin Walker MP, to appear before the Committee. The Minister gave evidence on July 2019.

4 The correspondence with each Department is [published on the Committee's website](#).

2 Written Parliamentary questions in the 2019 Parliament: monitoring of timeliness and quality of answers

Continued monitoring of timeliness

14. **The Committee will continue to monitor Departmental performance on the timeliness of answering questions at termly intervals during the present Session, on the basis of data provided by the Table Office. Departments exhibiting disappointing performance over a sustained period can expect to be required to account for their performance.**

Quality monitoring: the Procedure Committee complaint scheme

15. **The provision of timely answers is one means whereby the quality of Ministerial accountability to Parliament is ensured. It ought to go without saying that the content of such answers is as important as the speed with which they are provided.**

16. **The monitoring of timeliness undertaken by our predecessors since 2010 has been complemented by a scheme which gives Members a route to raise concerns about the quality of answers received to their questions and to seek redress. We plan to maintain this scheme over the course of this Parliament.**

17. We propose to maintain the quality monitoring scheme operated by our predecessors over the course of the present Parliament.

18. The outline of our quality monitoring scheme is as follows:

- Members may refer to the Committee individual answers which they regard as inadequate to the question asked, together with any background material which might help the Committee reach a decision on whether to take further action in that particular case.
- Late answers may also be referred to the Committee in a similar way.
- The Committee has delegated to the Chair the responsibility for evaluating individual complaints.
- The Chair will consider each answer submitted. Where he judges the answer to be unsatisfactory, he will ask the relevant department for observations within a set time, and will copy the correspondence to the Member concerned.
- In the case of late answers, the Chair will consider the extent of the delay and seek observations from the Government where he deems it appropriate to do so.
- When observations from the Department are received, the Chair will decide whether further action is necessary. Such further action may include a reference to the Committee, which may consider seeking further explanations orally or in writing.

- The Chair will pass on all observations to the relevant Member in cases where the Department has not already done so.
- Where the Chair identifies trends in bad practice, he will refer the matter to the Committee for further consideration. The Committee may then ask the department concerned to comment, either by means of a memorandum or in oral evidence.
- It is not anticipated that all answers referred to the Chairman will be judged unsatisfactory. In such cases Members will be informed of the Chairman's decision.

Quality monitoring: trends in answering behaviour

19. The predecessor committee in the 2017 Parliament drew to the attention of the House the very low numbers of late answers given by Departments providing answers to very high volumes of questions. In the figures for the 2017–19 session, published with this report, we also note that a number of Departments have answered similarly high volumes of questions to a similarly high timeliness rate.

20. The predecessor Committee thought it prudent

to ask whether the remarkably and consistently high performance of some departments on grounds of timeliness is being achieved at the expense of the overall quality of answers; and whether some departments are at an advantage, for instance in being able to score high marks for timeliness by providing brief substantive responses while forwarding the question to an agency or another arms length body not directly responsible to Parliament which may then provide a response via correspondence.⁵

We take a similar view.

21. In the present Parliament we will continue to assess the quality of answers given to written questions. Where we detect a pattern in answering which indicates, for instance, that the quality of answers is being compromised in order to maintain timeliness standards, we will not hesitate to take appropriate action.

Annex 1: timeliness of answers by Department, Session 2017–19

Table 1a: Departments listed alphabetically⁶

	Ordinary written			Named day		
	Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered substantively within 5 working days		Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered on named day	
Attorney General	297	169	56.9%	147	105	71.4%
Cabinet Office	1783	1326	74.4%	1375	951	71.4%
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	3315	2854	86.1%	2268	1712	75.5%
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport	1652	1530	92.6%	1473	1358	92.2%
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	4192	3889	92.8%	3928	3498	89.1%
Department for Exiting the European Union	840	589	70.1%	576	383	66.5%
Department for International Development	1425	1410	98.9%	1036	1013	97.8%
Department for International Trade	962	807	83.9%	649	490	75.5%
Department for Transport	3924	3851	98.1%	2417	2355	97.4%
Department for Work and Pensions	3754	3514	93.6%	3540	3260	92.1%
Department of Health and Social Care	8843	8712	98.5%	5777	5657	97.9%
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	3661	3585	97.9%	2273	2208	97.1%
Government Equalities Office	258	200	77.5%	220	138	62.7%
HM Treasury	3410	3376	99.0%	2602	2589	99.5%
Home Office	5127	4392	85.7%	4032	3214	79.7%
Leader of the House	43	36	83.7%	38	35	92.1%
Ministry of Defence	2752	2640	95.9%	1743	1651	94.7%
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	3167	2607	82.3%	2430	2106	86.7%
Ministry of Justice	3845	3325	86.5%	2147	1769	82.4%
Northern Ireland Office	347	317	91.4%	278	266	95.7%
Prime Minister	123	122	99.2%	103	103	100.0%

