



Northern Ireland Assembly

Bill Office

Procedural Handbook for Bills

Foreword

The *Procedural Handbook for Bills* is for **Members and their staff**, and is intended to provide practical guidance about the procedures on bills in the Northern Ireland Assembly.

It has been produced by the Bill Office, which is responsible for advising Members on the procedures in relation to bills and providing support to Members with drafting amendments. The Bill Office also arranges for the printing and publication of bills and amendments.

Members are encouraged to consult the Bill Office in advance on any aspect of bills procedure if they are in doubt about what they can do or how to do it.

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Pre-Introduction

The development of policy into a bill

The journey from policy intention to becoming a bill has many steps and no route is exactly the same. However, regardless of whether the Bill Sponsor is a Minister, a Member, a committee or the Assembly Commission, there are common elements to the process which usually precede a bill's Introduction to the Assembly.

These include developing the policy, undertaking consultation, finalising the policy, instructing legislative drafters accordingly, and final sign-off on the text of the bill.

Submission of bills to the Speaker

Before a bill can be introduced to the Assembly, it must be submitted to the Speaker.

The process for submitting a bill is the same for all Bill Sponsors, be they Ministers, Members, the Assembly Commission or a committee, and is set out in Standing Order 30.

Key points to note are:

- the full text of the bill must be submitted to the Speaker at least 7 to 10 days before the proposed Introduction date
- it must be submitted by the Member in charge of the bill (the Bill Sponsor)
- the Bill Sponsor must confirm in writing that in their view the bill is legislatively competent.

Standing Order 41 requires an Explanatory and Financial Memorandum (EFM) to accompany the bill, and it will also be included in the submission to the Speaker.

Scrutiny of bills by the Speaker

Section 10 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires the Speaker to undertake a number of checks before the bill can be introduced to the Assembly. These checks are also undertaken before Final Stage, and concern:

- legislative competence
- Secretary of State consent
- financial impacts of the bill.

Legislative competence (section 6 of the Northern Ireland Act)

In order for a bill to be introduced to the Assembly, it must be legislatively competent. This means in very broad terms that it must deal with an issue which the Assembly has the power to legislate on.

Legislative competence is described in section 6 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and schedules 2 and 3.

There are particular criteria against which legislative competence is assessed, and these fall into three categories:

Excepted Matters	Reserved Matters	Transferred Matters
• These are, and will continue to be, outside the competency of the Assembly. • Responsibility remains with Westminster. • Examples: the Crown, the UK Parliament, international relations, titles of honour, treason, national security.	• These are within the competency of the Assembly but only if the consent of the Secretary of State is sought and obtained. • These may eventually become the responsibility of the Assembly. • Examples: post and telecommunications, broadcasting.	• These are generally anything that is not excepted or reserved. • They are matters that fall entirely within the legislative competence of the Assembly. Examples: schools, hospitals, roads.

Assembly Legal Services assess the legislative competence of all bills and provide advice to the Speaker accordingly. Legislative competence will be assessed again before the bill's Final Stage as required.

Secretary of State consent (section 8 of the Northern Ireland Act)

Before allowing a bill to go forward for Introduction, the Speaker will check it against a number of other aspects of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

The consent of the Secretary of State is needed if a bill contains:

- a provision which deals with an excepted matter and is ancillary to other provisions dealing with reserved or transferred matters; or
- a provision dealing with reserved matters.

"Deals with" is defined in section 98(2) of the same Act.

Most bills do not require Secretary of State consent.

Financial impacts of the bill (section 63 of the Northern Ireland Act)

The Speaker will also note when a bill will have certain types of financial impacts, which are set out in section 63 of the Northern Ireland Act. In such cases, the bill will have a recommendation from the Minister of Finance attached to it.

Most bills do not require a recommendation from the Minister of Finance.

Speaker's approval to introduce a bill

The Bill Sponsor may only introduce their bill once the Speaker has determined that it is legislatively competent.

Once the Speaker has communicated this decision, the Bill Sponsor contacts the Business Office to arrange for it to be introduced.

The bill can be introduced on any sitting day subsequent to communication from the Speaker being received, and therefore does not have to be listed in an order paper. Often the Introduction of a bill will appear in revised indicative timings for the day's sitting.

Introduction/First Stage

How the stage proceeds (Standing Order 30)

The Speaker will invite the Bill Sponsor to move the bill.

The Bill Sponsor will rise and move the stage by saying, *“I beg to introduce the [Name] Bill”*, and then sit down.

The clerk will read the long title of the bill.

The Speaker will advise the Assembly that the bill has passed its First Stage and will be published.

There is no opportunity for the Bill Sponsor or other Members to make speeches or interventions.

A quorum of Members is required for all plenary business. If there is no quorum, the stage cannot proceed.

The bill as introduced – statements on the cover page

An example of a cover page of a bill can be found at Appendix 1.

The cover page of a bill contains the following:

- the name of the bill
- the iteration (version)
- the statement of legislative competence
- other statements (as needed)
- the NIA bill number.

The name of the bill

This is referred to as the short title in the text of the bill, and the bill name also features as a running header on every page.

The iteration

In some instances, a bill is only printed once (*As Introduced*) if no amendments are made to the text. Where amendments are made, a new iteration (version) is produced and is marked with the stage at which the changes were made. For example – *As Amended at Consideration Stage*.

The statement of legislative competence

The statement of legislative competence is always included on the front cover of the bill, and it asserts the Bill Sponsor’s view (stated when submitting the bill to the Speaker) that the bill is legislatively competent.

Other statements (as needed)

Secretary of State's consent – This will only be included on the front cover of a bill which contains a provision which

- deals with a reserved matter, or
- deals with an excepted matter, and is ancillary to a reserved/transferred matter (dealt with in the bill or existing legislation).

Minister of Finance financial recommendation – This will only be included where the bill has certain types of financial impact which require a recommendation from the Minister of Finance for it to proceed. It is often called a section 63 statement as it derives from section 63 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

NIA bill number

All bills are allocated a number based on the date on which they were introduced to the Assembly.

The Explanatory and Financial Memorandum (EFM)

The Explanatory and Financial Memorandum is published and circulated to Members alongside the bill.

The EFM provides background and context to the bill. It also contains information that Members will find useful in scrutinising the potential impact of the bill. All EFMs contain the following:

- the background to, and policy objectives of, the bill
- the consultation that has been undertaken on its objectives
- the different options considered for addressing the issue(s)
- an overview of each of the clauses and schedules contained in the bill
- an indication around cost implications
- any human rights or equality issues identified and how these have been addressed
- an assessment of any impact that the proposals may have on businesses, charities, social economy enterprises or the voluntary sector.

Timeline for moving through the remaining stages

There are a range of factors which influence how long it will take for a bill to complete all its stages. These include the complexity of the issues being dealt with in the bill, the size of the bill, the level of public interest in the subject matter, and the degree of political consensus on the bill.

Some bills may be passed in a number of weeks, but most will take many months to pass all their stages in the Assembly.

Intervals between stages

The scheduling of stages is a matter for the Bill Sponsor (subject to agreement from the Business Committee). However, there are certain procedural rules (under Standing Order 42) which must be adhered to:

- a minimum of 10 days for a bill to pass through all its stages
- a minimum of five days between stages (except between Second Stage and Committee Stage, or where a bill is subject to accelerated passage).

Committee Stage always begins the day after Second Stage.

Accelerated passage means that the intervals between stages may be less than five days and the Committee Stage may be excluded. It is commonly used for Budget bills but may also be used for other bills in exceptional circumstances. In relation to those other bills, the Bill Sponsor must explain to the relevant committee why they wish to use the accelerated passage procedure.

For a bill to proceed by accelerated passage, a motion must be debated and voted on by the Assembly. The debate is focused on the reasons why the Bill Sponsor is seeking to use the procedure, and Members will indicate whether they are supportive or otherwise.

The decision for a bill to proceed via accelerated passage requires cross-community support in plenary.

The debate and decision on accelerated passage happens before the Second Stage takes place.

It is also worth noting that in the case of a Member's bill, by convention, there is normally a month between Introduction and Second Stage. This is to provide more time to fully consider the bill's proposals.

Duration of each stage

All of the stages of a bill, except Committee Stage, take place in plenary.

Plenary stages

Individual stages can be very short and be completed within minutes (e.g. an Introduction), or can take many hours (e.g. a Consideration Stage of a bill subject to many amendments). Generally speaking, there are **no restrictions on the length of time for which any Member may speak**, or the length of the debate in total, given the importance placed on legislation.

Most plenary stages of bills are completed within that day's sitting. However, the Speaker can decide that a stage should run over two (or more) consecutive sitting days if it is expected to be very long.

Committee Stage

Committee Stage is different from the other stages, in that the Bill Sponsor cannot schedule a date for its completion. The duration of Committee Stage is a matter for the committee, within the bounds of Standing Order 33.

The basic time limit for a Committee Stage is 30 working days. However, the committee can table a motion to extend the time limit, and this is very common. The extension date reflects the committee's decision on how much time it needs to scrutinise, consider and report on the bill.

The Committee Stage finishes when the time limit is reached or when the committee lays its report with the Business Office, whichever occurs first.

Second Stage

How the stage proceeds (Standing Order 32)

The Speaker will invite the Bill Sponsor to move the Second Stage. The Bill Sponsor moves the stage and sits down.

The Speaker makes some brief opening remarks before calling the Bill Sponsor to open the debate.

