

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales
Y Pwyllgor Materion Cyfansoddiadol a Deddfwriaethol | Constitutional and
Legislative Affairs Committee
Ymchwiliad: Llais cryfach i Gymru: ymgysylltu â San Steffan a'r sefydliadau
datganoledig |
Inquiry: A stronger voice for Wales: engaging with Westminster and the
devolved institutions
Ymateb gan: Yr Athro J.P. Bradbury, Prifysgol Abertawe
Response from: Dr J.P. Bradbury, Swansea University

1. Swansea University and Work on Parliamentary Studies

Work on Parliamentary Studies in Swansea University is concentrated in the Department of Political and Cultural Studies. This comprises taught courses and research.

Taught courses: The Department has run a final year undergraduate module entitled *The National Assembly for Wales* (PO-3000) since 2005. This provides lectures, seminars and guest speakers on the Assembly; arranging placements for students with AMs; and supervising students in the preparation of their essay and policy report assignments. The module is year-long and typically has c20 students on it. The Department also has run a final year undergraduate module entitled *Parliamentary Studies* (PO-3121) since 2013. This has been convened under contract with the UK Parliament. It comprises a class schedule, including academic lectures; presentations and Q and A by parliamentary officers from the Commons, an MP and Peer; mock select committee evidence giving exercises; and a Westminster field trip. This module is always run in the first teaching block with around 25–30 students, and we then have a follow-on module, *Dissertation in Parliamentary Studies* (POA301) in the second teaching block. This enables students to focus on a particular aspect of parliamentary studies.

Research: Parliamentary studies and representation are key themes of research in the *Political Analysis and Governance Research Group*. My own research (**Professor Jonathan Bradbury**) has included constitutional development of devolution in Wales; electoral and party politics in Wales; and UK and European comparative research projects (inc Wales) on multi-level

politics and how MPs and AMs approach representation. **Dr Bettina Petersohn** researches on inter-parliamentary relations in multi-level political systems, notably Germany and the UK; **Dr Ekaterina Kolpinskaya** researches on religion, black and minority ethnic political agendas and representation in the UK Parliament; and **Dr Dion Curry** researches on legitimacy and multi-level governance with particular emphasis on EU governance and Wales. **Dr Matthew Wall** conducts part of his research on political parties in Wales, and through voter advice websites he has sought to engage voters and school pupils with understanding what parties stand for as they approach voting contexts.

2. The Role for Welsh Universities in improving understanding of Welsh devolution across the UK

I believe that the Welsh Universities could play much more of a role in helping to improve knowledge and understanding of Welsh devolution across the UK. I think there are two key arenas through which Welsh universities can channel their expertise in a collaborative way.

Institute for Government: First, at the UK level, and specifically aiming at UK civil servants there is the Institute for Government. The IFG was established to provide training and advice for UK civil servants and policy makers, which could incorporate officials and policy makers from across the UK. It is likely that a greater Welsh university input into the IFG would improve knowledge and understanding of Welsh devolution at the UK centre.

Learned Society for Wales: Secondly, a key arena through which greater collaboration might be stimulated is the Learned Society for Wales. This has the ambition to promote knowledge and understanding of Wales generally, and has a track record specifically of holding conferences and initiating reports in the areas of social science research in Wales and devolution, including in conjunction with the British Academy. An imaginative vision might include the LSW taking the initiative to bring together university expertise to produce publications, briefing reports and events, perhaps even held on an annual basis, to promote awareness of the Assembly. Invitees could include officials, representatives, journalists and opinion formers from

across the UK. An annual 'Hay in the Bay' Assembly event might be a popular winner.

3. Relationships with Other UK Universities and promoting understanding of Welsh devolution

Parliamentary Studies Lecturers Network: There are nearly twenty universities that provide the Parliamentary Studies module (see above) under contract with the UK Parliament. Over the last few years the convenors across the universities have formed a Parliamentary Studies lecturers' network. This has an annual meeting in Westminster with members of the UK Parliament Education service and Clerks and Committee specialists, the most recent of which was held on 15 June. It has a powerful potential for disseminating knowledge of any Parliamentary studies topic across Universities to academic staff and their students in university courses, as well as to UK parliamentary staff and members through events that the network can hold in Westminster. As the Convenor of the Swansea version of the module we could put more thought to making use of this network in developing understanding of devolution in Wales across the UK.

PSA Territorial Politics Specialist Group: Since 1994 I have also been the Convenor of the Territorial Politics Specialist Group of the UK Political Studies Association. This has just over a hundred members, who are active researchers on issues related to nationalism, devolution, constitutional change, party and electoral politics, and public policy and intergovernmental relations. Research is both UK-focused and comparative. The work of the specialist group gives rise to two sets of relationships. First, I and my colleagues in the group across the UK are a source of expertise for the *Politics teacher section of the PSA*. This includes an annual politics conference for teachers and pupils, a schedule of school talks and a series of topic guides on all subjects, to which members of the group can contribute. I have recently published a topic guide on nationalism for use by the teacher section in preparing to teach the revised A-Level Politics syllabus. It is perfectly possible to work through these UK-wide relationships to develop talks and written texts promoting understanding of Welsh devolution in schools. Secondly, the PSA Territorial Politics Group is a source of

networking among research groups and centres on research themes covered by the group. These include the Political Analysis and Governance RG in Swansea; the Wales Governance Centre in Cardiff; the Institutes of Governance in both Edinburgh and Belfast; and the Constitution Unit in University College London; as well as several centres for regional and local research in English universities. These institutions all have knowledge transfer arrangements that enable contact with both elite level policy makers and interest group and general public arenas. They provide a potential network of platforms for promoting understanding and discussing issues relating to Welsh devolution.

4. Other Matters

The principal further initiative to bring to your attention is the work of the **Study of Parliament Group, Welsh section**, on developing a book-length publication on the National Assembly for Wales. The defining character of the SPG is that it brings together Assembly officials and academics researching on the Assembly to foster dialogue and mutual understanding. The Welsh section has recently met twice a year at the Assembly and has formulated a plan to produce an edited book to act as a reference work on the Assembly, informed both by academic research and practitioner insight. Preparation of the volume is at an early stage but when it is finished it could provide a valuable resource for public officials in Wales, as well as indeed all parts of the UK and beyond, and provide a key reference work for anyone who has a responsibility to explain or understand how the Assembly works and what it does.

I hope that this provides some useful information and ideas to contribute to your work. If you would like me to amplify on any part of what I have written about here I would be happy to do so.