

BBC Parliament

Part I: Key characteristics of the service

1. Remit

The remit of BBC Parliament is to make accessible to all, the work of the UK's parliamentary and legislative bodies and the European Parliament.

The service should also analyse and set in context the issues and politics behind parliamentary debates.

2. Scope of the Licence

BBC Parliament should be available for 24 hours every day. It should be transmitted free to air for reception in the UK on digital television and it may be simulcast on fixed and mobile internet protocol networks.

It may also offer its broadcast content on fixed and mobile internet protocol networks or via other platforms¹ for seven days after it has been broadcast. On the same platforms, it may allow users retrospectively to download multiple episodes of first-run series (known as 'series stacking')² until a date no later than seven days after the last episode in the relevant series. The aggregate volume of such "series stacked" content must represent no more than 15% of all television content offered on demand. On the internet, it may give users 30 days after downloading the content to access it for the first time and may allow users to repeatedly consume downloaded content for up to seven days after first access.

It should offer programme-related content on bbc.co.uk.³ Some programmes should have interactive television features available on digital platforms.

¹ Provision by particular providers over certain platforms has been specifically approved by the Trust in its On-Demand public value test of April 2007. Content may also in future be syndicated to other providers and platforms, whether over the internet or otherwise, in accordance with the Trust's Syndication Policy for BBC on-demand content.

² The Trust's guidelines for which programmes may be included in series stacking are those where the series has a distinct run, with a beginning and an end and a clear 'narrative arc' or those with exceptionally high impact. These should cover a broad range of programmes, in terms of genre and appeal.

³ This includes the offer of some news and current affairs output on-demand for an unlimited time period after initial broadcast. Any expansion of this offering will require the approval of the BBC Trust.

3. Service budget

BBC Parliament has an annual service budget of £2.6 million.

Any planned or actual change in annual expenditure on the service of more than 10% in real value requires approval from the BBC Trust and may entail variation of this Service Licence. This parameter of change is set to allow variations in spending which arise from regular, cyclical factors such as spending on major sports events, a reasonable level of operational flexibility (e.g. programme scheduling) and changes in accounting policy. Allowing for these factors, the Trust may judge that planned or actual change in annual expenditure of less than 10% should require its approval if the implications of this are significant for the character of the service or its market.

4. Overview of aims and objectives

BBC Parliament programmes should exhibit the following characteristics: high quality, original, engaging and challenging, and it should nurture UK talent. All of its coverage should demonstrate impartiality, accuracy and independence.

BBC Parliament should deliver its remit by broadcasting gavel to gavel coverage of the Westminster Parliament, including uninterrupted debates from both Houses at Westminster. It should also show the work of the devolved parliamentary chambers of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, some Select Committee hearings and the work of the European Parliament.

The service should place a high value on showing proceedings with little or no broadcast mediation, such as commentary or voice-over. On-screen text should be used as a non-interventionist way of providing explanation. Opportunity should be taken to broadcast in full speeches and news conferences that may have been shown only in edited versions on other BBC output. There should be regular programmes providing highlights, analysis and context.

BBC Parliament should provide comprehensive coverage of the Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties' main conferences as well as the leaders' speeches from other political parties that have a significant elected base.

BBC Parliament should use digital and interactive technologies to reach the widest possible audience, and should continue to explore new and emerging technologies with the aim of delivering greater value to audiences and of supporting the BBC's public purposes.

Part II: Contribution to public value

5. Contribution to the promotion of the BBC's public purposes

5.1 Sustaining citizenship and civil society

BBC Parliament should make a very important contribution to this purpose amongst its audience, by providing accurate, impartial and comprehensive coverage of the work of the UK's parliamentary chambers and of the European Parliament. As the only UK television service dedicated to covering politics, it can make a unique contribution to broadening viewers' knowledge and understanding of the way UK and EU political institutions work.

By providing context and explanation through on-screen graphics and text, the service can also help to explain the mechanics of law-making and democracy and enable viewers to make up their own minds on important issues.

Current political and state developments should be set in context through showings from the BBC television archive of major state and national events.

Conditions

BBC Parliament should:

- Broadcast at least 70 hours of coverage of the Westminster Parliament during a normal sitting week, including at least 10 hours of Select Committees

5.2 Reflecting the UK's nations, regions and communities

BBC Parliament should contribute to this purpose amongst its audience, by devoting extensive coverage to the work of the UK's devolved parliament and assemblies, including some debates in full from the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly, Northern Ireland Assembly and some coverage from the London Assembly, together with edited highlights of other debates.