The Bill Sponsor opens the debate and sets out the bill's objectives.

The Speaker will invite other Members to speak to the bill.

At the end of the debate, the Speaker will call on the Bill Sponsor to respond to points raised by the other Members – this is known as the wind.

Once the Bill Sponsor has finished, the Speaker will then put the question *“That the Second Stage of the [Name] Bill be agreed”*.

Those Members present will then vote on that question – the vote will be taken on voices in the first instance. If the result is unclear, the Speaker will move to a formal division, whereby Members will record their vote in the lobbies.

The vote does not require cross-community support in order to pass, but is done on a simple majority basis.

Speeches at Second Stage

Erskine May describes the Second Stage as *“the first important stage through which the bill is required to pass; its whole principle is at issue, and is affirmed or denied by the House”*.

Members’ speeches focus on the principles of the bill and tend to cover the following:

- how the bill came about, including relevant contextual information
- why the legislation is required or otherwise
- alternative non-legislative approaches to achieving the policy goal
- rationale for supporting or opposing the principles of the bill
- the impact of the bill on particular individuals and on society more widely
- issues in the bill which require further examination at later stages.

However, this is not a definitive list of issues which the Member may wish to explore, and ultimately the parameters of the debate are a matter of judgement for the Speaker.

Useful documents for preparing for Second Stage include:

- the Official Reports (Hansard) of any oral evidence sessions held by the relevant committee with the Bill Sponsor
- the Explanatory and Financial Memorandum – particularly in relation to any non-legislative approaches which were considered, and indications of the anticipated cost implications of the bill.

Question at the end of Second Stage

At the end of the Second Stage, the Speaker puts the question *“That the Second Stage of the [Name] Bill be agreed”*. This is important as it is one of only two times a bill can fall during its passage through the Assembly.

If the bill has passed its Second Stage, the Assembly has agreed to support its principles.

Therefore, any amendments subsequently tabled to the bill will be inadmissible if they are inconsistent with this previous decision. Standing Order 38 puts it very succinctly:

“Amendments proposed to a Bill shall be relevant to the provisions of the Bill and shall not be in conflict with the principle of the Bill as agreed to at Second Stage”.

To put it another way, the subsequent two stages focus on making the bill the best possible version of itself – for example, adding or taking away content by way of amendment.

However, the House’s support for the underlying principles of what the bill is trying to do has been established by the response to the question at the end of Second Stage.

This means that amendments at a later point which seek to reverse the principles will be inadmissible.

As a result, it is very important to note that, if a Member opposes the principles of the bill, the procedurally correct course of action is to vote against it at Second Stage.

If the bill does not pass Second Stage, it is effectively stopped, and a bill which is in the same or similar terms is unlikely to be introduced within six months or until the beginning of a new mandate, whichever comes first (under Standing Order 30). However, this does not prevent bills dealing with the same policy area, but in a different way, from being introduced.

Options for a Member who supports the principles of the bill

Members who agree with the principles of the bill will vote “Aye” when asked by the Speaker if the Second Stage is to be agreed.

Options for a Member who does not support the principles of the bill

The most commonly used procedural route for a Member who opposes the principles of the bill is to vote “No” when asked by the Speaker if the Second Stage is to be agreed.

The more rarely used procedural option is to table a **reasoned amendment** before the Second Stage of a bill (under Standing Order 32(2)) to the motion *“That the Second Stage of the [Name] Bill be agreed”*.

A Member may wish to table a reasoned amendment in order to record their reasons for opposing the Second Stage of the bill. The reasoned amendment is tabled in the Business Office and must oppose some or all of the principles of the bill.

A Member should speak to a Bill Clerk if they are considering tabling a reasoned amendment, to ensure it is procedurally in order.

As with other amendments, selection of a reasoned amendment for debate is entirely at the discretion of the Speaker. This option in effect gives the House notice of the Member's opposition to the bill in advance of the debate.

When a reasoned amendment has been debated, the Speaker immediately puts the question on the reasoned amendment, and if it is agreed, the Assembly has effectively resolved not to agree to the bill proceeding any further. Consequently, there is no need for the Speaker to put the question that the Second Stage be agreed. However, if the amendment is not agreed, the Speaker will put the question that the Second Stage be agreed.

Committee Stage

How the stage proceeds

The day after the Second Stage finishes, the bill is referred to the relevant committee.

Committees of the Assembly are established to carry out detailed scrutiny of particular issues. They report their findings back to the Assembly, so that informed decisions can be taken by the Assembly in plenary on these matters.

When a committee is assigned the Committee Stage of a bill, it undertakes three key tasks:

- establishing the time required to conduct the Committee Stage
- scrutinising the bill
- reporting to the Assembly, including proposals for amendments.

Establishing the time required to conduct the Committee Stage

The first thing that happens is that the committee must consider how long the job of bill scrutiny will take. Standing Order 33(2) says: *“A statutory committee to which a Bill stands referred under this order, may, within the period of 30 working days from the date of referral, consider and take evidence on the provisions of the Bill, and report its opinion thereon to the Assembly”*.

Thirty days is a short time period and extensions are commonly sought by the committee. The challenge is that an extension (or further extensions) cannot be sought after the 30 days have elapsed, so it is important that the committee decides on a case-by-case basis how long it thinks it needs to undertake the scrutiny. This will be influenced by many factors such as the complexity of the issues being dealt with in the bill, the size of the bill, the level of public interest in the subject matter, and the degree of political consensus on the bill.

Scrutinising the bill

Once the committee has agreed its timetable for the Committee Stage, it begins the process of considering and taking evidence on the bill. This will typically involve taking written and oral evidence from the Bill Sponsor and relevant stakeholders.

The next step is the deliberation phase, whereby Members evaluate the evidence taken and form preliminary views on whether or not they are satisfied with the bill as introduced to the Assembly.

If the committee is of the view that the bill could be improved, it has a **number of options** at its disposal. The most common approach is to seek amendments to the text of the bill. In the first instance, the committee will normally seek to persuade the Bill Sponsor to bring forward amendments for its consideration. However, if the Bill Sponsor is not amenable to this course of action, the committee will ask the Bill Clerk to draft amendments.

In some cases, the committee's concerns may be dealt with through written or oral assurances (in plenary) from the Minister. In all instances, the Bill Clerk can advise on the options for the committee to achieve its desired objective.

Finally, the committee needs to come to a considered position on the bill, whether by consensus or on division. This involves the committee chairperson putting the question formally on whether the committee is content with each clause of/schedule to the bill, and on any proposed amendments. These decisions will be reported by Hansard, as well as being recorded in the minutes of proceedings of the relevant meeting.

Reporting to the Assembly

Once the committee has agreed its report, it is formally laid in the Business Office and published on the Assembly website. **It is important to remember that the target audience of the report is primarily the other Members who do not sit on the committee.** The purpose of the report is to advise those Members of the committee's position on the clauses and any proposed amendments, as well as to highlight the key issues of concern or contention. Members will use this knowledge to inform the decisions they make during the remaining stages of the bill.

Committee amendments

Any proposed amendments that are agreed by the committee, and therefore detailed in its report, must be tabled formally with the Bill Office by the committee chairperson.

Any committee Member may also table other amendments in their own name, separately from those tabled by the committee chairperson.

Role of non-committee Members during Committee Stage

Sometimes a Member who does not sit on the committee has strong views on the bill and wishes to engage on the issues prior to the amending stages. In that instance, a Member may wish to write to the committee and/or the Bill Sponsor, clearly laying out the issue.

Once the committee has published its report, the Member will consider how the issue has been dealt with, and whether the committee or the Bill Sponsor is intending to bring forward any amendments. It may be the case that the Member decides to table their own amendment to address the matter.

Amendments

What is an amendment?

An amendment is a proposal to change a bill by adding, deleting or replacing text.

Amendments are generally described as follows:

- “leave out”: removing some part of a clause or schedule
- “insert”: adding something to a clause or schedule
- “leave out and insert”: replacing something in a clause or schedule
- “insert a new clause/schedule”: adding a new clause/schedule.

It is also possible to table an amendment which seeks to modify an amendment already tabled by another Member. This is known as an amendment to an amendment.

A compendium of examples of different types of amendments from recent bills can be found at Appendix 2.

When are amendments considered by the Assembly?

Amendments are considered during the two amending stages (i.e. Consideration Stage and Further Consideration Stage) with the exception of a reasoned amendment, which is relevant to Second Stage.

Therefore, although Further Consideration Stage provides a second opportunity to amend the bill, **it is generally more prudent to table amendments for Consideration Stage**, given that they may require further refinement at Further Consideration Stage. When to table amendments is entirely a matter for the Member, but it may be helpful to seek advice from the Bill Office on the particular risks associated with deciding to delay amendments until Further Consideration Stage.

Who can table amendments?

Amendments can be tabled by Ministers, committee chairpersons and individual Members.

Ministerial amendments are typically tabled after Committee Stage is complete and the committee has published its report. This is to provide time for the Minister to be informed of the committee’s position on any amendments the Minister is proposing.

Committee amendments are tabled after Committee Stage is complete and the committee has published its report. Committee amendments are recorded as being tabled by “*Chair of the [Name] Committee*” to differentiate them from any amendments the chairperson may table in a personal capacity.

Members’ amendments are tabled by individual Members, and may be tabled any time after Second Stage. In practice, most Member amendments are tabled towards the end of

Committee Stage. However, Members are encouraged to speak to the Bill Clerk as early as possible about ideas they have regarding possible amendments.

