

PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PUNJAB

Parliamentary Questions and Motions

A practical handbook on legislative oversight, debate, and decision-making

A practical guide based on the Rules of Procedure of the Provincial Assembly of the Punjab. If the rules are amended, the latest official text prevails.

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Contents

- Introduction and purpose
- Questions, motions, and resolutions
- Types and procedure of parliamentary questions
- Admissibility, Question Hour, and supplementary questions
- Meaning and types of parliamentary motions
- Notice, debate, amendments, and voting
- Role of the Speaker and Assembly Secretariat
- Practical drafting checklists
- Key terms and official references

1. Introduction

A provincial assembly does more than pass laws. It examines government performance, raises public concerns, debates policy, approves public expenditure, and makes formal decisions. Parliamentary questions and motions are among the main tools through which members perform these functions.

This handbook explains the principal procedures followed in the Provincial Assembly of the Punjab. It is designed for students, citizens, public officials, media professionals, and readers who need a clear introduction to parliamentary oversight.

2. Why Questions and Motions Matter

- They place public concerns on the official parliamentary record.
- They require Ministers and departments to provide facts and explanations.
- They help members examine delays, expenditure, policy choices, and administrative performance.
- They allow urgent situations to be discussed under defined procedural safeguards.
- They give the House a structured method for debate, amendment, and decision.

A strong question exposes missing information. A properly drafted motion gives the House a clear proposition that can be debated or decided.

3. Question, Motion, and Resolution: The Difference

Instrument	Primary purpose	Usual outcome
Question	Seeks information or an explanation from a Minister, department, or responsible private member.	Normally does not ask the House to make a decision.
Motion	Places a formal proposal before the House for discussion, approval, rejection, amendment, or decision.	May lead to debate and a vote.
Resolution	Formally expresses the opinion, recommendation, or decision of the House.	Used for general public matters and certain constitutional proceedings.

Part One: Parliamentary Questions

4. Purpose of a Parliamentary Question

A member may ask a question to obtain information on a matter of public concern within the official responsibility of the Minister concerned. A question addressed to a Minister must relate to public affairs connected with that portfolio or to an administrative matter for which the Minister is responsible.

Questions concerning a department for which no Minister is designated are addressed to the Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs. A question may also be addressed to a private member when it concerns a bill, resolution, or other House business for which that member is responsible.

5. Main Types of Questions

5.1 Starred Question

A starred question is marked with an asterisk and is listed for an oral answer in the House. After the answer, members may ask supplementary questions with the permission of the Speaker. It is suitable when a verbal explanation, clarification, or direct ministerial accountability is required.

The Speaker may direct that a starred question be placed on the list of unstarred questions when a written reply would be more appropriate.

5.2 Unstarred Question

An unstarred question receives a written answer. It is generally used for statistical, district-wise, year-wise, financial, staffing, project, or other detailed information. It does not normally provide an opportunity for oral supplementary questions.

5.3 Short-Notice Question

A short-notice question concerns an urgent matter of public importance that cannot reasonably wait for the ordinary notice period. The Speaker may admit it when satisfied about the urgency. A member may not ask more than one short-notice question in a sitting, and such a question may not be used to anticipate a question for which notice has already been given.

5.4 Question to a Private Member

A question may be addressed to a private member when its subject relates to a bill, resolution, or other Assembly business for which that member is responsible. The Speaker may adjust the ordinary procedure where necessary.

6. Notice and Submission

- A separate written notice is required for every question.

- The notice is addressed to the Secretary General.
- It must identify the official designation of the Minister concerned, or the name of the responsible private member.
- A member seeking an oral answer marks the question with an asterisk.
- Ordinarily, at least fifteen clear days' notice is required.
- The Speaker may allow shorter notice with the consent of the Minister, and may admit a short-notice question on an urgent matter of public importance.

After admission, the Secretariat transmits the question to the department concerned. Under the current Punjab Assembly rule, the department must ensure that its answer reaches the Assembly Secretariat within eight days of transmission.

7. Conditions of Admissibility

The Speaker decides whether a question is admissible and may disallow the whole question, remove part of it, or amend its form. A question should be clear, brief, factual, and connected with a matter for which the provincial government is answerable.

- Do not include unnecessary names or statements.
- Do not use arguments, inferences, irony, imputations, epithets, or defamatory language.
- Do not ask for an opinion on an abstract legal question or a hypothetical proposition.
- Do not make or imply a personal charge.
- Do not repeat a question already answered in substance.
- Do not ask a vague, trivial, vexatious, or meaningless question.
- Do not seek information already easily available in public documents.
- Do not ask about confidential Cabinet discussions, protected advice, secret or sensitive matters.
- Do not raise a matter that is sub judice or likely to prejudice court proceedings.
- Do not ask about a matter under consideration by an Assembly committee unless its report has been placed before the House.

When a question contains a factual statement, the member submitting it accepts responsibility for the accuracy of that statement.

