



Main functions of the Legislative Council

The three main functions of the Legislative Council are **(a) enact laws**; **(b) approve public expenditure**; and **(c) monitor the work of the Government**.



Supplementary information

(a) Enact laws

The Legislative Council enacts, amends or repeals laws in accordance with the provisions of the Basic Law and legal procedures. The Government is primarily responsible for proposing new legislation or amendments to existing legislation, in the form of bills which are considered by the Legislative Council for enactment. Under Article 74 of the Basic Law, bills which do not relate to public expenditure or political structure or the operation of the Government may be introduced individually or jointly by Members of the Legislative Council. As for bills relating to government policies, the written consent of the Chief Executive is required before they can be introduced by Members. A bill must go through the three-reading procedure in the Legislative Council before it becomes a law. For example, the Legislative Council passed the Employment (Amendment) Bill 2021 in July 2021 which increases progressively the number of statutory holidays from 12 to 17 days.

For details of the three-reading procedure, please refer to supplementary notes on exhibition panels "How do Members perform their duties?/What Members do" under the "Education" section of the Legislative Council Website.

(b) Approve public expenditure

The Legislative Council also examines and approves the financial proposals put forward by the Government.

The Budget

In Hong Kong, the control and management of the public finances are governed by the Public Finance Ordinance (Cap. 2). The preparation of the estimates of the Government's revenue and expenditure for the upcoming financial year is the responsibility of the Financial Secretary while the approval of the Budget rests with the Legislative Council pursuant to Article 73 of the Basic Law. The Financial Secretary introduces into the Legislative Council, usually in February each year, the Appropriation Bill and the Government's Estimates of Expenditure for the scrutiny by the Legislative Council. The Financial Secretary's speech on moving the Second Reading of the Appropriation Bill is generally known as the Budget Speech. After the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council has examined the proposed Estimates of Expenditure at its special meetings, the Appropriation Bill is brought back to the Council for consideration and decision. The financial proposals need the examination and approval by the Legislative Council before they can be implemented.

Other financial proposals

During a financial year, the Financial Secretary may propose to the Finance Committee changes to the approved Estimates of Expenditure. These proposals are considered at regular meetings of the Finance Committee. For example, the proposals regarding the civic service pay and conditions of service are discussed at the regular meetings of the Finance Committee every year. Expenditure arising from any changes to the approved Estimates of Expenditure is charged to the relevant expenditure head. At the close of account for any financial year, if it is found that the expenditure

charged to any head is in excess of the sum appropriated for that head by the Appropriation Ordinance for that year, the excess shall be included in a Supplementary Appropriation Bill. The Supplementary Appropriation Bill shall be introduced by the Financial Secretary or the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury into the Legislative Council as soon as practicable after the close of the financial year for consideration by the Legislative Council.

(c) Monitor the work of the Government

The Legislative Council monitors the work of the Government. Through various means, the Legislative Council ensures that the Government is discharging its powers and functions effectively.

Raise questions and move motions for debate

Members monitor the work of the Government through raising questions or moving motions for debate at Legislative Council meetings. Members may address questions to the Government on its work, either to seek information or ask for official action with regard to a particular matter. For example, Members have raised questions regarding sports facilities and competition events, improving taxi services, and expediting public housing production. The Member raising a question must specify whether an oral or a written reply is required. For questions seeking an oral reply, supplementary questions may be put by any Member to request further elaboration after the public officer has replied. In addition, Members may debate motions not intended to have legislative effect to express their views on issues concerning public interest or call on the Government to take certain actions. For example, the Legislative Council has debated and voted on motions which requested the Government to enact legislation to combat false information on the Internet, and foster the achievement of carbon neutrality.

Consider reports of the Director of Audit

The Public Accounts Committee of the Legislative Council considers reports of the Director of Audit on the Government's accounts, and the results of value for money audits of the Government and other organizations which are within the purview of public audit. It may invite public officers and senior staff of public organizations to attend public hearings to give explanation, evidence or information, or any other person to assist it in relation to such explanation, evidence or information if considered necessary. For example, public hearings have been conducted in relation to collection and removal of marine refuse by the Marine Department, and efforts of the Home Affairs Department in facilitating building management in response to the report of the Director of Audit on the results of value for money audits. Following public hearings, the Public Accounts Committee will compile a committee report listing its conclusions and recommendations and table the report at the Council.

Examine government policies

The Legislative Council establishes 18 Panels to monitor and examine government policies. Panels provide a forum for Members to deliberate on policy matters and to study issues of public concern relating to the policy areas of their corresponding bureaux. The issues discussed in Panels affect us in various aspects such as health, education, environment, transport, and food safety. For example, the Panel on Education has met with the Government to monitor and examine the promotion of values education in schools, and the progress on supporting Chinese learning and teaching for non-Chinese speaking students. Items for discussion can be brought up by members of the Panel, referred to it by the House Committee or other committees, proposed by the Government, or raised by other Members following meetings with District Councils or upon receipt of complaints or representations. Panels may also invite views from the public and conduct meetings with deputations or individuals if necessary. The Panels are listed as follows:

Panel on Administration of Justice and Legal Services	Panel on Health Services
Panel on Commerce, Industry, Innovation and Technology	Panel on Home Affairs, Culture and Sports
Panel on Constitutional Affairs	Panel on Housing
Panel on Development	Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting
Panel on Economic Development	Panel on Manpower
Panel on Education	Panel on Public Service
Panel on Environmental Affairs	Panel on Security
Panel on Financial Affairs	Panel on Transport
Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene	Panel on Welfare Services

Questions and answers

Q1: *What are the three main functions of the Legislative Council?*

The three main functions of the Legislative Council are: (a) enact laws; (b) approve public expenditure; and (c) monitor the work of the Government.

Q2: *What procedure must a bill go through in the Legislative Council before it becomes a law?*

A bill must go through the three-reading procedure in the Legislative Council before it becomes a law.

Q3: *When does the Financial Secretary introduce the Appropriation Bill and the Government's Estimates of Expenditure into the Legislative Council each year?*

The Financial Secretary usually introduces the Appropriation Bill and the Government's Estimates of Expenditure into the Legislative Council in February each year.

Q4: *How does the Legislative Council monitor the work of the Government?*

The Legislative Council monitors the work of the Government with (a) Members raising questions and moving motions for debate at Legislative Council meetings; (b) the Public Accounts Committee considering reports of the Director of Audit; and (c) Panels examining government policies.

Q5: *How many Panels are established by the Legislative Council?*

Eighteen Panels are established by the Legislative Council.

Online resources

(a) *Quick Information*

Legislative Council Website (www.legco.gov.hk) → Education → [Quick Information](#)

(b) *Legislative Council in Brief*

Legislative Council Website (www.legco.gov.hk) → Education → Understand → [Legislative Council in Brief](#)

(c) *Animations and videos*

Legislative Council Website (www.legco.gov.hk) → Education → Understand → [Animations and videos](#)

- (d) *Exhibition panels*
Legislative Council Website (www.legco.gov.hk) → Education → Understand →
[Exhibition panels](#)
- (e) *PowerPoint slides*
Legislative Council Website (www.legco.gov.hk) → Education → Teach →
[PowerPoint slides](#)
- (f) *Issues in particular policy areas*
Legislative Council Website (www.legco.gov.hk) → Education → Teach →
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- (g) *Questions/Bills/Members' motions*
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[Questions/Bills/Members' motions](#)
- (h) *Committees*
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- (i) *Budget and financial proposals*
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