

GUIDANCE ON ORAL AND WRITTEN ASSEMBLY QUESTIONS

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ANNEX 1

GUIDANCE ON FORM AND CONTENT OF ORAL AND WRITTEN QUESTIONS

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GUIDANCE ON ORAL AND WRITTEN ASSEMBLY QUESTIONS

Purpose

1. 1 The purpose of tabling questions to Assembly Secretaries is to obtain information or press for action. Questions that primarily convey information, suggest their own answers, or convey a particular point of view may not be accepted. Questions should be drafted as concisely as possible, have regard for decent and respectable language and have respect for the Crown, the judiciary and Assembly Members.

1.2 Questions must be tabled to specific Assembly Secretaries on a specific topic within their remit. Open-ended questions (such as asking about the First Secretary's engagements for the day) will not be accepted by the Presiding Officer. (*See Presiding Officer's 1st Ruling – available on the Intranet under Assembly Guidance.*) Guidance on the areas in which individual Assembly Secretaries may be questioned is available on the Intranet (link from the

Assembly Guidance page) and/or from the Table Office.

1.3 Each question is considered on its merits and the Presiding Officer is the final authority as to the admissibility, content and length of questions and may rule questions to be unacceptable. However, in the first instance it is the Table Office that rule on the acceptability or otherwise of a question.

1.4 Where a question has been ruled unacceptable, the clerks of the Table Office are available to offer guidance to Assembly Members on any alterations to a question that may allow it to be accepted and may also assist Assembly Members in editing questions. Thus Assembly Members are not free to table questions on anything they wish but only on those matters which have been devolved under the Government of Wales Act 1998, or where the Assembly has a monitoring role, collects information or jointly administers grants. The content of a question must not only cover areas for which the Assembly Cabinet is responsible but is also subject to the more detailed limitations set out in Annex 1.

Introduction

2.1 Section 56(7) of the Government of Wales Act 1998 and Standing Order 6 provide for Assembly Members to ask oral and written questions of the First Secretary about the exercise of functions by the Assembly Cabinet; and of Assembly Secretaries about the functions in their field of responsibility. Where there are clearly delegated responsibilities, questions on detailed policy issues relating to those responsibilities, should be directed to the appropriate Assembly Secretary and not the First Secretary. However, questions relating to matters of policy co-ordination or questions that have implications for the First Secretary's own role in leading the Cabinet may be tabled to the First Secretary. (*See Presiding Officer's statement made in plenary on 13th July 1999.*)

2.2 Assembly questions are important ways in which Members can hold Assembly Secretaries to account. However, it is the intention that Members should only need to use these mechanisms when they wish to attract publicity or to have a clear statement of policy on the record. The culture of the Assembly should encourage a free flow of information between the executive and Assembly members, so that formal mechanisms are not needed simply to acquire factual information. Often the Intranet and the Library, which is able to offer a factual briefing service, are the most appropriate, and quickest, ways of obtaining factual information.

2.3 There are three categories of question:

- **questions for oral answer** which are tabled with the intention that they should be given an oral answer in the Assembly during designated oral Question Time;
- **questions for written answer** to which the answers are not given orally in the

Assembly but are instead sent in written form directly to the Assembly Member.

- **urgent questions** which can only be asked if the matter is judged by the Presiding Officer to be urgent and a matter of public importance, are answered orally in the Assembly at any plenary session. The guidance on acceptability of questions, including paragraph 1.4, and the Annex apply equally to urgent questions.

QUESTIONS FOR ORAL ANSWER

Designated days and rota of Assembly Secretaries answering

3.1 The requirements in Standing Order 6.3(I) are:

- i) oral questions to the First Secretary to be taken at least once a week (in a plenary meeting) and to last at least 15 minutes;
- ii) oral questions to each Assembly Secretary (except Business) to be taken at least once every four weeks in a plenary meeting) and to last at least 15 minutes.

3.2 Questions to the First Secretary are taken on Tuesdays, and to Assembly Secretaries on Wednesdays. The Business Committee will decide at the start of each session the dates and times of questions to each Assembly Secretary. These are listed in the Assembly Business Papers that are available on the inter/intranet. The clerks at the Table Office are also able to advise Members on the rota of Assembly Secretaries answering.