8. Question Hour

Except on specified special sitting days, the first hour of a sitting is reserved for asking and answering questions. Question Hour is not held on days fixed for major constitutional or financial business, such as the election of presiding officers or the

Chief Minister, confidence or no-confidence proceedings, the Governor's address, budget discussion, voting on demands for grants, or consideration of the Finance Bill. The Speaker allocates different days to different government departments. Only questions relating to departments allotted for that day are normally included in the list.

9. Number and Order of Questions

- Not more than two starred questions, including short-notice questions, from one member may be listed for a sitting.
- Not more than five unstarred questions from one member may be listed for a sitting.
- The total number of starred questions listed for one sitting may not exceed thirty-five.
- Questions are generally listed in the order in which notices are received.

10. Supplementary Questions

After an answer has been given, members may ask the number of supplementary questions that the Speaker considers necessary to clarify the answer. A supplementary question must arise from the original question or answer, remain within the admitted subject, and seek clarification rather than become a speech or allegation.

The Speaker may disallow a supplementary question that violates the rules on subject matter or admissibility, or otherwise abuses the right to ask questions.

11. Discussion Arising from an Answer

An ordinary question and answer do not lead to a general debate. However, on Wednesday, the Speaker may allot one hour to discuss a matter of sufficient public importance that arose from a starred or unstarred question during the previous week. The member must give two clear days' notice. No vote is taken and no formal motion is moved at the end of the discussion.

12. Drafting Examples

Starred question: Will the Minister for School Education be pleased to state whether the Government has approved additional classrooms for overcrowded public schools in District Kasur?

Unstarred question: Will the Minister for Primary and Secondary Healthcare provide district-wise details of sanctioned, vacant, and filled medical officer posts during the last three financial years?

Short-notice question: Will the Minister concerned state the immediate measures taken to provide relief and restore public services in areas recently affected by flooding?

Weak wording: Why has the department completely failed to perform its duties?

Improved wording: Will the Minister state the reasons for the delay in completing the project and provide its revised completion date?

Part Two: Parliamentary Motions

13. Meaning and Basic Stages of a Motion

A motion is a formal proposal made by a member asking the Assembly to discuss, approve, reject, amend, or decide a matter. A substantive motion is a complete, self-contained proposal drafted so that it can express a decision of the Assembly.

1. Notice is submitted in the prescribed form.
2. The Speaker determines admissibility and procedural order.
3. The motion is included in the Assembly business.
4. The mover formally moves the motion.
5. The Speaker proposes the question to the House.
6. Members debate the proposal and may move admissible amendments.
7. The Minister or Parliamentary Secretary concerned may reply.
8. The Speaker puts the question and announces the decision after voting.

14. Notice of a Motion or Amendment

Unless the Constitution or a specific rule provides otherwise, a substantive motion requires at least seven clear days' written notice and an amendment requires at least two clear days' written notice. The Speaker may allow a motion or amendment at shorter notice.

A motion requiring notice may normally be moved only by the member who submitted it. It should be moved in the form appearing in the notice unless the Speaker permits an altered form. If the member does not move it when called, it is treated as withdrawn.

15. Main Types of Motions

15.1 Substantive Motion

A substantive motion contains a complete proposal on which the Assembly can make a decision. Example: That this House recommends the establishment of a transparent provincial mechanism for monitoring completion of public development projects.

15.2 Amendment

An amendment proposes a change to a motion already before the House. It may delete, replace, or insert words. It must be relevant to the original motion and remain within its scope. An amendment cannot merely have the effect of a negative vote.

15.3 Adjournment Motion

An adjournment motion seeks to interrupt ordinary business so that a definite matter of urgent public importance may be discussed. It is an exceptional device and requires the consent of the Speaker under the special rules governing adjournment motions. It is not a general method for raising every administrative complaint.

15.4 Motion for General Discussion

A Minister or member may give notice of a motion that a policy or situation be discussed. Ordinarily no question is put at the conclusion of the debate unless, with the consent of the Speaker, an appropriate substantive motion is moved.

15.5 Procedural Motion

A procedural motion concerns the conduct or timing of Assembly business. Examples include a motion to close a debate, suspend a rule, refer a matter to a committee, take a bill into consideration, or change the manner in which a matter is being considered.

15.6 Cut Motion

During financial proceedings, a member may move a cut motion relating to a demand for grant. Cut motions are used to record disagreement with policy, propose a reduction in expenditure, or raise a specific grievance through a token reduction. They allow closer scrutiny of public policy and spending during the budget process.

15.7 No-Confidence Resolution

A vote of no-confidence against the Chief Minister is a special constitutional procedure. Article 136 of the Constitution requires the resolution to be moved by not less than twenty per cent of the total membership of the Provincial Assembly. It may not be voted upon before three days or later than seven days after it is moved. It must be passed by a majority of the total membership, after which the Chief Minister ceases to hold office.

16. Repetition, Withdrawal, and Amendments

A motion may not normally raise a question substantially identical to one already decided by the Assembly in the same session. After the Speaker has proposed the question and before voting, the mover may withdraw the motion with the leave of the Assembly. If an amendment has already been proposed, the original motion cannot be withdrawn until the amendment has been disposed of.