Deadline for tabling amendments and opposition to clause/schedule stand part

The deadline for tabling amendments and opposition to clause/schedule stand part is **9.30am on the Wednesday before the scheduled debate.**

Late amendments will be listed on a Notice of Amendments and marked with an asterisk. Selection of late amendments is a matter for the Speaker and only occurs when there are exceptional or unforeseen circumstances relating to the amendment.

Bill Office support for Member and committee amendments

The Bill Office has experience and expertise in drafting effective amendments, and one of its key roles is to offer this support to Members. This support is offered to Members **in confidence.**

Drafting effective amendments is a complex process and requires two key things:

- **time** – for detailed discussions between the Member and the Bill Clerk on the policy intention, and for the Bill Clerk to draft the amendment (a few drafts may be needed to reach a final version the Member is content with)
- **engagement with the Member** – to clarify the policy intention of the amendment, and for the Member to consider different versions of the amendment.

Members are advised to contact the Bill Office in sufficient time to allow for all the necessary steps – ideally, Members should approach the Bill Office no later than **two weeks** before the amendment deadline to discuss ideas for potential amendments.

Creating high-quality, effective amendments requires the following:

- a clear understanding of the **policy intention** which is to be achieved by the amendment
- a clear understanding of the **practical outworkings** of the amendment
- an understanding of how the amendment will **coexist alongside other clauses** in the bill
- an understanding of how the amendment will **coexist with existing law** in the same area
- **clarity and precision** in terms of the **language** used to write the amendment
- **technical knowledge** to ensure the amendment is **structured properly** in terms of the sub-divisions of a clause (use of subsections, paragraphs and sub-paragraphs)
- **technical knowledge** of how to correctly **frame** an amendment, so that it is inserted in the appropriate place within the bill
- an understanding of the **admissibility criteria** considered by the Speaker in relation to selecting amendments for debate (see Appendix 4).

Therefore, not allowing sufficient time to engage in a detailed and comprehensive way with the Bill Office can result in:

- the Member tabling an amendment which does not fully achieve its desired outcome, or an amendment which has unintended consequences
- the Member having to speak to an amendment during the debate without a detailed understanding of its policy intention and consequences.

Members may choose to draft their own amendments without Bill Office input. If Members choose this option they should consult Appendix 3, which contains technical guidance on framing amendments. Members should be aware that tabling amendments they have drafted without Bill Office support runs certain risks including:

- the amendment containing **basic errors**
- the amendment having **technical defects** (such as requiring separate paving amendments for it to make sense)
- the policy within the amendment being **beyond the scope** of the bill or reversing a decision already made by the Assembly.

All of the above can potentially mean the amendment does not meet the admissibility criteria and therefore **may not be selected for debate**.

Members should be aware that tabling an amendment is a formal process, and that the Bill Office has a duty to publish amendments in a timely manner. If the Bill Clerk identifies basic errors in the amendment, they will endeavour to contact the Member to clarify the position and repair the amendment before publication. However, there may not always be time to do this, particularly if the amendment is tabled close to the deadline.

Therefore, it is in Members' interests to:

- **engage with the Bill Office before tabling an amendment**
- **avoid tabling amendments with no Bill Office input the day before/on the day of the Wednesday 9.30am deadline.**

Where are amendments published?

Details of amendments are found in three types of documents, all of which are published on the Assembly website and circulated to Members:

- Notices of Amendments
- Marshalled List of Amendments
- Grouping of Amendments List.

Notices of Amendments

Amendments tabled to a bill are published on a Notice of Amendments. Each Notice only deals with one bill – if there are amendments to another bill, they will be detailed on a separate Notice.

On days where no amendments are tabled, no Notice is published.

The timescale for publishing a Notice of Amendments depends on a number of factors. More time will be needed when a high volume of amendments has been tabled to the bill on one day, and indeed to other live bills which will require their own Notice. This often occurs on the Monday or Tuesday leading up to the amendment deadline on the Wednesday at 9.30am. It is also more prevalent towards the end of a mandate when multiple bills are scheduled for amending stages the same week in plenary.

Once an amendment has been tabled, there are a number of steps which need to be taken by the Bill Office before it can be published on a Notice, including:

- Input of the amendment onto specialist legislative software
- Checking that the point of insertion of the amendment is correct
- Proofing of the amendment to ensure what appears on the Notice matches the text submitted by the Member
- Proofing of the entire Notice to ensure that all the tabled amendments appear on it.

In addition to these steps, additional work is required when the amendment has been drafted **without** Bill Office input. This involves the Bill Clerk liaising with the Member to remedy problems with the amendment including:

- Basic errors in relation to the technical framing of the amendment – e.g. an amendment which is offered in the wrong place, or which makes incorrect cross-references to other clauses
- Lack of clarity in terms of how the amendment is drafted and its relevance to the scope of the bill
- Lack of paving amendments in order to make the main amendment workable.

The rationale for the Bill Clerk liaising with Members in these instances is to attempt to remedy errors in order **to reduce the risk of the amendment engaging some of the admissibility criteria and potentially not being selected for the amending stage. Informal sharing of draft amendments or instructions is therefore of significant benefit to Members.**

Obviously, this process of liaising with the Member takes time which then has a knock-on effect on the time required to publish a Notice.

If sufficient flexibility is not built into the process for publishing Notices, there will not be time to address relevant issues with Members and amendments may be published which do not meet a basic standard. **This may result in Members having to withdraw the original amendment (which is done publicly through a Notice), and then re-tabling the corrected amendment after engaging with the Bill Clerk.** This is in nobody's interests.

If a Member is interested in getting an amendment published as soon as practicable, submitting these to the Bill Office before 12 noon on the relevant day is advisable. This builds in additional opportunity to engage with the Member and make any final adjustments.

Issues which are likely to increase challenges with processing amendments include:

- Where significant numbers of amendments are tabled on the Monday or Tuesday leading up to the amendment deadline on the Wednesday at 9.30am,
- When a large number of amendments have been tabled at the same time to the bill
- When the amendment has been tabled without prior engagement with the Bill Clerk.

The Bill Office's aim is to support Members to table high-quality amendments, which have the maximum opportunity for being selected for debate. A central element of this is advising the Member about issues with amendments in a timely fashion. Formal submission of amendments is therefore best seen as the culmination, rather than the beginning, of the process.

Marshalled List of Amendments

After the deadline for amendments, the Speaker reviews all the amendments which have been tabled, and then selects those which will be debated during the amending stage. When selecting amendments, the Speaker uses the admissibility criteria as part of the decision-making process. Examples of inadmissible amendments can be found at Appendix 4.

The Speaker's decision on which amendments are selected for debate is final.

All amendments selected for debate are arranged in the order in which they arise in the bill, allocated a number and printed on a Marshalled List. The Marshalled List is available to Members at least one day before the day of the amending stage. Generally, this will be by Friday for amending stages scheduled for the following Monday/Tuesday.

Grouping of Amendments List

To avoid repetition, related amendments selected by the Speaker are often grouped together for debate. Such groupings are approved by the Speaker and made available to Members at the same time as the Marshalled List.

Amendments are grouped solely for the purpose of debate. The actual decisions on each clause/schedule in the bill and related amendments are always taken in the sequence in which they occur in the bill.

Opposition to clause/schedule stand part

A Member may prefer that a particular clause or schedule is not part of the bill. In such cases, the Member has the option of tabling opposition to the clause/schedule standing part of the bill. "Standing part" is a parliamentary term, and it means "being part" or "remaining part" of the bill.

When a Member gives notice that this is their intention, it is published on a Notice/Marshalled List. However, it is not technically an amendment to the bill, and therefore does not receive an amendment number on the Marshalled List. An example of a Notice listing an opposition to a clause stand part can be found at Appendix 5.

However, given its listing on the Marshalled List, the deadline for tabling opposition to clause/schedule stand part is the same as the deadline for amendments (i.e. 9.30am on the Wednesday before the scheduled debate).

Rationale for tabling opposition to clause/schedule standing part

A Member is not obliged to table notice of their intention to oppose a particular clause/schedule. Instead, they can simply respond “No” when the Speaker puts the question *“That the clause/schedule stand part of the Bill”*.

However, the inclusion of an opposition to clause/schedule stand part on the Marshalled List gives a clear indication to other Members that this Member has a view on this clause and will make a case in plenary on why it should not be part of the bill.

The opposition will be included in a Grouping List and therefore will be debated. This is also the case when no amendments have been selected for the Marshalled List.

In instances where the opposition is the first item in a group, the Member who tabled it will have additional speaking rights, in that they will both move and wind up the debate on that group.

Procedures for tabling

All emails should come from the Member’s Assembly email account or from an account that has been formally nominated to the Bill Office.

- To formally nominate a member of party staff to be able to table amendments on a Member’s behalf, please use the Amendment Authoriser Form.
- To formally nominate a member of party staff to table amendments on behalf of any Members, please use the Whips Authorisation Form.

These forms can be found on the Bill Office pages of the Members’ Portal.

Procedure for tabling amendments

All amendments must be tabled by email, before the amendment deadline, to the Bill Office public email address: billoffice@niassembly.gov.uk

Amendments may be included in the text of the email or attached to the email as Word documents. A Word template for Members' use can be found on the Bill Office pages of the Members' Portal.