Notice of oral questions

4.1 Members are required to give notice of the questions they wish to ask. Providing the Table Office with the wording of the question (referred to as 'tabling a question') no earlier than 10 days and no later than 5 days before the relevant question time does this. (*Standing Order 6.27*).

4.2 The notice period allows Assembly Secretaries, and their advisers, time to prepare answers to questions.

4.3 A form is available to make tabling questions easy (available on the Intranet and from the Table Office). Members are required to either table the question in person at the Table Office, or authorise a member of their staff or another Member to do so by signing and dating the completed form, or emailing the form to a clerk at the Table Office. Questions will be processed during the Table Office's published working hours when the Assembly is in session (and on special dates in recess). Questions may be tabled in either English or Welsh.

4.4 Members are responsible for all material that is sent from their personal computers and should ensure that their password etc. is kept secure.

4.5 Tabling days in recess periods are designed to ensure that oral question sessions can take place during the first two weeks following a recess and are therefore likely to be near the end of a recess period. The Table Office will produce a list of dates and times that has been agreed with the Business Committee, when Assembly Members may table oral questions in a recess period prior to the start of each recess period. The list is available on the Intranet and will be posted on the Table Office bulletin board.

4.6 Members are required to declare any relevant interest when tabling and before asking a question, and the question will be annotated with an [R] on the Order Paper to draw attention to the interest. (Members should refer to the Guidance on Members Interests when participating in proceedings.)

Content of questions

5.1 Questions are accepted at the discretion of the Presiding Officer. In practice, this discretion has been delegated to the Table Office staff who will advise Members on the acceptability or otherwise of their questions. Questions should be short, concise and not normally longer than 50 words.

5.2 When a question has been refused by the Table Office, and the Assembly Member wishes to take the matter further, he or she may speak to the Head of the Table Office or the Clerk to the Assembly. If the Member remains dissatisfied after speaking to the Head of the Table Office or the Clerk, he/she should write to the Presiding Officer and not raise the matter as a point of order in the Assembly. The Presiding Officer is the final authority as to the admissibility of questions.

5.3 Questions that are tabled, and which are accepted, will be published in the Questions section to the Assembly Business Papers. Oral and written questions are given a unique reference number by the Table Office which is shown against the question in the Business Papers.

Number and order of questions for oral answer

6.1 Standing Order 6 limits the number of oral questions which an Assembly Member can ask each Assembly Secretary to two per question time (or in the case of the First Secretary, no more than one question).

6.2 Standing Order 6.29 specifies how the order in which oral questions are answered is determined. All accepted questions received by the published deadline on the first day on

which they may be tabled, go into a random selection process to determine their order. The result of this process will be posted onto the Table Office notice board that evening and published in the Business Papers the following morning. Only the first 30 questions successful in the shuffle are printed in the Business Papers. Questions which are lower than 30 in the list, following the shuffle, fall and receive no answer.

Procedure at question time

7.1 The Presiding Officer starts question time by calling the name of the Assembly Member whose question is first on the agenda of the Assembly for that day. The Assembly Member reads the question [which should not differ from the version that was tabled in the Table Office]. The Presiding Officer then invites the First Secretary or the Assembly Secretary to give an answer. It is expected that answers will normally be short - ideally not much longer than 50 words. Longer answers should be an exception to the rule. Answers should not be expanded into statements. An Assembly Member who is not present to ask his or her question receives a written answer unless he or she withdraws the question. In such circumstances, the Presiding Officer calls the next question on the agenda. If an Assembly Member knows in advance that they are going to be unable to attend a plenary meeting to ask a question they have tabled they should convert it to a question for written answer by informing the Table Office.

7.2 Following an Assembly Secretary's answer, the Presiding Officer invites the Assembly Member who asked the original question to ask a follow up question (a supplementary question), which must relate to the main question. When the first supplementary question has been answered the Presiding Officer may call other Assembly Members to put related supplementary questions. [These should also normally be limited to no more than 50 words in length]. An answer and any supplementary question must relate only to the original question. Decisions on who is called to ask supplementary questions or speak are entirely at the discretion of the Presiding Officer and cannot be challenged.

