

How the Punjab Assembly Works

A Practical Guide to Provincial Law-Making, Representation
and Government Oversight

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Purpose of This Handbook

The Punjab Assembly is often seen only as a chamber for political speeches and debate. Its actual work is broader. It makes provincial laws, approves public expenditure, elects the Chief Minister, examines government performance, raises citizens' concerns and holds provincial departments accountable.

This handbook explains the institution in clear, practical language for students, citizens, professionals, journalists, public officials, new legislators and parliamentary staff.

Research basis: Constitution of Pakistan amended up to 21 November 2025, official Punjab Assembly Rules of Procedure, legislative guidance, committee information and parliamentary records.

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1. What Is the Punjab Assembly?

The Provincial Assembly of the Punjab is Punjab's elected provincial legislature. It represents the people of the province and performs legislative, financial, representative and oversight functions.

It is a **unicameral legislature**, which means that it has one legislative chamber. This differs from the federal Parliament, which consists of the National Assembly and the Senate.

The present legislature is the 18th Punjab Assembly, constituted after the 2024 general election. The Assembly and the Punjab Government are separate institutions:

- **The Punjab Government** administers the province through the Chief Minister, Cabinet, departments and public bodies.
- **The Punjab Assembly** makes provincial laws, approves expenditure, represents citizens and examines the government's work.

Key point: The Assembly does not directly run provincial departments. It authorises, scrutinises and holds the executive accountable.

2. Constitutional Position of the Assembly

The Punjab Assembly operates under the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Its internal proceedings are governed by the Rules of Procedure of the Provincial Assembly of the Punjab and by applicable standing orders and rulings of the Chair.

The Assembly may legislate on matters within the provincial legislative field. Following the constitutional distribution of powers, provincial assemblies generally legislate on matters not included in the Federal Legislative List. Provincial competence also extends to criminal law, criminal procedure and evidence, subject to constitutional limits.

Examples of Provincial Subjects

Public health	Agriculture	Provincial education
Local government	Land administration	Provincial taxation
Irrigation	Housing and urban development	Social welfare
Provincial transport	Culture and heritage	Provincial institutions

A provincial law cannot override the Constitution. Where Parliament has constitutional authority and a valid federal law conflicts with a provincial law, the federal law generally prevails to the extent of the conflict. [1]

3. Composition and Membership

The Constitution provides that the Punjab Assembly consists of **371 seats**:

Seat category	Number	Method
General seats	297	Direct election from constituencies
Reserved seats for women	66	Allocated to parties through proportional representation
Reserved seats for non-Muslims	8	Allocated to parties through proportional representation

A member is commonly called an **MPA**, meaning Member of the Provincial Assembly. The normal constitutional term of the Assembly is five years from its first meeting, unless it is dissolved earlier. [1]

Basic Qualifications and Responsibilities

Members must meet the constitutional and electoral qualifications applicable to provincial legislators. After election, they take the prescribed oath before participating in proceedings. Members are expected to attend sittings, serve on committees, represent constituents and comply with parliamentary rules.

4. Main Functions of the Assembly

Law-making

Considers, amends and passes provincial legislation.

Representation

Provides a formal platform for raising constituency and provincial concerns.

Oversight

Questions ministers and examines departmental policies and performance.

Financial control

Debates the provincial budget and votes on demands for grants.

Government formation

Elects the Chief Minister and tests the government's confidence.

Public debate

Debates policy, emergencies, legislation and matters of public importance.

These functions arise from the Constitution and are reflected in the Assembly's official Rules and business procedures. ^{[1][2][3]}

5. Important Parliamentary Office Holders

The Speaker

The Speaker is elected by the Assembly from among its members. The Speaker presides over sittings, maintains order, applies the Rules, determines admissibility of notices, calls members to speak, puts questions to a vote, announces results, refers matters to committees and gives procedural rulings.