Procedure for tabling opposition to clause/schedule stand part

A Member's opposition to clause/schedule stand part must be tabled by email, before the amendment deadline, to the Bill Office public email address: billoffice@niassembly.gov.uk

Notices of Opposition may be included in the text of the email or attached to the email as Word documents. A Word template for Members' use can be found on the Bill Office pages of the Members' Portal.

Procedure for indicating support for another Member's amendment/opposition stand part after a Notice of Amendments has been published

A Member may add their name to an amendment/opposition stand part tabled by another Member and published on a Notice of Amendments by emailing:
billoffice@niassembly.gov.uk

The email should clearly state the amendment or opposition to clause/schedule stand part in question (e.g. by reference to a published Notice if appropriate). If the Member has a relevant interest (see the section on Members' interests when tabling amendments below), this should be noted in the email.

The Member's name will appear as a supporter of the amendment/opposition stand part if it is selected for the Marshalled List (Notices of Amendments are not republished to show supporters). A maximum of four names can appear underneath an amendment/opposition, on a first come, first served basis.

Members should note that no additional speaking rights attach as a consequence of tabling support for an amendment/opposition. Members wishing to speak in the debate should contact the Business Office in the normal way.

The deadline for tabling support for an amendment/opposition stand part is 9.30am on the Wednesday before the scheduled debate.

Procedure for withdrawing amendments and opposition to clause/schedule stand part

A Member who has proposed an amendment or opposition to clause/schedule stand part may withdraw the amendment or opposition to clause/schedule stand part by emailing:
billoffice@niassembly.gov.uk

Members who have put down their names as supporters may not withdraw an amendment or opposition to clause/schedule stand part. They may only withdraw their support, and this

will be reflected in the Marshalled List of Amendments. Withdrawal of support should be emailed to billoffice@niassembly.gov.uk

The deadline for withdrawing an amendment/opposition, or withdrawing support for it, is 9.30am on the Wednesday before the scheduled debate.

Members' interests when tabling amendments

Under [The Code of Conduct and The Guide to the Rules relating to the Conduct of Members](#), Members are required to declare any relevant interests when:

- tabling an amendment/opposition stand part, and/or
- tabling support for another Member's amendment/opposition stand part.

The Word templates for tabling amendments/opposition stand part contain a section for Members to note any relevant interests. If a Member chooses not to use the template, their email should note they have a relevant interest.

If a Member is tabling support for another Member's amendment/opposition stand part, their email should note they have a relevant interest.

When Members declare a relevant interest when tabling an amendment/opposition stand part, the symbol "[R]" is printed after their name on the Notice and Marshalled List.

In all instances, if the relevant interest is not in the Register of Members' Interests or it is not readily apparent which of the Member's registered interests is relevant to the amendment in question, the Member must include a brief written explanation of the relevant interest. The written description of the interest will be available for inspection by Members in the Bill Office.

Consideration Stage

Standing Order 36 sets out the process for Consideration Stage.

The key purpose of Consideration Stage is for the Assembly to take decisions on whether the clauses and schedules should formally become part of the bill going forward, and whether proposed amendments to those clauses/schedules should be incorporated into the bill.

Consideration Stage is the first of **only two amending stages** within the Assembly's legislative process.

Preparations for the stage

There are four key documents which are helpful in preparing for the Consideration Stage debate in plenary:

- the committee's report
- the Marshalled List of Amendments
- the Grouping of Amendments List
- an Order of Debate.

Key documents

The **committee's report** will provide Members with the key issues which have been raised by stakeholders and scrutinised by the committee. It will also detail the committee's position on each clause and schedule, whether it supports amendments to be tabled by the Bill Sponsor, and whether it intends to table its own amendments.

The committee report will also note whether the committee reached decisions by consensus or whether it voted on certain amendments/clauses/schedules.

The **Marshalled List of Amendments** details the changes which Members wish to make to the bill. Members may wish to contact the tabling Member for the background to, and rationale for, the amendment/opposition prior to the debate.

In particular, Members may wish to explore whether there is an intended connection between an opposition and an amendment inserting a new clause tabled by the same Member.

The **Grouping of Amendments List** will detail how many group debates there will be during the stage, and the amendments which will be debated in each group.

An **Order of Debate** document is prepared by the Bill Office and circulated to Members before the stage. This document details the order in which amendments and clauses/schedules will be debated and voted upon. An example of an Order of Debate for Consideration Stage can be found at Appendix 6.

How the stage proceeds

The Speaker invites the Bill Sponsor to move the Consideration Stage. The Bill Sponsor moves the stage and sits down.

The Consideration Stage then follows a well-established pattern of debate followed by votes being taken on amendments and clauses/schedules. When there is more than one group of amendments, there can be quite a lot of toing and froing between periods of debating and periods of voting. A detailed example of this process can be found at Appendix 7.

In relation to the question on clauses/schedules, the Speaker asks whether they should “stand part”. This is a parliamentary term, and it means “being part” or “remaining part” of the bill.

After all the debates and votes on the amendments, clauses and schedules have taken place, the Speaker will put a final question: *“That the long title be agreed”*. This concludes the Consideration Stage.

The group debates – Speaker’s explanation of how the stage proceeds

After the Bill Sponsor has moved the stage, the Speaker provides the House with an explanation of how the stage will proceed. In doing so, the Speaker refers Members to the Marshalled List of Amendments and the Groupings List. The Speaker notes the theme or topic of each group and the specific amendments contained within each group.

The Speaker reminds Members that, during each group debate, Members should **address all the amendments** they wish to comment on in that group. Members are also reminded that the group debates will be interspersed with votes on the amendments and clauses/schedules at the appropriate points.

At the start of each group debate, the Speaker will draw Members’ attention to any links between amendments in that group. The links between amendments generally fall into one of three categories:

- mutually exclusive amendments – where the making of one of the amendments would effectively preclude the making of the other amendment(s)
- consequential amendment – an amendment which occurs as a result or consequence of another amendment (it cannot exist on its own)
- paving amendment – an amendment which channels or paves the way for a more substantive amendment. The substantive amendment requires the paving amendment to make it effective.

The Speaker’s view on the links between amendments will influence their decision on which of the linked amendments they will call, depending on votes already taken. **The links between amendments are a matter of judgement and within the Speaker’s sphere of**

authority. Indeed, the Speaker may, on listening to the debate, alter their view on the links between certain amendments and call amendments accordingly. Therefore, Members should not challenge the Speaker's decision on the links between amendments during the stage, as to do so is to challenge the Speaker's authority.

The group debates – speaking order

The typical speaking order of who speaks when during a group debate is as follows:

1. The mover – the Member who has tabled the first or lead amendment in the group
2. The committee chairperson – however, if the chairperson has tabled the lead amendment they are the mover and will speak first
3. Other Members who wish to speak – normally called in party strength order
4. Minister of relevant department
5. Bill Sponsor (if the bill is a Members' bill, rather than an Executive bill)
6. Winder – the same Member who opened the debate with the lead amendment – the mover – also concludes or winds the debate.

The group debates – Members' speeches

The stage is primarily aimed at putting in place the **content of the bill** (by voting in amendments, clauses and schedules). Therefore, the Speaker will expect that Members' contributions to the group debates focus on the specific amendments of the group in question, and any clauses/schedules to which opposition has been tabled.

Members may also wish to use the debates **to ask questions or seek reassurance from the Bill Sponsor** on certain clauses, both in terms of policy intention and how they will operate in practice. If the clause/schedule in question is not subject to an amendment or an opposition, a Member may still speak to that particular clause or schedule, and the Member should inform the Bill Clerk in advance of the debate that they intend to speak to it. This is referred to as "speaking to clause stand part", and the Bill Clerk can provide procedural advice on the appropriate point at which to speak during the debate.

The group debates should not be seen as an opportunity to rehearse general views on the principles of the bill – these have already been debated and agreed by the Assembly at Second Stage. Neither should the group debates be used to refer to amendments which were not selected by the Speaker for the Marshalled List. The Speaker's decision on selection is final and is not challenged.

The chairperson of the relevant committee, however, will be permitted some discretion the first time they speak during the stage. Before laying out the committee's views on the specific amendments within the group, the chairperson will normally provide the House with a brief overview of Committee Stage. This typically includes details of the stakeholders

from whom it took evidence, the key issues of contention, and any general recommendations made by the committee.

Under Standing Order 69(5), Members must **declare relevant interests**, financial or otherwise, before taking part in any proceedings of the Assembly. This includes proceedings relating to bills. When speaking during the amending stages of a bill (Consideration Stage and Further Consideration Stage), Members should make a declaration when a relevant interest arises – in other words, Members should declare the interest when speaking in the group debate to which it is relevant.

Moving amendments

At the appropriate point during the stage, the Speaker will ask the Member who tabled the amendment in question to “move” it. “Moving” is a parliamentary term which means formally bringing the amendment forward for a vote. The Speaker will do this for each and every amendment. In most instances the Member will move the amendment.

However, in some cases the Member may choose not to move the amendment after listening to the contributions of other Members, including the Bill Sponsor. **When the Member chooses not to move the amendment (or is not in their place for some reason), any other Member may do so by rising and saying “moved”. Only amendments that have been moved can be voted on.**

Amendments are called by the Speaker in the order in which they arise in the bill, and therefore if an amendment is not moved by anyone when it is called, it effectively falls and the Speaker will not return to it later in the stage. However, it may be retabled by a Member for debate at Further Consideration Stage.

Voting on amendments and clauses/schedules standing part

At various points during the stage, the Speaker will put the question on each moved amendment, clause and schedule.