17. Debate on a Motion

- A member speaks only when called by the Speaker.
- The speech must remain relevant to the matter before the House.
- The member should avoid unnecessary repetition.
- Sub judice matters, personal accusations, defamatory language, and unparliamentary expressions are restricted.
- The conduct of judges in the discharge of judicial duties may not be discussed.
- The mover normally has a right of reply, subject to the rules.
- The Minister or Parliamentary Secretary concerned has an opportunity to respond before decision.

18. Closure and Voting

A member may move that the question be put. The Speaker may refuse a closure motion if it would abuse the rules or unfairly restrict reasonable debate. If closure is carried, the main question is put without further amendment or debate, subject to any permitted right of reply.

Voting is normally taken by voice. Members in favour say “Aye” and those against say “No.” If the Speaker's opinion is challenged and a division is demanded, votes may be counted through the prescribed division procedure or by asking members to rise in their places.

19. Role of the Speaker

- Decides whether questions, motions, and amendments are admissible.
- May amend inappropriate, argumentative, irrelevant, or unnecessarily lengthy wording.
- Controls the order of business and calls members to speak.
- Allows or disallows supplementary questions.
- Maintains relevance, decorum, and order during debate.
- Selects amendments and may fix time limits for debate or speeches.
- Puts questions to the House, conducts voting, and announces decisions.

20. Role of the Assembly Secretariat

- Receives notices and checks their form and completeness.
- Places notices before the Speaker for a ruling on admissibility.
- Transmits admitted questions to departments and receives replies.
- Prepares lists of questions and the Order of the Day.
- Maintains the authentic parliamentary record.

- Provides procedural guidance to members.

Submission of a notice does not itself amount to admission. Admissibility remains subject to the Rules and the decision of the Speaker.

21. Checklist for Drafting a Question

1. Does the question concern a matter of public importance?
2. Is the matter within the responsibility of the provincial government?
3. Is it addressed to the correct Minister or responsible private member?
4. Does it seek information rather than express an opinion?
5. Is the wording brief, specific, and neutral?
6. Have allegations and political speeches been removed?
7. Does it avoid confidential, personal, committee, and sub judice matters?
8. Is the information already publicly available?
9. Is an oral or written answer more suitable?
10. Has the required notice period been met?

22. Checklist for Drafting a Motion

1. What precise action or decision is requested from the House?
2. Is the proposal complete and self-contained?
3. Does the Assembly have authority over the matter?
4. Does the motion concern one clear subject?
5. Is its wording respectful and parliamentary?
6. Has the House already decided substantially the same question in the session?
7. Has the correct notice period been observed?
8. Is the motion substantive, procedural, financial, or constitutional?
9. Are the supporting facts ready for debate?
10. Can members clearly vote for or against the proposition?

23. Importance for Citizens

Parliamentary questions and motions are internal procedures, but their purpose is public. They can bring neglected local problems into the official record, require Ministers to provide facts, scrutinise expenditure, debate urgent situations, review policy, and show citizens how their elected representatives perform.

Used carefully, these instruments convert a public complaint into structured parliamentary oversight.

24. Key Terms

Term	Meaning
Question Hour	The period reserved for asking and answering parliamentary questions.
Starred question	A question listed for an oral answer, normally allowing supplementary questions.
Unstarred question	A question answered in writing.
Short-notice question	An urgent question admitted on shorter notice.
Supplementary question	A follow-up question seeking clarification of an answer.
Motion	A formal proposal submitted for discussion or decision.
Substantive motion	A complete proposal capable of expressing a decision of the House.
Amendment	A proposed change to a motion, resolution, bill, or other matter.
Adjournment motion	A motion seeking urgent discussion by interrupting ordinary business.
Cut motion	A financial motion relating to a demand for grant.
Division	A formal method of recording or counting votes.
Resolution	A formal expression of the opinion, recommendation, or decision of the House.

25. Conclusion

Questions obtain information, test government claims, and require Ministers to explain administrative performance. Motions place proposals before the House, organise debate, allow amendments, and lead to formal decisions. Their effectiveness depends on accurate drafting, public relevance, compliance with procedure, and responsible use.

Official References

[1] Provincial Assembly of the Punjab, Rules of Procedure, Chapter VIII - Questions, Rules 42-61. https://pap.gov.pk/about_assembly/details/en/23

[2] Provincial Assembly of the Punjab, Rules of Procedure, Chapter XI - Adjournment Motions. https://pap.gov.pk/about_assembly/details/en/26

[3] Provincial Assembly of the Punjab, Rules of Procedure, Chapter XVI - Procedure in Financial Matters. https://pap.gov.pk/about_assembly/details/en/31

[4] Provincial Assembly of the Punjab, Rules of Procedure, Chapter XVIII - General Rules, including Rules 191-208 and 243-244. https://pap.gov.pk/about_assembly/details/en/33

[5] Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Article 136. https://na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1333523681_951.pdf

Accessed and cross-checked in July 2026. The latest official rules and constitutional text prevail over this explanatory handbook.