



## 06 HOW TO

### Research the debates on sections of an Act

This guide will help you to find debates on particular sections of a Public and General Act (PGA) for *Pepper v Hart* type research. It only describes the process for straightforward acts and there are numerous exceptions to these general principles. If you need more help please ask staff to see the booklet *Parliamentary Debates on Legislation: How to do Pepper v Hart Research (2004)*.

Pepper v Hart research can be complex and very long-winded. Library staff can direct you to the relevant sources so you can carry out your own research.

#### Shortcuts

Checking the following resources can potentially save a lot of research time.

- *Current Law Statutes Annotated* 1952- often gives commentary, details of pre-bill material and *Hansard* references to the parliamentary debate surrounding a particular clause. Read the commentary under the specific section of the act and check the general note at the beginning of the relevant act (located at Bay E)
- Relevant textbooks e.g. *Copinger on Copyright* and various guides to new acts
- Check Public Information Online (subscription database) as the database can list all documents that relate to a particular act

#### 1. Which Act and section of an Act are you researching?

Is the act a consolidation act? If so, trace the original act and research that act (see 7 below).

Was the section inserted by a later act? If so, you need to research the act doing the insertion.

#### 2. Which clause of the Bill are you researching?

Until a bill becomes an act, sections are called 'clauses'. The clause number of the bill is not necessarily the same as the final section number of the act. Bill clause numbers often change during the life of the bill as it goes through Parliament and gets re-printed.

#### 3. Find all prints of the Bill

Gather all the versions of the bill (see How to guide 07 How to Find Bills). Then compare with the act so you can see the position of the clause, whether identical, when changed, when inserted etc. Note when the clause reached its final form and note clause numbers at each stage.

When conducting this kind of research you may prefer to consult the printed versions of the bills. If this is the case please speak to a librarian who may be able to help.

#### 4. Find *Hansard* references for each stage

There are several tools you can use to find the debates. What you use will usually depend on the date of the debates.

##### Older acts

There are separate indexes for House of Commons and House of Lords *Hansards*. They are bound at the back of the last volume for the session and give volume and column numbers. Ignore references marked \*. Bound volumes of *Standing Committees* contain an index by clause number.

##### Recent acts

- *Sessional Digests* lists the *Hansard* dates (1983/84- ) (



- *House of Commons Weekly Information Bulletin* (19 Oct 1996 - 23 July 2011) lists dates, available on the parliament website at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmweb.htm>

### Useful alternatives

- *Halsbury's Statutes* (1993-) gives details of stages, dates, volume and column numbers.
- *Current Law Statutes Annotated* (1952-) gives stages, volume and column numbers of debates (less details for earlier debates).
- Current Law Parliamentary Debates Table (in Current Awareness loose leaf) gives volume and column numbers.
- Explanatory Notes to Acts (1999-) give stages, dates, volume and column numbers.

## 5. Location of HL and HC Hansard

1803 – 1908 (Commons and Lords in same volumes)	Common Room 251 (ask staff)
1909/10 - 1995/96 (Lords)	South Gallery (ask staff)
1996/97 – most recent bound volumes (Lords)	Library Gallery Bay 164
1909/10 - 1965/66 (Commons)	South Gallery (ask staff)
1966/67 - 1996/97 (Commons)	North Gallery (ask staff)
1997/98 - most recent bound volumes (Commons)	Library Gallery Bay 157
Most recent issues (Commons & Lords)	On the internet, Commons & Lords website

### Standing Committee and Public Bill Committee Hansard

1967/68 - 1993/94	Standing Committees	Room 105 (ask staff)
1994/95 - 2015/16	Standing and Public Bill Committees	Bay 167

The Library also has Public Information Online (subscription database) which has Hansard and Committee debates. Ask staff for the date of coverage as they differ for each resource.

## 6. Reading the debates

The final stage is to read through the debates and see if the clause in question is mentioned. The Second Reading is usually a discussion of the broad aims of the bill. At Committee and Report stages the bill is debated clause by clause. In *Standing Committee* it is stated at the start of the debate if clauses are going to be discussed out of number order and it is a good idea to check the start of the debate to see when the relevant clause will be discussed.

There is no guarantee that the clause will have been discussed at all.

## 7. Consolidation Acts – additional steps

Trace the derivation using *Halsbury's Statutes*, *Current Law Statutes Annotated* (see 4 above), tables of derivations in *Public General Acts* (1967-) or, as a last resort, acts listed in *Schedule of Repeals* (Bay 168). Check that the previous act is not a consolidation act as well, if so repeat the above step.

Compare wording of original act and consolidation act. If identical, research original act (steps 1-6 above); if not identical, research consolidation process (ask staff to see the booklet *Parliamentary Debates on Legislation: How to do Pepper v Hart Research*).