For amendments, the Speaker asks whether the amendment be “made”.

For clauses and schedules, the Speaker asks whether the clause or the clause (as amended), or the schedule or the schedule (as amended) should “stand part” of the bill. The term “stand part” means form part or be part of the bill.

The questions on clauses/schedules will always be put in the positive – “*The Question is that clause X stand part of the Bill*”. There will not be a separate question on whether Members support the opposition.

Therefore, where an opposition to the clause has been tabled and debated, Members who support the opposition should signal this by voting “No” when the question is asked on the clause.

In other words, **by voting “No” the Member is voting against the clause being part of the bill.**

It is important to note that Members can choose to vote against any clause/schedule irrespective of whether an opposition to it has been tabled and debated.

Where there is a series of clauses or schedules in consecutive numerical order which have no amendments listed against them, the Speaker may seek the Assembly’s consent to group them together for the question on “stand part”. This saves the House’s time when it appears that a series of clauses or schedules will be agreed without division. If a Member wishes to vote against a clause/schedule which the Speaker is proposing to group for the question, the Member should rise in their place and say “No” when the Speaker makes that proposal.

Votes on amendments, clauses and schedules may be made on voices or through division by voting in the lobbies. The votes do not require cross-community support in order to pass, but are done on a simple majority basis.

Further Consideration Stage

Standing Order 37 sets out the process for Further Consideration Stage.

The key purpose of Further Consideration Stage is for the Assembly to take decisions on whether proposed amendments should be incorporated into the bill. The clauses and schedules of the bill are already in place as a result of the decisions taken at Consideration Stage.

Therefore, there are no votes on clauses/schedules standing part of the bill. Further Consideration Stage provides an opportunity to debate and vote on proposed amendments only.

How the stage proceeds

The Speaker invites the Bill Sponsor to move the Further Consideration Stage. The Bill Sponsor moves the stage and sits down.

The Further Consideration Stage is very similar to Consideration Stage, in that there are periods of debates interspersed with periods of voting.

However, with Further Consideration Stage, the pattern is simplified by the fact that votes are only taken on amendments, rather than on clauses and schedules as well. An example of an Order of Debate at Further Consideration Stage can be found at Appendix 8.

The group debates operate in the same way as at Consideration Stage.

After the Bill Sponsor has moved the stage, the Speaker provides the House with an explanation of how the stage will proceed. In doing so, the Speaker refers Members to the Marshalled List of Amendments, Grouping of Amendments List and any links between amendments.

Debate is limited to the amendments under consideration and therefore if there are no amendments there will be no opportunity for debate.

Amendments are moved and voted on in the same way as at Consideration Stage.

After the debates and votes on the amendments have taken place, this concludes the Further Consideration Stage.

Amendments at Further Consideration Stage: key points

It is fairly common for the Bill Sponsor or the relevant Minister (if they are not the Bill Sponsor) to table amendments which build upon committee/Member amendments which were made at Consideration Stage.

The intention is usually to refine the amended text so its legal impact is clear, or to bring the text closer in style to that used in the rest of the bill. However, it is important that Members satisfy themselves of the policy intention behind the Bill Sponsor's/Minister's amendment, and that it is in line with the policy intention of the related amendment made at Consideration Stage.

The admissibility criteria for Consideration Stage and Further Consideration Stage are exactly the same. Therefore, the types of amendments which can be tabled at Further Consideration Stage are exactly the same as for Consideration Stage. While some amendments may seek to refine or build upon amendments made at Consideration Stage, Members are not restricted to tabling these types of amendments, and may indeed table amendments on completely new issues which were not debated at Consideration Stage.

The admissibility criterion that tends to come more sharply into focus at Further Consideration Stage is the restriction on overturning previous decisions of the Assembly – which includes decisions made at both Consideration Stage and Second Stage. These considerations therefore require some thought, and Members are encouraged to engage with the Bill Office on such matters as early as possible.

Possible Exceptional Further Consideration Stage

Standing Order 37A provides for an Exceptional Further Consideration Stage.

This stage takes place only in exceptional circumstances, when the Bill Sponsor becomes aware that amendments made to the bill will bring the bill outside the legislative competence of the Assembly or mean that the bill will have a serious technical defect.

In such cases the Bill Sponsor must write to the Speaker explaining the issue. If the Assembly did not fully consider that either of these scenarios would be the result of making the amendment in question, then an Exceptional Further Consideration Stage shall be scheduled to deal with the matter.

Members should note that the scope for amendments is strictly limited to resolving the issue identified by the Bill Sponsor. Amendments addressing any other aspect of the bill will not be admissible.

Final Stage

Standing Order 39 sets out the process for Final Stage.

The key purpose of Final Stage is for the Assembly to decide whether to pass or reject the bill as a whole, following its passage through the amending stages. The bill cannot be amended further.

Final Stage is one of only two times at which a bill can fall during its passage through the Assembly, the first time being Second Stage.

In most cases, the vote on the bill does not require cross-community support in order to pass, but is done on a simple majority basis. However, bills which have particular financial impacts, as set out in section 63 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, will require cross-community support. This includes the Budget bills.

How the stage proceeds

The Speaker will invite the Bill Sponsor to move the Final Stage. The Bill Sponsor moves the stage and sits down.

The Speaker makes some brief opening remarks before calling the Bill Sponsor.

The Bill Sponsor opens the debate. The Speaker will invite other Members to speak to the bill and there is no time limit on anyone's contribution.

The debate is focused on reasons why the bill should be passed or otherwise. Members may wish to speak to the bill as a whole, or to focus on certain clauses. The debate may be quite wide-ranging and cover matters such as the impact of the bill on the community, or the need to monitor the implementation of the bill through Assembly scrutiny mechanisms at a later date.

Primarily, however, Members will make clear to the House whether they intend to support the bill or otherwise.

The Bill Sponsor will then wind up the debate, and respond to points raised by the other Members.

At the end of the debate, the Speaker will put the question on whether the bill should pass. The Assembly's decision may be made on voices or through division by voting in the lobbies.

Possible Reconsideration Stage

Standing Order 40 provides for a Reconsideration Stage.

This stage takes place only when certain bodies outside the Assembly which have a role in relation to its legislation by means of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 have raised concerns. Such bodies include the Supreme Court, the Houses of Parliament and the Secretary of State (see the following section on Royal Assent).

In such instances, the bill returns to the Assembly. However, decision-making is strictly limited to any proposed amendments to deal with the issue in question. If the amendments are agreed, a vote is taken on whether to approve the bill as amended.

Royal Assent

After Final Stage, further steps must be undertaken before a bill can receive Royal Assent and become law. The requirements are contained in the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Referral to the Attorney General and the Advocate General

Any bill passed by the Assembly is referred to the Attorney General for Northern Ireland and the Advocate General of England and Wales to come to a view on whether the bill is within the legislative competence of the Assembly. If either comes to the view that the bill may be outside legislative competence, they may refer that question to the Supreme Court within four weeks of Final Stage.

If no referral is made, the Speaker writes to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland requesting that Royal Assent be arranged.

Secretary of State consideration

The Secretary of State then considers the bill against the requirements of sections 14 and 15 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. A bill which substantially engages excepted or reserved matters must be laid before Parliament for 20 days, in which period Members of both Houses (the Commons and the Lords) may consider it, and, if so minded, give notice by means of a motion that the bill should not be submitted for Royal Assent.

Once the Secretary of State is satisfied that there are no impediments to the seeking of Royal Assent, they submit the relevant paperwork to the Palace.

Royal Assent

Letters Patent are signed by the Monarch and sent to the Royal Courts of Justice in Belfast. The Clerk to the Crown for Northern Ireland then affixes the Great Seal of Northern Ireland to the Letters Patent and subsequently notifies the Speaker.

A bill becomes an Act of the Northern Ireland Assembly at the beginning of the day on which the Speaker has been notified that the Great Seal has been affixed.

An Act (in its entirety or in phases) may come into operation immediately, or after a specified time, or after a commencement order has been made by the relevant Northern Ireland Minister. If there is no provision for a commencement order, the Act will come into operation from midnight at the start of the day of the Royal Assent.

A notice advising of Royal Assent is placed in the Belfast Gazette as soon as is practicable after that.

The Speaker announces that a bill has received Royal Assent at the next plenary sitting of the Assembly.

Appendix 1

Example cover page of a Bill

[EXAMPLE BILL]

[AS INTRODUCED]

LEGISLATIVE COMPETENCE

At Introduction the Minister of/for [Department name] had made the following statement under section 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998:

“In my view the [Bill name] would be within the legislative competence of the Northern Ireland Assembly.”

SECTION 63 RECOMMENDATION

The Minister of Finance has made the following recommendation as required under section 63 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998:

“As Minister of Finance, I recommend the [Name of Bill] to the Assembly as is required by section 63 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.”

SECRETARY OF STATE’S CONSENT

The following statement is for the purpose of section 10(3)(b) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998:

The Secretary of State has consented to the Assembly considering this Bill.

NIA Bill XX/22-27

Appendix 2

Examples of different types of amendments

Table of contents

Inserting

To insert a new clause or schedule

To insert new subsection(s), paragraph(s), sub-paragraph(s), or head(s)

To insert new word(s) or other blocks of text

Deleting

To delete a clause or schedule

To delete subsection(s), paragraph(s), sub-paragraph(s), or head(s)

To delete word(s) or other blocks of text

Substituting

To substitute a clause or schedule

To substitute new subsection(s), paragraph(s), sub-paragraph(s), or head(s)

To substitute new word(s) or other blocks of text

Amendments to long title

Amendments to amendments

Inserting

To insert a new clause or schedule

1. After clause 3 insert —

‘Title of new clause

.—(1) Text of new clause.

