University of Manchester Q-Step Summer Project 2019

Ref #30: UoMQStep 2019 UoM – Gender Equity in Parliamentary Select Committees

For enquires, contact Dr Martin Prowse, martin.prowse@manchester.ac.uk (Lecturer) or the Q-Step general email – q-step@manchester.ac.uk

Organisation Name: University of Manchester

Team/Department: Policy@Manchester

Address: Crawford House, University of Manchester

Provisional title for project: Gender Equity in Parliamentary Select Committees

Since 2010, parliamentary select committees have become a key component of UK government process. Select committees have the role of holding the government to account publicly for the creation and implementation of their policies by gathering evidence. This evidence comes from a range of stakeholders, primarily called as witnesses to appear at committee hearings. Typically, several hundred witnesses will be called to appear before select committees each month to provide vital input into policy decisions, as well as parliamentary scrutiny.

Amongst the witnesses called by select committees, academics contribute most within the independent expert category. This category of witness is selected entirely at the discretion of the select committee itself and unfortunately is also the category that shows the greatest gender imbalance. A 2014 study from LSE calculated that 83% of the independent experts appearing before select committees were men. Such disparities are dangerous as they may lead to biased evidence, encourage stereotypes and result in power imbalances.

In this internship the student will analyse whether this imbalance persists at the same level as documented in the 2014 report. They will use a combination of web-scraping and data mining techniques to assemble the required information, with input from online parliamentary data sources and assistance from the Policy@Manchester team. This new analysis will assess gender balance alongside regional origin and ethnicity (where available). The project will be done in Python, but no prior experience is assumed.

Key words (up to 12): policy, government, parliamentary evidence, gender balance

Essential and desirable skills that the student would need to have:

Essential: An interest in parliamentary processes and a willingness to learn Python (if not already known).

Desirable: Basic statistical understanding

Where the work would be carried out: Either in the Schuster Annex Hive or in Crawford House with P@M.

Preferred selection method (interview or other method): Interview

Interview preference (on campus, remote, in your office): Campus

Support and training offered by the organisation: Python training

Any issues of data confidentiality and/or IPR that would need to be resolved: None

Supporting information: None

Financial assistance offered by the organisation: None