⁶ In the 2017–19 Session no questions for written answer were tabled to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Scotland Office	342	338	98.8%	176	166	94.3%
Wales Office	254	252	99.2%	193	182	94.3%

Source: data from the Q&A system provided by House of Commons Table Office

Table 1b: Departments ranked by number of questions for ordinary written answer received

	Ordinary written			Named day		
	Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered substantively within 5 working days		Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered on named day	
Department of Health and Social Care	8843	8712	98.5%	5777	5657	97.9%
Home Office	5127	4392	85.7%	4032	3214	79.7%
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	4192	3889	92.8%	3928	3498	89.1%
Department for Transport	3924	3851	98.1%	2417	2355	97.4%
Ministry of Justice	3845	3325	86.5%	2147	1769	82.4%
Department for Work and Pensions	3754	3514	93.6%	3540	3260	92.1%
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	3661	3585	97.9%	2273	2208	97.1%
HM Treasury	3410	3376	99.0%	2602	2589	99.5%
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	3315	2854	86.1%	2268	1712	75.5%
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	3167	2607	82.3%	2430	2106	86.7%
Ministry of Defence	2752	2640	95.9%	1743	1651	94.7%
Cabinet Office	1783	1326	74.4%	1375	951	71.4%
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport	1652	1530	92.6%	1473	1358	92.2%
Department for International Development	1425	1410	98.9%	1036	1013	97.8%
Department for International Trade	962	807	83.9%	649	490	75.5%
Department for Exiting the European Union	840	589	70.1%	576	383	66.5%
Northern Ireland Office	347	317	91.4%	278	266	95.7%
Scotland Office	342	338	98.8%	176	166	94.3%
Attorney General	297	169	56.9%	147	105	71.4%
Government Equalities Office	258	200	77.5%	220	138	62.7%
Wales Office	254	252	99.2%	193	182	94.3%

Prime Minister	123	122	99.2%	103	103	100.0%
Leader of the House	43	36	83.7%	38	35	92.1%

Source: data from the Q&A system provided by House of Commons Table Office

Table 1c: Departments ranked by proportion of questions for ordinary written answer receiving substantive response within five working days

	Ordinary written			Named day		
	Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered substantively within 5 working days		Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered on named day	
Wales Office	254	252	99.2%	193	182	94.3%
Prime Minister	123	122	99.2%	103	103	100.0%
HM Treasury	3410	3376	99.0%	2602	2589	99.5%
Department for International Development	1425	1410	98.9%	1036	1013	97.8%
Scotland Office	342	338	98.8%	176	166	94.3%
Department of Health and Social Care	8843	8712	98.5%	5777	5657	97.9%
Department for Transport	3924	3851	98.1%	2417	2355	97.4%
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	3661	3585	97.9%	2273	2208	97.1%
Ministry of Defence	2752	2640	95.9%	1743	1651	94.7%
Department for Work and Pensions	3754	3514	93.6%	3540	3260	92.1%
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	4192	3889	92.8%	3928	3498	89.1%
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport	1652	1530	92.6%	1473	1358	92.2%
Northern Ireland Office	347	317	91.4%	278	266	95.7%
Ministry of Justice	3845	3325	86.5%	2147	1769	82.4%
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	3315	2854	86.1%	2268	1712	75.5%
Home Office	5127	4392	85.7%	4032	3214	79.7%
Department for International Trade	962	807	83.9%	649	490	75.5%
Leader of the House	43	36	83.7%	38	35	92.1%
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	3167	2607	82.3%	2430	2106	86.7%
Government Equalities Office	258	200	77.5%	220	138	62.7%
Cabinet Office	1783	1326	74.4%	1375	951	71.4%

Department for Exiting the European Union	840	589	70.1%	576	383	66.5%
Attorney General	297	169	56.9%	147	105	71.4%

Source: data from the Q&A system provided by House of Commons Table Office

Table 1d: Departments ranked by number of questions for written answer on a named day received