Grouping of Questions

7.3 Sometimes an Assembly Secretary will choose to give a single reply to more than one question on that day's agenda where they are the same or on a closely related topic. The responsibility for grouping questions is a matter for the appropriate Assembly Secretary but ultimately the Presiding Officer. Only those questions that would normally be reached during the oral question session should be grouped. However there may be exceptional circumstances, where this rule might be inappropriate. If it is proposed that questions are to be grouped, the Presiding Officer's Private Secretary should be advised by the Private Secretary to the First or Assembly Secretary, as appropriate, before the start of that day's question time. Cabinet Secretariat should also notify the Members concerned by giving them as much notice as possible and the Assembly Secretary's answer will refer to the questions being answered together. In the event of questions being grouped, the Presiding Officer will call in numerical

order those Assembly Members whose questions have been answered together for each to put their supplementary questions.

7.4 When the Presiding Officer decides that a question, and any such supplementary questions as he or she allows, have been answered sufficiently, the name of the Member who is to ask the next question on that day's agenda will be called. This process will continue until the available time for questions is exhausted. It is expected that any oral question that has not been answered at the end of this period will receive a written answer on the same day.

7.5 The Presiding Officer's decision on all matters regarding the control of question time is final and Assembly Members should not question such decisions. In particular, and in the interest of ensuring that all Assembly Members have a reasonable opportunity for their questions to be aired, it is important that both Assembly Cabinet replies and supplementary questions are kept as short as possible. An answer should be confined to the points contained in the question and any supplementary question should be put succinctly, without debate or elaborate comment. Exceptionally, a question requiring a lengthy answer may be published in the Assembly *Record* instead of being given orally but an Assembly Secretary should endeavour to provide a helpful short oral answer which refers to the substantive reply being sent to the Member as well as being made available in the Record of Proceedings.

7.6 An Assembly Secretary is expected to be questioned for the whole of the time available. In the unlikely event that the Assembly Secretary answers all questions before the allocated time is complete, the Presiding Officer calls for the next item on the agenda for the day.

Withdrawal of oral questions

8.1 An oral question may be withdrawn or converted to a written question at any time before the start of the plenary session in which it is due to be answered. Assembly Members or Members' support staff (with the member's consent) should advise the Table Office, either in person by telephone or by e-mail, of the decision to withdraw or convert an oral question. The Table Office is able to deal with withdrawals by email more effectively if Assembly Members or their support staff follow up with a phone call to check that the email has been received. On receipt of notice of withdrawal of a question the Table Office immediately notifies the Cabinet Secretariat and the Chamber Secretariat. If the question is withdrawn before the day on which it is to be answered, the text of the question is published in the daily agenda, for the day it was to be answered, as being withdrawn.

Transfer of oral questions

9.1 When an oral question has been wrongly addressed and the Table Office has not been able to advise the Member concerned before it is tabled, Cabinet Secretariat will notify the Member if it is to be transferred. If Cabinet Secretariat transfers the question this means that

the Assembly Member loses the chance of receiving an oral answer on the day they had chosen. Questions should be transferred at least 24 hours before they are due to be answered to ensure that suitable notice is given to the Member concerned.

9.2 When a question is transferred, a formal notice is sent by the Cabinet Secretariat to the Assembly Member and to the Table Office. Decisions about transferring questions and the reasons for the transfer are conveyed to the appropriate Assembly Member.

Publication of question and answer

10.1 All questions that are tabled and accepted are published in the order that they are to be answered in the Assembly Questions section of the Order Paper on the day following the receipt of the question. The answers are published in the Record of Proceedings again on the day following the day they are answered.

Urgent oral questions

11.1 Standing Order 6.31 provides for oral questions to be put to the First Secretary and Assembly Secretaries without prior written notification if they are of an urgent nature and relate to a matter of public importance. At least two hours notice must be given to the Presiding Officer and the Assembly Secretary/First Secretary for such questions. The Presiding Officer will decide whether, and at what time, questions may be asked. When a Member wishes to make an application for an urgent question, he / she should in the first instance contact the Private Secretary to the Presiding Officer who will seek advice from the Presiding Officer. If the Presiding Officer is satisfied that the application meets the dual criteria of urgency and public importance and decides to allow the Member to put his / her question at the next available plenary session, the Member should complete the appropriate form and submit it to the Table Office for tabling. The Table Office are able to assist Members in drafting the text of urgent questions which have been accepted in principle by the Presiding Officer.