Conditions

BBC Parliament should:

- Broadcast at least 260 hours of proceedings of the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly and Northern Ireland Assembly each year, with significant proportions of coverage given to each

5.3 Bringing the UK to the world and the world to the UK

BBC Parliament should contribute to this purpose amongst its audience, primarily by bringing the world to the UK. It should do this by broadcasting a weekly programme during parliamentary terms covering news of the work of the European Union's political institutions, focusing on the European Parliament.

From time to time BBC Parliament may also feature political coverage of nations outside Europe.

Conditions

BBC Parliament should:

- Broadcast at least 100 hours of programming from Brussels and Strasbourg (including repeats) each year

5.4 Promoting education and learning

BBC Parliament should contribute to this purpose amongst its audience by aiming to give viewers – including students of politics, democracy and citizenship – greater knowledge and understanding of the politics and procedures of the political institutions of the UK and EU.

BBC Parliament should also use the BBC's archive to provide historical context and promote a better understanding of the political history of the UK.

5.5 Emerging communications

The BBC's sixth public purpose is defined in the Charter as "in promoting its other purposes, helping to deliver to the public the benefit of emerging communications technologies and services and, in addition, taking a leading role in the switchover to digital television".

BBC Parliament should contribute to the promotion of this purpose in a variety of ways which are described in this Service Licence.

6. Annexes to this Licence

6.1 Annex I – Performance assessment

The performance of BBC Parliament will be assessed by the Trust using the framework described in Annex I. BBC Parliament's compliance with any Conditions, as described in section 5, will also be measured on an annual basis and reported in the Annual Report and Accounts.

The BBC Trust will expect BBC Parliament to comply with the commitments described in sections 4 and 5 of the Service Licence. The BBC Trust will monitor compliance with these commitments retrospectively as part of its periodic service reviews and/or on an exceptional basis if there is evidence or allegation of non-compliance.

6.2. Annex II - Statutory commitments

Details of statutory quotas and other obligations to be fulfilled by BBC Parliament, in conjunction with other BBC services, are set out in Annex II.

7. Operation of this Licence by the BBC Trust

For details of how the BBC Trust operates this Service Licence, please see the Service Licence Operating Framework. This is available from www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust or upon request from the BBC Trust Unit.

Annex I: Performance measurement framework

Introduction

The BBC Trust has the function of assessing the performance of the Executive Board in delivering the BBC's services and activities and holding the Executive Board to account for its performance.⁴ It will use the framework described below as the basis for its assessment of BBC Parliament.

The framework is based around the four drivers of public value: Reach, Quality, Impact and Value for money and it includes measurement of the five content characteristics, as described in the BBC Agreement⁵: high quality, challenging, original, innovative and engaging.

The Trust can amend this framework without this constituting formal variation to this Service Licence.

Performance measurement framework

Reach: BBC Parliament should contribute towards the maintenance of combined BBC weekly reach⁶ at over 90% by aiming to maintain its own *weekly reach*.

It should contribute towards on-demand consumption of content. This will be measured by reference to:

- seven-day television catch-up over the internet – weekly reach amongst all television households;
- simulcast television over the internet – weekly reach amongst all television households;
- seven-day television catch-up over cable – weekly reach amongst all television households.

In addition, its overall reach should include estimated on-demand usage.

Quality: audience *approval* of BBC Parliament and perceptions of it as *high quality*.

Impact: licence fee payer *awareness* of BBC Parliament and audience perceptions of BBC Parliament as *informative, engaging and challenging*.

Value for money: BBC Parliament's *cost per viewer hour*.

⁴ Charter, article 24 (c)

⁵ Agreement, clause 14

⁶ For all BBC services

Annex II: Statutory commitments

In addition to its Service Licence Conditions and commitments, BBC Parliament contributes to the fulfilment of a number of statutory commitments each calendar year. The exact level of each annual commitment is published by the BBC in its Statement of Programme Policy each year.

- A minimum percentage of all hours must be originations (original productions include all BBC-commissioned programming, excluding repeats of programming first shown on another BBC public service channel)
- In conjunction with other BBC network television services, a minimum proportion of relevant programme production budgets [excluding news], representing a proportion of hours of productions by volume, must be spent outside the M25