

Glossary

Accountability – Liable to being called to account; answerable.

Action research – Applied research that connects practitioners with researchers in a research partnership, emphasizing the ongoing improvement of practice by the practitioners themselves.

Ad hoc committee – Committees that are constituted to deal with very pressing and impromptu issues, such as in disaster situations. Parliaments set up *ad hoc* committees with very definite mandates to be achieved within specific, usually short, time periods.

Applied research - Research designed for the purpose of producing results that may be applied to real world situations.

Civil society – The name used to encompass a wide variety of interest groups, which are not public or for-profit.

Committee of Selection - The group that appoints committees on private bills, selects Members to serve on standing committees, and chooses the membership of all select committees. Names are put forward to the committee by the party whips and the committee can either accept or reject these recommendations. The committee's recommendations must be voted on by the Whole House and are sometimes overturned.

Committee of the whole – Consisting of all Members, this committee provides a forum for a bill to be analyzed in a more informal manner, for example Members are able to speak more than once and raise specific issues on the operation of the legislation. It allows a question and answer session to take place between Members and the Member in charge of the bill. The Committee of the Whole is presided over by the Chairman of Committees instead of the Speaker and its functions are exercised apart from the House so much so that the House does not recognize its proceedings until the Chairman makes a report. The function of the Committee is to go through the bill clause by clause and if necessary word by word with a view to making the bill more acceptable to a majority of the Committee.

Constituency – Citizens residing in the area governed, represented, or served by a politician.

Descriptive statistics – Statistics that provide descriptions of the sample data, such as the mean and inferential statistics used to infer the truth or falsity of a hypothesis in order to carry out basic statistics themselves, and to communicate meaningfully with statisticians when they are needed for the more complicated analysis.

Independent sources of information – Sources of political information that are not under the control of the government or any single group and whose right to publish or otherwise disseminate information is protected by law. All citizens are entitled to seek out and use such sources of information.

Inferential statistics – Statistics that allow the researcher to be able to make inferences or judgments about a larger population based on the data collected from a small sample drawn from the population. Exit polling used during elections to determine how the population of voters voted is an example of the use of inferential statistics. A key component of inferential statistics is the calculation of statistical significance of a research finding.

Law making – See legislation.

Legislation – Written laws made by parliament, a provincial legislature, or by a person or body that has law-making authority, usually delegated by Parliament or a legislature and exercised by making regulations or other delegated legislation

Legislative committee – A joint standing committee of the Legislature, a joint select committee of the Legislature, a task force, commission or council or any other committee established by the Legislature and composed wholly or partly of Legislators for the purpose of conducting legislative business.

Libel – A form of defamation, or defamation of character, which is the tort or delict of making a false statement of fact that injures someone's reputation.

Oversight – This is one of the legislature's "check and balance" functions, through which it seeks to ensure that programs are carried out legally, effectively, and for the purposes for which they were intended.

Parliamentary Procedure – Generally accepted rules, precedents, and practices used in the governance of deliberative assemblies. They are intended to maintain decorum, ascertain the will of the majority, preserve the rights of the minority, and facilitate the orderly transaction of business. Rules of parliamentary procedure originated in Britain in the 16th and 17th centuries and were subsequently adopted by legislatures around the world. Robert's Rules of Order, codified in 1876 by U.S. Gen. Henry M. Robert (1837 – 1923) and regularly refined and enlarged, is the standard set of rules used by legislatures in the U.S.

Public Accounts Committees (PACs) – Used by the majority of Westminster parliaments to follow-up on findings of public audits, to investigate irregularities reported, and to recommend changes to rectify any problems discovered. PACs invite ministers and other ministry officials to testify before the committee, and, in some systems, have the power to subpoena witnesses.

Public hearing – A formal meeting designed to provide the public with the fullest opportunity to express support of or opposition to legislation in an open forum.

Qualitative research – A research method that measures information based on opinions and values as opposed to statistical data.

Quantitative research – A research method based on collecting statistical data through questionnaires or surveys to help researchers determine the public opinion.

Sampling – A way to obtain information about a large group by examining a smaller, randomly chosen selection (the sample) of group members. If the sampling is conducted correctly, the results will be representative of the group as a whole.

Select Committees – Parliamentary committees that are constituted with very specific terms to deal with issues of major public concern.

Standing Committee – A committee that is set up to examine a proposed bill in parliament.

Standing Orders – Statements that describe the manner in which parliament should proceed under various circumstances. These statements can be amended by parliament by a simple majority vote.

Subcommittees – A committee that is a subset of a larger committee.

Transparency – This concept implies an openness and willingness to accept public scrutiny that diminishes the capacity for an organization to practice or harbor deception or deceit.