11.2 Decisions on whether or not to accept such requests are entirely at the discretion of the Presiding Officer. The Presiding Officer may consult the appropriate Assembly Secretary on the issue of urgency/public importance but is not required to do so. Urgent questions are subject to the same rules as to form, content and order as ordinary oral questions.

11.3 When an urgent question is allowed, the Private Secretary to the Presiding Officer informs the Member, Cabinet Secretariat, the Table Office and Party Business Managers immediately. The text of the question will appear on the Chamber Website and, where there is sufficient time to do so, a notice will also be published in the relevant section of the Order Paper.

QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN ANSWER

Statutory requirement

12.1 Standing Order 6.33 provides for written questions to the First Secretary or to any Assembly Secretary about any matters relating to their responsibilities.

Tabling questions for written answer

13.1 See 4.4 above.

13.2 Question forms must be clearly marked that they are for written answer. All written questions should be addressed to the Assembly First Secretary or the appropriate Assembly Secretary, e.g. "To ask the Assembly Secretary for Education...". Declaration of relevant interest is required when tabling a written question and when such an interest is declared the symbol '[R]' is printed after the Assembly Member's name on the agenda for the day. (There are no limits on the number of questions for written answer that may be tabled.)

Acceptance of questions for written answer

14.1 Questions are accepted at the discretion of the Presiding Officer. The Table Office staff will advise Members on the acceptability of their questions. [Questions should be short, concise and not normally longer than 50 words].

14.2 When a question has been refused by the Table Office, and the Assembly Member wishes to take the matter further, he or she may speak to the Head of the Table Office or the Clerk to the Assembly. If the Member remains dissatisfied after speaking to the Head of the Table Office or the Clerk, he/she should write to the Presiding Officer and not raise the matter as a point of order in the Assembly. The Presiding Officer is the final authority as to the admissibility of questions.

Withdrawal of written questions

15.1 Assembly Members, or Members' support staff (with the member's consent), should advise the Table Office either personally or by e-mail, of their decision to withdraw or convert an oral question. The Table Office is able to deal with withdrawals by email more effectively if Assembly Members or their support staff follow up with a phone call to check that the email has been received. On receipt of notice of withdrawal of a question the Table Office immediately notifies the Cabinet Secretariat and the Chamber Secretariat.

Amendments to tabled questions

16.1 Members may make minor amendments to questions tabled for written or oral answer provided that they notify the Table Office at least the day before the question is due to be answered. (This might be necessary, for example, where the number of a road scheme has been quoted incorrectly in the tabled question.) Significant amendments such as altering completely the subject matter of the question will not be accepted.

Transfer of written questions

16.2 If an Assembly Member addresses his or her question to the wrong Assembly Secretary, and the Table Office does not pick this up at the time of tabling, it is transferred to the relevant Assembly Secretary. The Cabinet Secretariat will notify the Assembly Member and the Table Office as to the Assembly Secretary that will answer who has responsibility for the matter.

Holding replies

17.1 Occasionally, when a written question requires a lengthy answer, or when some research is required, or for some other reason it takes some time for the Assembly Secretary to provide an answer, the Member receives a reply which says "I will write to the Member". The holding reply is not published but is referred to when the substantive reply is published in the Record of Proceedings.

Publication of questions and answers

18.1 Questions that are accepted are posted onto the Intranet on the day following the tabling of the question.

18.2 Assembly Members will normally receive an answer to a written question from the appropriate Assembly Secretary within five working days. At the same time a copy is also sent by the Cabinet Secretariat to the Table Office and the Record of Proceedings who arrange for it to be published in the Assembly Record on the Intranet and Internet.

Cost

19.1 Assembly Secretaries may choose not to provide substantive answers to questions where the cost of doing so would be disproportionate and the advisory limit would be exceeded. The current cost limit for written answers is £500. The Member will be informed if this is the case (and this will also be published in the Record).

Office of Presiding Officer

ANNEX 1

DRAFT GUIDANCE ON FORM AND CONTENT OF ASSEMBLY QUESTIONS

Please note that guidance on the form & content of questions is to be adopted by the Assembly, in accordance with standing order 6.28 and 6.34.

Equal opportunities

1. Members, when tabling questions for oral and written answers, should have regard for section 48 of the Government of Wales Act 1998:

"The Assembly shall make appropriate arrangements with a view to securing that its business is conducted with due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people."