The Deputy Speaker

The Deputy Speaker performs the Speaker's functions when the Speaker is absent, unable to act or when the office is vacant.

The Chief Minister and Leader of the House

The Chief Minister is head of the provincial government and normally serves as Leader of the House. The Chief Minister leads the Cabinet and must retain the confidence of the Assembly.

The Leader of the Opposition

The Leader of the Opposition leads the largest recognised opposition group and presents the opposition's position on legislation, policy, expenditure and government performance.

Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries

Provincial ministers manage departments and answer to the Assembly. Parliamentary secretaries may assist ministers with assigned parliamentary business.

The Secretary General

The Secretary General is the senior administrative and procedural officer of the Assembly Secretariat and supports sittings, legislation, committees, records and parliamentary documentation.

6. Formation of the Provincial Government

After a general election, the Assembly follows a constitutional sequence:

1. Newly elected members take the oath.
2. The Assembly elects the Speaker.
3. The Assembly elects the Deputy Speaker.
4. The Assembly elects the Chief Minister.

In the first poll for Chief Minister, a candidate must obtain a majority of the total membership. If no candidate receives that majority, a second poll is held between the two candidates who obtained the highest votes. The candidate receiving a majority of the members present and voting in the second poll is elected. [1]

The Cabinet is collectively responsible to the Assembly. A motion of no-confidence against the Chief Minister may be initiated by at least 20 per cent of the total membership, subject to constitutional procedure. [1]

7. Assembly Sessions and Sittings

A **session** is a group of sittings held between the formal summoning and prorogation of the Assembly. A **sitting** is an individual meeting held on a particular day.

The Governor summons and prorogues the Assembly under the Constitution. The constitutional framework requires at least three sessions each year, no more than 120 days between the last sitting of one session and the first sitting of the next, and at least 100 working days each year. [1]

At least one-fourth of the total membership may requisition a session. The Speaker must summon the Assembly within 14 days of receiving a valid requisition.

Term	Meaning
Adjournment	Suspension or ending of a sitting until another time or date.
Adjournment sine die	Ending a sitting without fixing the next date.
Prorogation	Formal ending of an entire session.
Dissolution	Ending the life of the Assembly.

A Bill does not lapse merely because a session is prorogued. It normally lapses when the Assembly is dissolved. [1]

8. Daily Business of the House

The official list of matters to be taken up during a sitting is called the **Order of the Day** or agenda.

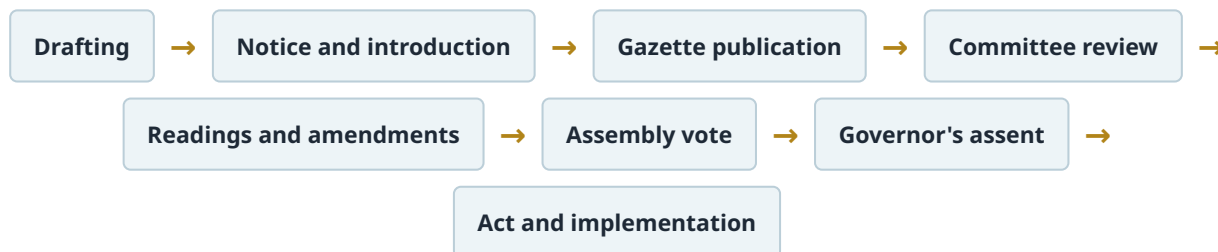
Depending on the approved business, a sitting may include:

1. Recitation and formal commencement
2. Oath of newly elected members
3. Questions and answers
4. Calling Attention Notices
5. Matters of immediate public importance
6. Privilege motions and adjournment motions
7. Presentation of reports
8. Introduction and consideration of Bills
9. Resolutions
10. Budget discussion
11. Ministerial statements
12. Government and private members' business
13. Voting
14. Adjournment or announcement of the next sitting

The Speaker controls the sequence of business subject to the Rules and approved agenda. Official agendas, questions, Bills, resolutions, committee reports and verbatim debates are published by the Assembly. [2][8]

9. How a Provincial Law Is Made

A proposal for a new law or an amendment to an existing law is introduced as a **Bill**.