(2) Text of new clause.’

Example – Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill – Consideration Stage – Amendment 1

After clause 1 insert —

‘Removal of restrictions on late opening for on-sales on Sunday

1A.—(1) In Article 30 of the Licensing Order (occasional licences), in paragraph (1)(c), for paragraphs (ii) and (iii) substitute—

“(ii) on Sundays, between half past 12 in the afternoon and 1 in the morning of the day next following,”.

(2) In Article 42 of the Licensing Order (general permitted hours)—

(a) in paragraph (1), after sub-paragraph (a) and the following “and” insert—

“(aa) on Sundays, other than Christmas Day, from half past 12 in the afternoon to 11 in the evening; and”,

(b) in paragraph (1)(c), for the words from “except” to “Christmas Day” substitute “on Christmas Day,”, and

(c) in paragraph (3), for “paragraph (1)(c)” substitute “paragraph (1)(aa) and (c)”.’

2. After schedule 1 insert —

‘SCHEDULE NO

TITLE OF NEW SCHEDULE

1. Text of new schedule.

2. Text of new schedule.’

Example – Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill – Consideration Stage – Amendment 23

After schedule 3 insert –

‘SCHEDULE 4

OFFENCE OF NON-FATAL STRANGULATION OR ASPHYXIATION: CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 (NI 12)

1. In Article 53A (qualifying offences for particular investigative purposes), in paragraph (2)—

(a) the second of the two sub-paragraphs numbered as (t) is renumbered as (u),

(b) after the second of those two sub-paragraphs insert—

“(v) an offence under section 19B of the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (non-fatal strangulation or asphyxiation).”’

To insert new subsection(s), paragraph(s), sub-paragraph(s), or head(s)

3. Clause 2, Page 3, Line 4, at end insert –

‘(5) Text of new subsection which refers to clause (*Title of new clause*) inserted by amendment 1 above.’

Example – Adoption and Children Bill – Consideration Stage – Amendment 17

Clause 130, Page 84, Line 26

At end insert –

‘(8) In Article 183 of the Children Order (regulations and orders), after paragraph (2) insert—
“(2A) Regulations under Article 35D(1A) or Article 45(4A) must not be made unless a draft of the regulations has been laid before, and approved by resolution of, the Assembly.”.’

4. Clause 2, Page 3, Line 20, at end insert –

‘() text of new paragraph;

() text of second new paragraph which refers to schedule (*Title of new schedule*) inserted by amendment 2;’

Example – Autism (Amendment) Bill – Consideration Stage – Amendment 2

Clause 2, Page 2, Line 7

At end insert –

‘(ca) physical health,’

5. Schedule 3, Page 37, Line 4, at end insert –

‘1A. Text of new paragraph.

1B. Text of second new paragraph referring to paragraph 1A.’

Example – Private Tenancies Bill – Consideration Stage – Amendment 43

Schedule 3, Page 19, Line 12

At end insert –

‘(za) in paragraph (2), for “paragraph (3)” substitute “paragraphs (3) and (3A)”;

To insert new word(s) or other blocks of text

6. Clause 3, Page 10, Line 25, after ‘word’ insert ‘word(s)’

Example – Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill – Consideration Stage – Amendment 3

Clause 9, Page 6, Line 6

After ‘if’ insert ‘(any or all)’

Example – Adoption and Children Bill – Consideration Stage – Amendment 18

Clause 132, Page 85, Line 4

At beginning insert ‘Independent’

7. Clause 3, Page 10, Line 25, at end insert ‘word(s)

() Text of a new subsection/paragraph/sub-paragraph/head.’

Example – Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill – Consideration Stage – Amendment 5

Clause 9, Page 6, Line 11

At end insert

‘, or

(c) both of these apply—

(i) a reasonable person would consider the course of behaviour, or an incident of behaviour which A directed at B as part of the course of behaviour, to be likely to adversely affect the child (including likely to cause the child to suffer fear, alarm or distress), and

(ii) the child usually resides with A or B (or with A and B).'

Example – Climate Change Bill – Consideration Stage – Amendment 39

Clause 4, Page 6, Line 10

After second 'target' insert 'or if the target is not likely to be met, the reasons for such likelihood'

Deleting

To delete a clause or schedule

8. The Minister of [] gives notice of his/her intention to oppose the question that clause 4 stand part of the Bill.

Example – Hospital Parking Charges Bill – Consideration Stage – Clause 1

The Minister of Health gives notice of his intention to oppose the question that clause 1 stand part of the Bill.

Example – Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill – Consideration Stage – Clause 4

The Member listed below gives notice of his intention to oppose the question that clause 4 stand part of the Bill.

9. The Minister of [] gives notice of his/her intention to oppose the question that schedule 4 stand part of the Bill.

To delete subsection(s), paragraph(s), sub-paragraph(s), or head(s)

10. Clause 2, Page 4, Line 6, leave out subsection (2)

Example – Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill – Further Consideration Stage – Amendment 24

Clause 18, Page 23, Line 41

Leave out subsections (2) and (3)

11. Clause 3, Page 5, Line 17, leave out paragraphs (a) to (c)

Example – Integrated Education Bill – Consideration Stage – Amendment 40

Clause 8, Page 3, Line 35

Leave out paragraph (f)

12. Schedule 3, Page 15, Line 16, leave out paragraph 6

Example – Adoption and Children Bill – Consideration Stage – Amendment 47

Schedule 2, Page 103, Line 36

Leave out paragraph 4

Example – Private Tenancies Bill – Consideration Stage – Amendment 25

Schedule 2, Page 16, Line 10

Leave out sub-paragraph (a)

To delete word(s) or other blocks of text

13. Clause 5, Page 4, Line 25, leave out ‘word(s)’

Example – Adoption and Children Bill – Consideration Stage – Amendment 56

Schedule 4, Page 133, Line 38

Leave out ‘or the Board’

14. Clause 5, Page 5, Line 4, leave out second ‘word’

15. Clause 5, Page 5, Line 6, leave out from ‘word’ to ‘word’

Example – Climate Change (No. 2) Bill – Further Consideration Stage – Amendment 24

Clause 22, Page 8, Line 15

Leave out from second ‘and’ to ‘Assembly’ on line 16

16. Clause 5, Page 5, Line 7, leave out from ‘word’ to end of line 8

Example – Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill – Further Consideration Stage – Amendment 28

Clause 8, Page 3, Line 40

Leave out from second 'or' to end of line 41

17. Clause 5, Page 5, Line 8, leave out from 'word' to 'word' in line 12

Example – Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Bill – Consideration Stage – Amendment 25

Clause 1, Page 4, Line 3

Leave out from '(including' to 'enactments)' in line 4

18. Clause 5, Page 5, Line 9, leave out from beginning to 'word' in line 10

Example – Local Government (Best Value) Bill – Amendment 3

Clause 8, Page 5, Line 16

Leave out from beginning to end of line 17

19. Clause 5, Page 5, leave out lines 15 to 32

Example – Executive Committee (Functions) Bill – Further Consideration Stage – Amendment 3

Clause 1, Page 2

Leave out lines 3 to 5

Substituting

To substitute a clause or schedule

20. Leave out clause 2 and insert –

‘Title of new clause

2—(1) Text of new clause.

(2) Text of new clause.’

Example – Climate Change (No. 2) Bill – Further Consideration Stage – Amendment 62

Leave out clause 35 and insert –

‘Proposals and policies: carbon leakage

35.—(1) In deciding its proposals and policies for the purposes of section 28, each Northern Ireland department must take into account—

(a) the risk of that implementation of those proposals and policies will result in carbon leakage, and

(b) the desirability of eliminating or minimising that risk.

(2) “Carbon leakage” means the transfer of the production of goods (including agricultural goods) and the provision of services to countries without comparable climate change policies.

(3) In subsection (2), “comparable climate change policies” are policies that are intended to achieve reductions in greenhouse gas emissions for the country in question which are equivalent to the targets set out in sections 1, 3 and 4, by the years set out in those sections.’

21. Leave out schedule 3 and insert –

‘Schedule 3

TITLE OF SCHEDULE

1. Text of new schedule.

2. Text of new schedule.’

To substitute new subsection(s), paragraph(s), sub-paragraph(s), or head(s)

22. Clause 2, Page 3, Line 4, leave out subsection (5) and insert –

‘(5) Text of new subsection.’

Example – Adoption and Children Bill – Further Consideration Stage – Amendment 5

Clause 158, Page 98, Line 1

Leave out subsection (3) and (4) and insert –

‘(3) This section expires at the end of the period of ten years beginning with the date on which this Act is passed, but this is subject to subsection (4).

(4) Subsection (3) does not have effect unless all of the provisions of Parts 1 and 2 have been commenced and included in a report under this section.’

23. Clause 2, Page 3, Line 20, leave out paragraph (a) and insert –

‘() text of new paragraph;

() text of second new paragraph;’

Example – Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Amendment) Bill – Consideration Stage – Amendment 1

Clause 9, Page 4, Line 5

Leave out paragraph (a) and insert –

‘(a) in paragraph (5) (price limit on tickets) for “£1” substitute “£100”.’