2. Questions containing language considered by the Presiding Officer to be racist, sexist or otherwise discriminatory will not be accepted. A Code of Conduct for Assembly Members is available on the Intranet and Members should have regard to this when composing any question.

Content of tabled questions

3. Questions tabled to the First Secretary must relate to the exercise of functions by the First Secretary and those of the Assembly Cabinet ((Government of Wales Act 1998, section 56(7) (a)).

4. Questions tabled to Assembly Secretaries should relate to the exercise of functions by the Assembly in the fields in which they are accountable (Government of Wales Act 1998, section 56(7)(b) and Standing Orders 6.26 & 6.33). A question should be addressed to the Secretary who is primarily responsible for the matter. If it subsequently transpires that a question has been misdirected, the transfer is agreed and implemented between the Assembly Secretaries concerned, and the Table Office and the Assembly Member are notified by the Cabinet Secretariat.

5. A tabled question must relate to a matter for which the First or Assembly Secretary to whom it is addressed is responsible as a *Secretary*. It may not, for example, touch on any activities in their capacity as a party leader or Assembly Member. Oral questions to Assembly Secretaries should be worded as to indicate, within reasonably broad limits, a particular subject matter.

Guidance on the areas in which individual Assembly Secretaries may be questioned is available on the Intranet (link from the Assembly Guidance page) and/or from the Table Office.

Admissible questions

6. *Assembly Cabinet responsibility* - Questions to Assembly Secretaries must relate to matters for which those Secretaries are officially responsible. They may be asked for statements of their policy or intentions on such matters, or for administrative or legislative action.

7. *Statements outside the Assembly* - It is permissible to table questions about any public statements outside the Assembly, in whatever form, made by the Assembly First Secretary or an Assembly Secretary in an official capacity.

Inadmissible questions

8. *Argument and disorderly expressions* - Questions seeking an expression of opinion from an Assembly Secretary, or containing arguments, expressions of opinion, inferences or imputations, unnecessary epithets or rhetorical, conversational, ironical or offensive expressions are not in order.

9. *Factual basis* - Extracts from newspapers or books and paraphrases of or quotations from speeches etc. are not admissible but the facts on which a question is based may, within the framework of a question, be briefly set out, provided the Member asking it makes him or herself responsible for the accuracy of such facts.

10. *Personal reflections* - Questions should not reflect on the character or conduct of those persons whose conduct may only be challenged on a substantive motion of the Assembly; nor is it permissible to reflect on the conduct of other persons outside of their official or public capacity. A question is not admissible if it introduces names invidiously or for advertisement or in any way not necessary to render the question intelligible. Questions asking about Assembly Secretaries personal views, habits or interests outside of their responsibilities as Assembly Secretaries may not be accepted. Discourteous references to a foreign country, or the Head of State of such a country, may also be ruled inadmissible and members should have regard for the dignity of the proceedings at all times.

11. *Royal family* - No question can be put which brings the name of the Sovereign or the influence of the Crown directly before the Assembly, or which casts reflections upon the Sovereign or the royal family.

12. *Accuracy of statements* – questions on whether statements made in the press, or of private individuals, or unofficial bodies are accurate or asking for comment on statements made by persons in other countries (unless the statement is a message from another government to the Assembly).

13. *Local authority / statutory body issues* - questions asking for action to deal with operational matters under the control of local authorities, health authorities or other statutory authorities, or bodies or persons not responsible to the Assembly such as; banks, the Stock Exchange, companies, employers' organisations and trade unions; or asking for action regarding or information about the activities of such persons or bodies which Assembly Secretaries have no power to perform or obtain. However, questions may be asked about information the Assembly collects on such bodies.

14. *Nationalised industries* - questions relating to nationalised industries and other nationalised analogous public bodies, including the regulators of former nationalised industries other than OFWAT. Such questions are restricted to those matters for which the Assembly Secretary is made responsible by statute , or by other legislation and to matters in which the Assembly Secretary is known to be involved. Questions seeking statistical information on a national basis and those regarding day-to-day administration, provided that they raise matters of urgent public importance may be admissible;

15. *Assembly Committees* - questions that refer to the evidence of witnesses or other matters before a Royal Commission, a Public Enquiry, a Parliamentary Committee, or an Assembly committee, or deal with matters within the jurisdiction of the chairman of a subject or any other committee or the authorities of the Assembly, may be unacceptable. No question can be asked about proceedings in a committee that have not been placed before the Assembly by a report from the committee;

16. *Questions seeking an expression of opinion* on a question of law, such as the interpretation of a statute, or of an international document, an Assembly Secretary's own powers etc, may not be accepted. Assembly Secretaries may, however, be asked by what statutory authority they have acted in a particular instance, and the First Secretary may be asked to define an Assembly Secretary's responsibilities;

17. *Questions seeking readily available information* are not admissible, when the Assembly Member can easily obtain the information of their own accord or through another source.

