

Semester 4 MJC 5

The UK Parliament, also known as the Westminster Parliament, is the supreme legislative body in the United Kingdom.

Structure:

The Parliament is bicameral, consisting of two houses:

1. House of Commons (Lower House):

- Elected members (MPs) representing constituencies in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.
- 650 MPs, each serving a five-year term (subject to dissolution).
- The party with the majority forms the government, and its leader becomes the Prime Minister.

2. House of Lords (Upper House):

- Unelected members, comprising:
 - Life peers (appointed by the monarch on advice of the PM).
 - Hereditary peers (limited to 92, elected by other peers).
 - Bishops (senior clergy of the Church of England).
- Reviews, amends, and delays legislation.

Powers and Functions:

1. Legislation: Parliament makes laws on domestic and international matters.

2. Scrutiny: MPs scrutinize government policies, decisions,

and actions.

3. Representation: MPs represent constituents' interests and concerns.

4. Debate: Parliament provides a forum for national debate on key issues.

5. Accountability: Holds the government accountable through questions, committees, and investigations.

Key Processes:

1. Bill to Law: A proposed law (bill) goes through several stages:

- First Reading (introduction).
- Second Reading (debate on general principles).
- Committee Stage (detailed scrutiny).
- Report Stage (amendments considered).
- Third Reading (final debate).
- Royal Assent (monarch's approval).

2. Question Time: Ministers answer MPs' questions.

3. Select Committees: Investigate specific issues or government departments.

Devolution:

Some powers are devolved to regional governments:

1. Scotland: Scottish Parliament (Holyrood).

2. Wales: Welsh Parliament (Senedd Cymru).

3. Northern Ireland: Northern Ireland Assembly.

Interesting Facts:

1. Longest-serving MP: Currently, Sir Peter Bottomley (Conservative) has served over 48 years.
2. Oldest MP: Currently, Sir William Cash (Conservative) is 83 years old.
3. Most common profession: Before entering politics, many MPs were businesspeople, teachers, or lawyers.