	Ordinary written			Named day		
	Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered substantively within 5 working days		Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered on named day	
Department of Health and Social Care	8843	8712	98.5%	5777	5657	97.9%
Home Office	5127	4392	85.7%	4032	3214	79.7%
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	4192	3889	92.8%	3928	3498	89.1%
Department for Work and Pensions	3754	3514	93.6%	3540	3260	92.1%
HM Treasury	3410	3376	99.0%	2602	2589	99.5%
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	3167	2607	82.3%	2430	2106	86.7%
Department for Transport	3924	3851	98.1%	2417	2355	97.4%
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	3661	3585	97.9%	2273	2208	97.1%
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	3315	2854	86.1%	2268	1712	75.5%
Ministry of Justice	3845	3325	86.5%	2147	1769	82.4%
Ministry of Defence	2752	2640	95.9%	1743	1651	94.7%
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport	1652	1530	92.6%	1473	1358	92.2%
Cabinet Office	1783	1326	74.4%	1375	951	71.4%
Department for International Development	1425	1410	98.9%	1036	1013	97.8%
Department for International Trade	962	807	83.9%	649	490	75.5%
Department for Exiting the European Union	840	589	70.1%	576	383	66.5%
Northern Ireland Office	347	317	91.4%	278	266	95.7%
Government Equalities Office	258	200	77.5%	220	138	62.7%
Wales Office	254	252	99.2%	193	182	94.3%
Scotland Office	342	338	98.8%	176	166	94.3%

Attorney General	297	169	56.9%	147	105	71.4%
Prime Minister	123	122	99.2%	103	103	100.0%
Leader of the House	43	36	83.7%	38	35	92.1%

Source: data from the Q&A system provided by House of Commons Table Office

Table 1e: Departments ranked by proportion of questions for written answer on a named day answered on the day named

	Ordinary written			Named day		
	Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered substantively within 5 working days		Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered on named day	
Prime Minister	123	122	99.2%	103	103	100.0%
HM Treasury	3410	3376	99.0%	2602	2589	99.5%
Department for Health and Social Care	8843	8712	98.5%	5777	5657	97.9%
Department for International Development	1425	1410	98.9%	1036	1013	97.8%
Department for Transport	3924	3851	98.1%	2417	2355	97.4%
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	3661	3585	97.9%	2273	2208	97.1%
Northern Ireland Office	347	317	91.4%	278	266	95.7%
Ministry of Defence	2752	2640	95.9%	1743	1651	94.7%
Scotland Office	342	338	98.8%	176	166	94.3%
Wales Office	254	252	99.2%	193	182	94.3%
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport	1652	1530	92.6%	1473	1358	92.2%
Leader of the House	43	36	83.7%	38	35	92.1%
Department for Work and Pensions	3754	3514	93.6%	3540	3260	92.1%
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	4192	3889	92.8%	3928	3498	89.1%
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	3167	2607	82.3%	2430	2106	86.7%
Ministry of Justice	3845	3325	86.5%	2147	1769	82.4%
Home Office	5127	4392	85.7%	4032	3214	79.7%
Department for International Trade	962	807	83.9%	649	490	75.5%
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	3315	2854	86.1%	2268	1712	75.5%
Cabinet Office	1783	1326	74.4%	1375	951	71.4%

Attorney General	297	169	56.9%	147	105	71.4%
Department for Exiting the European Union	840	589	70.1%	576	383	66.5%
Government Equalities Office	258	200	77.5%	220	138	62.7%

Source: data from the Q&A system provided by House of Commons Table Office

Annex 2: timeliness of answers by Department, Session 2019

Table 2a: Departments listed alphabetically⁷

	Ordinary written			Named day		
	Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered substantively within 5 working days		Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered on named day	
Attorney General	7	7	100.0%	2	2	100.0%
Cabinet Office	7	7	100.0%	2	2	100.0%
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	97	79	81.4%	113	78	69.0%
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport	82	58	70.7%	65	59	90.8%
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	111	86	77.5%	73	56	76.7%
Department for Exiting the European Union	15	14	93.3%	10	5	50.0%
Department for International Development	66	64	97.0%	35	34	97.1%
Department for International Trade	32	31	96.9%	35	34	97.1%
Department for Transport	138	138	100.0%	60	60	100.0%
Department for Work and Pensions	111	106	95.5%	121	108	89.3%
Department of Health and Social Care	267	250	93.6%	196	176	89.8%
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	149	149	100.0%	143	137	95.8%
Government Equalities Office	7	6	85.7%	10	5	50.0%
HM Treasury	98	98	100.0%	102	101	99.0%
Home Office	164	126	76.8%	177	100	56.5%
Leader of the House	3	3	100.0%	1	1	100.0%
Ministry of Defence	54	54	100.0%	66	66	100.0%
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	60	60	83.3%	71	30	42.3%
Ministry of Justice	136	126	92.6%	122	113	92.6%
Northern Ireland Office	16	16	100.0%	17	16	94.1%
Prime Minister	0	0	N/A	3	3	100.0%