24. Schedule 3, Page 37, Line 4, leave out paragraph 1 and insert –

‘1. Text of new paragraph referring to paragraph 1A.

1A. Text of second new paragraph referring to paragraph 1.’

Example – Taxis Bill – Amendment 73

Schedule 3, Page 40, Line 9

Leave out ‘paragraph 16(2)’ and insert ‘paragraphs 16(2) and 21A(2)’

To substitute new word(s) or other blocks of text

25. Clause 3, Page 10, Line 25, leave out ‘word(s)’ and insert ‘word(s)’

Example – Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill – Consideration Stage – Amendment 16

Clause 25, Page 13, Line 28

Leave out ‘may’ and insert ‘must’

Example – Protection from Stalking Bill – Consideration Stage – Amendment 8

Clause 19, Page 12, Line 22

Leave out first ‘section’ and insert ‘sections 17A to’

26. Clause 5, Page 5, Line 6, leave out from ‘word’ to ‘word’ and insert ‘word(s)’

Example – Integrated Education Bill – Further Consideration Stage – Amendment 19

Clause 11, Page 6, Line 37

Leave out from ‘initial’ to ‘teachers’ on line 38 and insert ‘training appropriate to their role for all’

27. Clause 5, Page 5, Line 7, leave out from ‘word’ to end of line 8 and insert ‘word(s)’

Example – Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill – Consideration Stage – Amendment 19

Clause 25, Page 13, Line 34

Leave out from ‘may’ to end of line 35 and insert –

‘must—

(a) keep any guidance issued under this section under review, and

(b) revise any guidance issued under this section if it considers revision to be necessary in light of review.’

28. Clause 5, Page 5, Line 8, leave out from ‘word’ to ‘word’ in line 12 and insert ‘word(s)’

Example – Private Tenancies (Coronavirus Modifications) Bill – Consideration Stage – Amendment 1

Clause 1, Page 1, Line 5

Leave out from ‘12’ to ‘weeks’ on line 6 and insert ‘1 year’

29. Clause 5, Page 5, Line 9, leave out from beginning to ‘word’ in line 10 and insert ‘word(s)’

30. Clause 5, Page 5, leave out lines 15 to 32 and insert 'word(s)'

Example – Private Tenancies Bill – Consideration Stage – Amendment 20

Clause 11, Page 11

Leave out lines 30 to 33 and insert –

'(4) The department may by regulations amend the length of notice to quit outlined in Paragraph (2) by draft affirmative procedure.'

31. Clause 5, Page 5, Line 20, leave out from 'word' to end of line 4 on page 6 and insert 'word(s)'

Example – Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill – Further Consideration Stage – Amendment 23

Clause 18, Page 23, Line 39

Leave out from 'other' to end of line 40 and insert 'associated matters as the Department considers appropriate as to criminal law or procedure'

32. Clause 5, Page 5, Line 24, leave out from beginning to 'word' on page 6, line 12 and insert 'words—

() new subsection/ paragraph/ sub-paragraph/ head.'

Amendments to long title

33. Example – Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill – Further Consideration Stage – Amendment 17

Long Title

Leave out from 'and prevent' to end and insert 'regulate the conduct of civil proceedings in particular circumstances; and make provision for connected purposes.'

34. Example – Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill – Consideration Stage – Amendment 24

Long Title

Leave out ‘rules applying with respect to certain sexual or violent offences prevention orders’ and insert ‘certain rules of law and procedure for the purpose of protecting people from harm’

35. Example – Housing (Amendment) Bill – Consideration Stage – Amendment 3

Long Title

After ‘associations;’ insert ‘right to buy schemes;’

Amendments to amendments

36. Example – Adoption and Children Bill – Notice of Amendments 9 February 2022

An amendment to the amendment inserting a new clause entitled ‘Meaning of “relevant document”’, tabled by the Minister of Health on 7 February 2022

New Clause 143B(3)(c)

After women insert-

‘, girls’

Appendix 3

Guidance on the technical framing of amendments to bills

Introduction

The Bill Office has experience and expertise in drafting effective amendments, and one of its key roles is to offer this support to Members. However, if Members choose to draft their own amendments without Bill Office input, they should pay particular attention to this guidance. Amendments which are technically deficient may be inadmissible.

When submitting an amendment to a bill, Members must observe the rules and conventions set out in this guidance to ensure that the full intent of their amendment is clearly understood. The wording provided should be as it would appear in a bill.

Examples of different types of amendments are referred to in this guidance and can be found in Appendix 2. These examples demonstrate how the technical framing rules work in practice.

The main technical and formatting rules concerning amendments to bills are set out below.

Terminology

1. An amendment that seeks to add new text must use the term **‘insert’** not ‘add’, ‘substitute’ etc.
2. An amendment to exclude text must use the term **‘leave out’** rather than ‘omit’ or ‘delete’ etc.

Form of an amendment

3. Each amendment should propose only one change to the text of the bill.
4. All amendments must refer to the page and line number of the relevant clause or schedule, save where the amendment is to insert a new clause or schedule.
5. When an amendment seeks to insert a new clause or schedule, the title of the new clause or schedule must also be submitted.
6. An amendment should take the form of –
 - (a) inserting new text into the bill
 - (b) leaving existing text out of the bill, or

(c) leaving out existing text and inserting new text in its place – a combination of (a) and (b). This is referred to as substituting in the examples in Appendix 2.

7. An amendment should not insert, leave out, or substitute more than one clause or schedule.

Quotation Marks

8. In all amendments, words in the bill referred to and text to be inserted should be framed by **single** quotation marks.

Numbering

9. Amendments to insert or substitute a block of text in the bill must set out that block of text in the form in which it would appear in the bill, except that –
 - (a) a block of text which, if part of the bill, would have a number should either be unnumbered or numbered so as not to require renumbering of existing provisions – see examples 4, 5, 23 and 24. Note that if a new provision is referred to in that or any other amendment it must have a number – see examples 5 and 24
 - (b) amendments that refer to a new clause or schedule to be inserted by another amendment should refer to that clause or schedule by its title – see examples 3 and 4.
10. Amendments to leave out a whole clause, subsection, paragraph, sub-paragraph or head should do so by reference to its number – see examples 8 to 12 and 20 to 24.

Amendments to blocks of text

11. Amendments to leave out words should do so by reference to those words or, where that would make the amendment unreasonably long, to the first and last of those words – see examples 13 to 15, 17, 25, 26 and 28.
12. In an amendment to leave out from ‘word’ to ‘word’, both references are taken as **inclusive** so that both words are removed from the text of the bill. This follows normal drafting practice as set out in section 47(4) of the Interpretation Act (Northern Ireland) 1954.
13. Amendments to leave out a larger defined block of text should be by reference to lines and, if necessary, to particular words – see examples 16, 18, 19 and 29 to 32 below.

14. If an amendment is framed by reference to a word which occurs more than once in a line then the word needs to be preceded by “first”, “second”, etc. – see example 14.

Amendments to amendments

15. Corresponding rules apply to amendments to amendments, which should be in the form –
As an amendment to amendment [*here identify the amendment by reference to the proposer and the relevant clause, page and line*] ... (see example at paragraph 36 in Appendix 2)

Parts of a bill that may be amended

16. As a general rule any part of a bill that has legislative effect may be amended. Therefore, every clause and schedule in a bill may be amended, as may the long title (though only in consequence of amendments made elsewhere in the bill). The short title may be amended where it is cited in the bill itself (generally in the final clause).

The parts of a bill that may not normally be amended are –

- (a) Part and Chapter titles
- (b) italic cross headings
- (c) clause or schedule titles
- (d) any of the numbers assigned to any of the component parts of the bill (but cross-references in the text of a bill may be amended)
- (e) punctuation, and
- (f) the enacting words which appear immediately after the long title.

These elements of a bill (except (f)) are amended administratively to reflect what the Assembly has decided in relation to the legislative text. So, for example, if the Assembly decides to insert a new clause at the beginning of a bill, all subsequent clauses will be renumbered and all cross references will be changed administratively when the bill is next republished.

Appendix 4

Admissibility of amendments

1. Amendments may be made to every part of the substantive text of a bill. Amendments to the short and long titles are also admissible where amendments have been made to the bill which render them necessary. New clauses and schedules may be added to a bill.
2. There are a number of other rules on the admissibility of amendments. The key requirements are set out in Standing Order 38:
“Amendments proposed to a Bill shall be relevant to the provisions of the Bill, and shall not be in conflict with the principle of the Bill as agreed to at Second Stage.”
3. The following are examples of amendments which are inadmissible:
 - (a) an amendment which is irrelevant to the subject matter or beyond the scope of the bill (i.e. it must be relevant to the provisions of the bill as agreed at Second Stage)
 - (b) an amendment which is irrelevant to the subject matter or beyond the scope of the clause under consideration
 - (c) an amendment which is governed by, or dependent upon, amendment(s) already negated by the Assembly
 - (d) an amendment which is inconsistent with, or contrary to, the bill as so far agreed, or any previous decisions of the Assembly in respect of the bill
 - (e) an amendment which refers to, or is not intelligible without, paving or subsequent amendment(s), new clauses, schedules etc., of which notice has not been given, or which is otherwise incomplete
 - (f) an amendment which reverses the principles of the bill as agreed at Second Stage, or amounts to a direct negative of the clause or of the bill
 - (g) an amendment to leave out a clause, or the whole substance, or the only effective words, of the clause or the words upon which the rest of the clause is dependent, or to insert words at the beginning of the clause in order to propose an alternative scheme. The proper course of action in these cases is to **vote against the question “That the clause/schedule stand part of the Bill”** and, if necessary, to propose a new clause in its place. Part (b) of the Bill

Amendment Form should be used to indicate an intention to oppose the question that a clause or schedule stand part of the bill.