18. *Questions seeking to influence or urge Assembly Secretaries to make representations to another Assembly Secretary or Secretary of State-*

Members may not ask one Assembly Secretary to influence another and similarly may not ask an Assembly Secretary to make representations to a Secretary of State. However, questions which ask an Assembly Secretary what scope the Assembly has to influence..... may be acceptable.

19. *Questions seeking legislation to deal with circumstances outside the responsibility of the Assembly* evade the rule that questions must relate to matters for which Assembly Secretaries are officially responsible and may be ruled inadmissible, as may those which cite individual incidents in relation to which the Assembly Secretary has no administrative power or responsibilities when asking for legislation.

20. *Questions suggesting detailed amendments to legislation* before the Assembly, or in committee, are inadmissible. Questions seeking information on the effects of proposed legislation may however be asked.

21. *Opposition party policies* – questions relating to opposition party policies rather than Assembly Secretaries responsibilities are inadmissible.

22. *Assembly Business and Workings of the Assembly* - Questions about the order of public business in the Assembly the workings of the Assembly, such as the Order Paper, Record of Proceedings or the intranet, equip & facilities etc., are matters for the Presiding Officer. However as Standing Orders do not allow questions to be tabled to the Presiding Officer, questions on these matters will be permitted to be tabled to the Business Secretary who will answer on behalf of the Presiding Officer. Standing Order 6.26 precludes oral questions being tabled to the Business Secretary therefore, such questions will only be accepted as questions for written answer.

23 *Questions already answered, or to which an answer has previously been refused* - Questions which repeat or renew in substance questions already answered or to which an answer has been refused, in that session of the Assembly, are inadmissible. However, where an Assembly Secretary has refused to take action or give information asked in a particular question, he or she may be asked the same question after an interval of three months.

24. *A question which one Assembly Secretary has refused to answer* cannot be addressed to another Assembly Secretary and a question answered by one Assembly Secretary may not be put to another. An answer to a question cannot be insisted upon, if an Assembly Secretary has refused to answer, and the Presiding Officer may refuse supplementary questions in these circumstances.

25. *Decisions of the Assembly* - Questions which criticise the decisions of the Assembly are inadmissible; nor may questions refer to debates or questions and answers of the current Assembly session, other than for the purpose of seeking further clarification of a previous

answer. Questions referring to the time taken by individual speeches may not be asked and are matters for the Presiding Officer as are procedural matters generally. The Presiding Officer will make rulings from time to time and these will be posted to the intranet.

26 Matters sub judice - Matters awaiting, or under adjudication, in a criminal court, a coroner's court in which a jury is sitting or a court martial and matters set down for trial or otherwise brought before a civil court may not be referred to in any debate or question. (Standing Order 7.13 refers) If the subject matter of a question is found to be, or becomes, sub judice after the question has been tabled, the Assembly Member is asked to withdraw it, or the Presiding Officer may direct the Table Office to remove it from the agenda for the day or refuse to allow it to be asked.

27. Questions which reflect on the decision of a court of law are not acceptable. Questions relating to the sentence passed by a judge or criticise the judiciary are inadmissible. (Standing Order 7.14 refers).

28. Assembly Elections – Questions about the National Assembly elections are generally a matter for the Presiding Officer. Questions about the conduct of or media campaign for local elections may be admissible.

29. Questions which convey an opinion or suggest their own answers are inadmissible.

30. Miscellaneous - Questions seeking the solution to hypothetical propositions are inadmissible as are those raising questions of policy too large to be dealt with in an answer to a question. Questions seeking information on matters of past history for the purposes of argument, those multiplied with slight variations on the same point and questions which are, in the opinion of the Presiding Officer, trivial, vague or meaningless are not acceptable.

Note: references to Assembly Secretaries also include the Assembly First Secretary except for paragraph 6.1.