Stage 1: Drafting

A Government Bill is normally prepared by the relevant department in consultation with the Law and Parliamentary Affairs Department. A private member may also propose a Bill, subject to the Constitution and Rules.

Stage 2: Notice and Introduction

The minister or member gives the required notice. The Bill normally includes a statement of objects and reasons and is introduced after permission under the applicable procedure.

Stage 3: Publication

After introduction, the Bill is published in the official Gazette.

Stage 4: Committee Review

The Speaker normally refers the Bill to the relevant Standing Committee and fixes a date for its report. The Finance Bill is generally not referred under the ordinary committee procedure. [4]

Stage 5: First Reading

The general principles and purpose of the Bill are considered.

Stage 6: Second Reading

The Bill is considered clause by clause. Members may propose relevant amendments and each clause or amendment may be put to a vote.

Stage 7: Third Reading

The final Bill is considered for passage. Debate focuses on whether the completed Bill should be approved.

Stage 8: Assembly Approval

Unless a special majority is constitutionally required, the Bill is passed by a majority of members present and voting.

Stage 9: Governor's Assent

The Governor has ten days to assent or, for a Bill other than a Money Bill, return it for reconsideration. If the Assembly passes the returned Bill again, the Governor must assent within ten days. If assent is not given in that period, assent is deemed to have been given. The law is then published as an Act. [1]

10. Government Bills and Private Members' Bills

Type	Who introduces it?	Typical purpose
Government Bill	A provincial minister on behalf of the government	Major policy, administration, taxation and institutional reform
Private Member's Bill	An MPA acting in a non-ministerial capacity	New laws or amendments proposed by an individual legislator

Private Members' Bills allow legislators to propose reforms, address social problems and respond to constituency concerns. A Bill involving provincial expenditure, taxation or withdrawal from public funds may require the consent or recommendation of the provincial government. [2][4]

11. Money Bills and Financial Legislation

A Money Bill deals with constitutionally specified financial matters, including provincial taxation, government borrowing, provincial guarantees, the Provincial Consolidated Fund and the withdrawal or custody of public money.

A Money Bill, or a Bill involving expenditure from the Provincial Consolidated Fund, may not be introduced without the required involvement or consent of the provincial government.

The Speaker decides whether a Bill is a Money Bill, and the Speaker's certificate is constitutionally conclusive. Unlike an ordinary Bill, a Money Bill cannot be returned by the Governor for reconsideration under the procedure applicable to non-Money Bills. [1]

12. The Committee System

Committees allow detailed parliamentary scrutiny that is difficult to conduct during full sittings. The official Punjab Assembly material currently lists **51 Standing Committees**, consisting of 42 departmental Standing Committees and 9 other Standing Committees. [5]

What Committees Do

- Examine Bills and proposed amendments
- Review the work of government departments
- Examine public expenditure and audit issues
- Seek information, records and explanations
- Call officials and other persons where permitted
- Study policy matters and reports
- Prepare findings and recommendations
- Present reports to the Assembly

Important committees include departmental Standing Committees, Public Accounts Committees, the Committee on Privileges, the Business Advisory Committee, the Finance Committee and special committees established for particular matters.

Why committees matter: A committee can study evidence, documents and departmental explanations in much greater detail than the full House usually can.

13. Question Hour and Government Accountability

Question Hour is a principal mechanism through which MPAs obtain information from ministers and departments. Under the Rules, the first hour of a sitting is generally available for questions, except on specified special days. A normal question generally requires at least 15 clear days' notice. The Speaker may allow a short-notice question on an urgent matter of public importance.