⁷ In the 2019 Session no questions for written answer were tabled to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and no questions for ordinary written answer were tabled to the Prime Minister.

Scotland Office	13	13	100.0%	2	2	100.0%
Wales Office	6	6	100.0%	2	2	100.0%

Source: data from the Q&A system provided by House of Commons Table Office

Table 2b: Departments ranked by number of questions for ordinary written answer received

	Ordinary written			Named day		
	Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered substantively within 5 working days		Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered on named day	
Department of Health and Social Care	267	250	93.6%	196	176	89.8%
Home Office	164	126	76.8%	177	100	56.5%
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	149	149	100.0%	143	137	95.8%
Department for Transport	138	138	100.0%	60	60	100.0%
Ministry of Justice	136	126	92.6%	122	113	92.6%
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	111	86	77.5%	73	56	76.7%
Department for Work and Pensions	111	106	95.5%	121	108	89.3%
HM Treasury	98	98	100.0%	102	101	99.0%
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	97	79	81.4%	113	78	69.0%
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport	82	58	70.7%	65	59	90.8%
Department for International Development	66	64	97.0%	35	34	97.1%
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	60	60	83.3%	71	30	42.3%
Ministry of Defence	54	54	100.0%	66	66	100.0%
Department for International Trade	32	31	96.9%	35	34	97.1%
Northern Ireland Office	16	16	100.0%	17	16	94.1%
Department for Exiting the European Union	15	14	93.3%	10	5	50.0%
Scotland Office	13	13	100.0%	2	2	100.0%
Attorney General	7	7	100.0%	2	2	100.0%
Cabinet Office	7	7	100.0%	2	2	100.0%
Government Equalities Office	7	6	85.7%	10	5	50.0%
Wales Office	6	6	100.0%	2	2	100.0%

Leader of the House	3	3	100.0%	1	1	100.0%
Prime Minister	0	0	N/A	3	3	100.0%

Source: data from the Q&A system provided by House of Commons Table Office

Table 2c: Departments ranked by proportion of questions for ordinary written answer receiving substantive response within five working days

	Ordinary written			Named day		
	Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered substantively within 5 working days		Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered on named day	
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	149	149	100.0%	143	137	95.8%
Department for Transport	138	138	100.0%	60	60	100.0%
HM Treasury	98	98	100.0%	102	101	99.0%
Ministry of Defence	54	54	100.0%	66	66	100.0%
Northern Ireland Office	16	16	100.0%	17	16	94.1%
Scotland Office	13	13	100.0%	2	2	100.0%
Attorney General	7	7	100.0%	2	2	100.0%
Cabinet Office	7	7	100.0%	2	2	100.0%
Wales Office	6	6	100.0%	2	2	100.0%
Leader of the House	3	3	100.0%	1	1	100.0%
Department for International Development	66	64	97.0%	35	34	97.1%
Department for International Trade	32	31	96.9%	35	34	97.1%
Department for Work and Pensions	111	106	95.5%	121	108	89.3%
Department of Health and Social Care	267	250	93.6%	196	176	89.8%
Department for Exiting the European Union	15	14	93.3%	10	5	50.0%
Ministry of Justice	136	126	92.6%	122	113	92.6%
Government Equalities Office	7	6	85.7%	10	5	50.0%
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	60	60	83.3%	71	30	42.3%
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	97	79	81.4%	113	78	69.0%
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	111	86	77.5%	73	56	76.7%
Home Office	164	126	76.8%	177	100	56.5%

Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport	82	58	70.7%	65	59	90.8%
Prime Minister	0	0	N/A	3	3	100%

Source: data from the Q&A system provided by House of Commons Table Office

Table 2d: Departments ranked by number of questions for written answer on a named day received