Note: There is no 'stand part' question on clauses or schedules at Further Consideration Stage but usually an amendment to 'leave out' a clause or schedule would be inadmissible as it would seek to reverse a decision taken by the House. If, however, it is necessary to leave out a clause or schedule as a consequence of an amendment that has already been made, an amendment seeking to do so will be admissible.

- (h) an amendment which would make the relevant clause unintelligible or grossly ungrammatical
- (i) an amendment which is vague, trifling or tendered in a spirit of mockery
- (j) an amendment which is offered in the wrong place in the bill
- (k) an amendment which seeks to attach unreasonable conditions to the bill
- (l) an amendment to the enacting words, the marginal notes or titles of the clauses and schedules or the headings of parts of a bill. When the Assembly makes amendments to a bill, the Bill Office makes necessary editorial changes to correct titles and the sequencing and numbering of clauses and schedules as they should appear in the bill
- (m) an amendment to a finance bill which creates a charge(s) not sanctioned under section 63 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Appendix 5

Example of a Notice listing an opposition to a clause stand part



Northern Ireland Assembly

Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill

Notice of Amendments tabled on 7 February 2022 for Consideration Stage

Clause 1, Page 1, Line 2

Leave out 'requires the Department of Health to establish' and insert 'establishes'

Ms Clare Bailey

Clause 5

The Member listed below gives notice of her intention to oppose the question that clause 5 stand part of the Bill.

Ms Clare Bailey

Appendix 6

Example of an Order of Debate at Consideration Stage

Protection from Stalking Bill – Order of Debate at Consideration Stage

	Speaker Opening – Explanation of Group Moving of the Bill		
	Votes: Amendments	Votes: Clauses/Schedules	Group debate
1		Clause 1–16 stand part	
2			<u>Single group debate</u> Moved: Minister of Justice Committee chairperson Other Members who wish to speak Wind: Minister of Justice
3	Am 1		
4	Am 2		
5	Am 3		
6		Clause 17 (as amended) stand part	
7	Am 4 – New clause		
8	Am 5 – New clause		
9	Am 6 – New clause		
10	Am 7 (Am to Am 6)		
11		Clause 18 stand part	
12	Am 8		
13		Clause 19 (as amended) stand part	
14		Clause 20 stand part	
15		Long Title	

NB where *(as amended)* is included, it indicates that this clause may potentially be amended depending on the decision of the House on the relevant amendment(s).

Appendix 7

Example of the process at Consideration Stage

Bill and amendments

This example relates to a bill with, say, 10 clauses and one schedule.

Let us assume that five amendments have been tabled to the bill and that all have been selected by the Speaker. They are as follows:

- **Amendment 1** to clause 2 – proposes a change in the name of the agency to be set up by the bill.
- **Amendment 2** to clause 3 – proposes that an annual report provided for in the bill should be laid in the Assembly.
- **Amendment 3** to clause 6 – relates to making regulations under the bill to be subject to approval by the Assembly under the affirmatory procedure.
- **Amendment 4** to clause 8 – relates to the style of the annual report provided for in the bill.
- **Amendment 5** to clause 10 – proposes a change in the name of the agency to be set up by the bill.

Grouping of amendments

Amendments are grouped where the issues have a clear link and to avoid repetition in debate. So let us assume that the Speaker has decided in this case to have three Groups of Amendments for debate as follows:

Group 1 – Name of agency **amendments**
and 5

Group 2 – Annual reports **amendments 2**
and 4

Group 3 – Regulations **amendment 3**

The running order for the Consideration Stage based on this example is set out below.

Running order of debate and voting on amendments, clauses, schedules and long title

Based on the example of a bill set out above and the Speaker's selection and grouping of amendments as outlined above, the running order for the debate and votes should be along the following lines.

- The Speaker calls the Minister to move the Consideration Stage.
- The Minister says, “I beg to move that the Consideration Stage of the [Name] Bill be now taken.”
- No amendments have been tabled to clause 1, so the question is put by the Speaker ***“That clause 1 stand part of the Bill”*** (and Members agree/disagree on collection of voices or, if necessary, on a division).*
- An amendment has been tabled to clause 2 (amendment 1) and it is grouped with amendment 5 (to clause 10) so the Minister or Member who tabled the “lead” amendment is called to move it. Once it has been moved, a debate ensues on all amendments in the group.

Debate on group 1 (amendments 1 and 5)

- Mover speaks to group of amendments, followed by other Members
- Committee chairperson gets precedence in speaking order (called after mover, unless the chair is the mover)
- If the Minister is not the mover, they are the penultimate speaker
- Minister/Member moving also winds debate, addressing points raised.

- Once debate finishes, the Speaker puts the question ***“That amendment 1 be made”***. Note this is the only amendment voted on at this juncture. The question on the other amendment in the group (amendment 5) will not be put until the clause to which it relates is reached (i.e. clause 10).
- Presuming that amendment 1 is made, the next question put is ***“That clause 2, as amended, stand part of the Bill”***.
- There is an amendment to clause 3 (amendment 2) which is grouped with amendment 4, so the Minister or Member who tabled the “lead” amendment (amendment 2) is called to move it. Once it has been moved, a debate ensues on **all** amendments in the group.

Debate on group 2 (amendments 2 and 4)

- Mover speaks to group of amendments, followed by other Members
- Committee chairperson gets precedence in speaking order (called after mover, unless the chair is the mover)
- If the Minister is not the mover, they are the penultimate speaker
- Minister/Member moving also winds debate, addressing points raised.

- Once debate finishes, the Speaker puts the question ***“That amendment 2 be made”***. Note this is the only amendment voted on at this juncture. The question on the other amendment in the group (amendment 4) will not be put until the clause to which it relates is reached (i.e. clause 8).
- Presuming that amendment 2 is made, the next question put is ***“That clause 3, as amended, stand part of the Bill”***.
- No amendments have been tabled to clauses 4 and 5 so the Speaker will ask the Assembly for leave to group them for the question on stand part. If no one dissents, the question is put ***“That clauses 4 and 5 stand part of the Bill”***.
- There is an amendment to clause 6 (amendment 3) which is a stand-alone amendment. The Speaker calls the Minister or Member who tabled the amendment to move it and debate ensues.

Debate on group 3 (amendment 3)

- Mover speaks to the amendment followed by other Members.
- Committee chairperson gets precedence in speaking order (called after mover, unless the chair is the mover).
- If the Minister is not the mover, they are the penultimate speaker.
- Minister/Member moving also winds debate, addressing points raised.

- Once the debate finishes, the Speaker puts the question ***“That amendment 3 be made”***. Let us presume that amendment 3 is **rejected** by the Assembly – the next question put is ***“That clause 6 stand part of the Bill”*** (alternatively, if the amendment is made, the question put is ***“That clause 6, as amended, stand part of the Bill”***).
- No amendments have been tabled to clause 7, so the question is put ***“That clause 7 stand part of the Bill”***.
- There is an amendment to clause 8 (amendment 4) but it has already been debated earlier (i.e. in the second group of amendments for debate) along with amendment 2. There can therefore be no further debate on it. The Speaker calls the Minister or Member who tabled it to move it formally and the Minister/Member simply says “moved”. The Speaker then puts the question ***“That amendment 4 be made”***.
- Presuming that Amendment 4 is made the next question is put ***“That clause 8, as amended, stand part of the Bill”***.
- No amendments have been tabled to clause 9 so the question is put ***“That clause 9 stand part of the Bill”***.
- There is an amendment to clause 10 (amendment 5) but it has already been debated earlier (i.e. in the first group of amendments for debate) along with amendment 1. There can therefore be no further debate on it. The Speaker calls the Minister or

Member who tabled it to move it formally and the Minister/Member simply says “moved”. The Speaker then puts the question ***“That amendment 5 be made”***.

- Presuming that amendment 5 is made, the next question is put ***“That clause 10, as amended, stand part of the Bill”***.
- No amendments have been made to the schedule, so the question is put ***“That the schedule stand part of the Bill”***.
- No amendments have been made to the long title, so the question is put ***“That the long title be agreed”***.
- The Speaker announces that that concludes the Consideration Stage of the bill and that the bill stands referred to the Speaker (pending a date for the Further Consideration Stage).

NOTE: as can be seen from the example above, the Assembly’s decisions on amendments, or on clauses/schedules stand part, will normally be taken in strict numerical sequence, but those decisions may be interspersed by mini-debates on groups of amendments.

*At any point where a question is put by the Speaker, the Assembly’s decision is taken initially by a collection of voices (“Ayes” and “Noes”). Where the decision is unclear or the Speaker’s opinion is challenged the Assembly will divide formally and Members will vote in the lobbies.

Appendix 8

Example of an Order of Debate at Further Consideration Stage

Adoption and Children Bill – Order of Debate for Further Consideration Stage

Speaker Opening – Explanation of Group Moving of the Bill	
Votes: Amendments	Group debate
	<u>Single Group debate</u> Moved: Minister of Health Committee chairperson Other Members who wish to speak Wind: Minister of Health
Amendment 1	
Amendment 2	
Amendment 3	
Amendment 4	
Amendment 5	