[2][6]

Question type	Answer	Supplementary questions
Starred question	Oral answer in the House	Normally allowed with the Speaker's permission
Unstarred question	Written answer	Normally not allowed

Questions must concern matters of public importance for which the relevant minister or department is responsible. Questions containing allegations, arguments, defamatory language, vague claims or matters outside provincial responsibility may be disallowed. The Speaker decides admissibility, and the Secretariat sends admitted questions to the relevant department for preparation of an answer.

14. Calling Attention Notices, Motions and Resolutions

Calling Attention Notice

Allows a member to draw a minister's attention to an urgent matter of public importance. The minister provides an explanation or response in the House.

Adjournment Motion

Seeks to interrupt normal business to discuss a definite, urgent and important public matter. Admission depends on the Rules and the Speaker's decision.

Privilege Motion

May be raised when a member believes that the rights, authority or privileges of the Assembly, a committee or a member have been breached.

Resolution

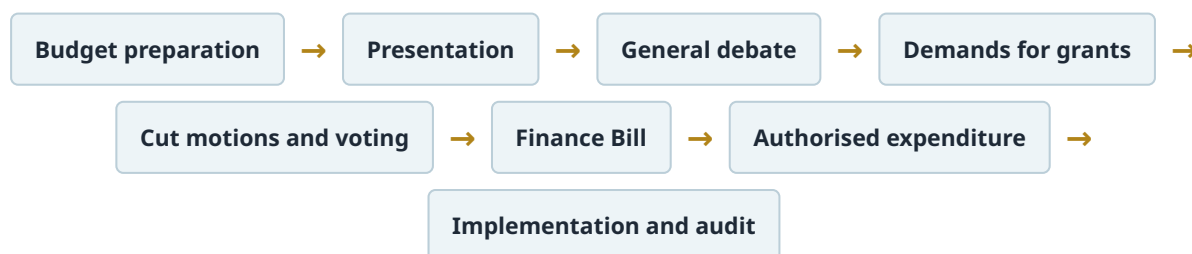
Allows the Assembly to express an opinion, recommendation, approval or disapproval. Many resolutions are recommendatory, while some have constitutional or legal consequences depending on their subject.

Zero Hour and Immediate Matters

The Rules provide additional procedures for raising urgent constituency and public matters, subject to notice, time limits and the Speaker's admissibility decision. [2]

15. The Provincial Budget

For every financial year, the provincial government lays an Annual Budget Statement before the Assembly showing estimated receipts and expenditure. [1]



Charged Expenditure

Certain expenditure is constitutionally charged upon the Provincial Consolidated Fund. Members may discuss it, but it is not submitted to a vote.

Voted Expenditure

Other expenditure is presented as demands for grants. The Assembly may approve, reject or reduce a demand. A demand may be made only on the recommendation of the provincial government.

Supplementary and Excess Grants

If authorised expenditure is insufficient, or expenditure exceeds the approved amount, supplementary or excess budget statements may be presented for parliamentary consideration.

The budget is therefore both a financial plan and a major instrument of legislative control over the executive.

16. Debate, Voting and Quorum

Quorum

When quorum is formally questioned, at least one-fourth of the total membership must be present. For a House of 371 members, the minimum is **93 members**. If quorum is not present, the sitting must be suspended or adjourned until the required number is available. [1]

Voting

Most decisions are taken by a majority of members present and voting. Voting may occur by voice vote, members rising, formal division or another method permitted by the Rules.

The Speaker normally does not vote. If votes are equal, the Speaker may exercise a casting vote.

[2][7]

17. Parliamentary Discipline and Privileges

The Speaker maintains order and protects the dignity of the House. Members are expected to address the Chair, follow directions, remain relevant, use parliamentary language and avoid conduct that obstructs proceedings.

The Speaker may direct a member to discontinue a speech, withdraw from a sitting or face suspension when the member seriously disregards the authority of the Chair or obstructs business. Unparliamentary, indecent or defamatory expressions may be expunged from the official record. [2][7]

Parliamentary privilege exists to protect the Assembly's ability to perform its constitutional functions. It is not a general personal exemption from the law.