	Ordinary written			Named day		
	Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered substantively within 5 working days		Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered on named day	
Department of Health and Social Care	267	250	93.6%	196	176	89.8%
Home Office	164	126	76.8%	177	100	56.5%
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	149	149	100.0%	143	137	95.8%
Ministry of Justice	136	126	92.6%	122	113	92.6%
Department for Work and Pensions	111	106	95.5%	121	108	89.3%
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	97	79	81.4%	113	78	69.0%
HM Treasury	98	98	100.0%	102	101	99.0%
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	111	86	77.5%	73	56	76.7%
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	60	60	83.3%	71	30	42.3%
Ministry of Defence	54	54	100.0%	66	66	100.0%
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport	82	58	70.7%	65	59	90.8%
Department for Transport	138	138	100.0%	60	60	100.0%
Department for International Development	66	64	97.0%	35	34	97.1%
Department for International Trade	32	31	96.9%	35	34	97.1%
Northern Ireland Office	16	16	100.0%	17	16	94.1%
Department for Exiting the European Union	15	14	93.3%	10	5	50.0%
Government Equalities Office	7	6	85.7%	10	5	50.0%
Prime Minister	0	0	#DIV/0!	3	3	100.0%
Scotland Office	13	13	100.0%	2	2	100.0%
Attorney General	7	7	100.0%	2	2	100.0%

Cabinet Office	7	7	100.0%	2	2	100.0%
Wales Office	6	6	100.0%	2	2	100.0%
Leader of the House	3	3	100.0%	1	1	100.0%

Source: data from the Q&A system provided by House of Commons Table Office

Table 2e: Departments ranked by proportion of questions for written answer on a named day answered on the day named

	Ordinary written			Named day		
	Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered substantively within 5 working days		Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered on named day	
Ministry of Defence	54	54	100.0%	66	66	100.0%
Department for Transport	138	138	100.0%	60	60	100.0%
Prime Minister	0	0	N/A	3	3	100.0%
Scotland Office	13	13	100.0%	2	2	100.0%
Attorney General	7	7	100.0%	2	2	100.0%
Cabinet Office	7	7	100.0%	2	2	100.0%
Wales Office	6	6	100.0%	2	2	100.0%
Leader of the House	3	3	100.0%	1	1	100.0%
HM Treasury	98	98	100.0%	102	101	99.0%
Department for International Development	66	64	97.0%	35	34	97.1%
Department for International Trade	32	31	96.9%	35	34	97.1%
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	149	149	100.0%	143	137	95.8%
Northern Ireland Office	16	16	100.0%	17	16	94.1%
Ministry of Justice	136	126	92.6%	122	113	92.6%
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport	82	58	70.7%	65	59	90.8%
Department of Health and Social Care	267	250	93.6%	196	176	89.8%
Department for Work and Pensions	111	106	95.5%	121	108	89.3%
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	111	86	77.5%	73	56	76.7%
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	97	79	81.4%	113	78	69.0%
Home Office	164	126	76.8%	177	100	56.5%

Department for Exiting the European Union	15	14	93.3%	10	5	50.0%
Government Equalities Office	7	6	85.7%	10	5	50.0%
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	60	60	83.3%	71	30	42.3%

Source: data from the Q&A system provided by House of Commons Table Office

Formal minutes

Wednesday 30 September 2020

Members present:

Karen Bradley, in the Chair

Jack Brereton	Rob Roberts
Bambos Charalambous	Douglas Ross
Chris Elmore	James Sunderland
Kevan Jones	Owen Thompson
Nigel Mills	Suzanne Webb

The Committee deliberated.

Draft Report (*Written Parliamentary questions: Departmental performance in the 2017 Parliament*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 21 read and agreed to.

Annexes 1 and 2 agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Fifth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

[Adjourned till Monday 5 October at 2.30 pm.]

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website. The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2019–21

First Report	Procedure under coronavirus restrictions: proposals for remote participation	HC 300 (HC 565)
Second Report	Procedure under coronavirus restrictions: remote voting in divisions	HC 335 (HC 565)
Third Report	Procedure under coronavirus restrictions: the Government's proposal to discontinue remote participation	HC 392 (HC 565)
Fourth Report	Proxy voting: review of pilot arrangements	HC 10 (HC 836)
First Special Report	Procedure under coronavirus restrictions: the Government's proposal for proxy voting for shielding Members	HC 429
Second Special Report	Procedure under coronavirus restrictions: Government Responses to the Committee's First, Second and Third Reports	HC 565
Third Special Report	Proxy voting: review of pilot arrangements: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report	HC 836