18. The Assembly Secretariat

The Assembly Secretariat is the professional administrative institution that supports the House, Speaker, members and committees.

- Receives parliamentary notices
- Prepares the Order of the Day
- Processes questions, motions and resolutions
- Supports Bills and legislative work
- Organises sittings and committee meetings
- Records and publishes proceedings
- Preserves Assembly records
- Provides research, library and procedural support
- Communicates with government departments
- Publishes reports and parliamentary information

The Secretary General is responsible for ensuring that an authentic report of every sitting is prepared and published. Printed debates are the authoritative record, while audio and video records may also be maintained and made publicly available subject to restrictions. [2][7][8]

19. Public Access and Citizen Participation

Citizens do not normally participate directly in debate or voting, but they can influence parliamentary work through elected representatives and public engagement.

Practical Ways to Engage

- Contact the constituency MPA with a clear, documented issue
- Request that an issue be raised through a question, motion, resolution or committee
- Follow Assembly agendas and proceedings
- Read Bills, Acts, questions and departmental answers
- Review committee reports and verbatim debates
- Watch publicly available proceedings
- Provide evidence or views when invited by a committee
- Attend the public gallery where permission and security arrangements allow

Useful practice: A citizen's submission is more effective when it identifies the responsible department, states the facts, includes evidence and requests a specific action.

20. Common Misunderstandings

"The Assembly directly runs government departments."

Incorrect. Departments are run by the provincial executive. The Assembly legislates, approves finances and holds departments accountable.

"Every resolution becomes a law."

Incorrect. A resolution usually expresses the opinion or recommendation of the House. A Bill must complete the legislative process to become an Act.

"Every introduced Bill becomes law."

Incorrect. A Bill may be rejected, withdrawn, delayed, amended, referred to a committee or allowed to lapse.

"The Speaker heads the Punjab Government."

Incorrect. The Speaker presides over the Assembly. The Chief Minister heads the provincial government.

"An MPA can directly order a department to act."

An MPA may seek information, raise an issue or recommend action. Formal executive authority remains with the government and legally authorised officials.

"A speech automatically changes policy."

A speech may influence debate, but legal or administrative action usually requires a formal decision, legislation, budget approval or government order.

21. Parliamentary Glossary

Act	A Bill that has completed the legislative process and become law.
Adjournment	Suspension or ending of a sitting until another time.
Bill	A proposed new law or amendment to an existing law.
Cabinet	The Chief Minister and provincial ministers responsible for executive government.
Committee	A smaller group of members appointed to examine legislation, departments or specific matters.
Constituency	The geographical area represented by an elected member.
Division	A formal counted or recorded vote.
Gazette	The official government publication used for laws and notifications.
Money Bill	A Bill dealing with constitutionally defined financial matters.
Motion	A formal proposal submitted for discussion or decision.
MPA	Member of the Provincial Assembly.
Prorogation	Formal ending of a session.
Quorum	The minimum number of members required when presence is questioned.
Resolution	A formal expression of the Assembly's opinion or decision.
Session	One or more sittings between summoning and prorogation.
Sitting	A meeting of the Assembly on a particular day.
Starred question	A question requiring an oral answer and allowing supplementary questions.
Unstarred question	A question answered in writing.

22. Summary of the Assembly's Workflow

Legislative Workflow



Accountability Workflow



Budget Workflow



Conclusion

The Punjab Assembly is the constitutional centre of representative law-making in Punjab. Its effectiveness depends on informed members, strong committees, accurate records, meaningful debate, financial scrutiny and public awareness. It works best when legislation is carefully examined, ministers answer questions properly, committees investigate seriously and citizens remain informed about the performance of their elected representatives.

References and Official Sources

This handbook is intended for public education. For a specific legal issue, consult the current constitutional text, applicable legislation, Assembly rules and qualified legal advice.

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