



Acts of Parliament, or Acts of the Scottish Parliament, also called statutes, originate in the Westminster or Holyrood Parliaments as Bills. Once a Bill has passed through the various Parliamentary stages it may receive Royal Assent and become an Act. Some UK Acts still apply to Scotland, while all Acts of the Scottish Parliament apply to Scotland only.

From the beginning of 1999 all Acts published by the Westminster and Scottish Parliament contain Explanatory Notes. The purpose of these Explanatory Notes is to make the Act of Parliament accessible to readers who are not legally qualified and who have no specialised knowledge of the matters dealt with. They are intended to allow the reader to grasp what the Act sets out to achieve and place its effect in context.

## Citations

Each Act is given a running number for the year in which it is passed, known as the Chapter Number for UK Acts or the ASP number for Acts of the Scottish Parliament. Acts are referred to by their short title and year

e.g. The Companies Act 1989 c. 40

The Ethical Standards in Public Life (Scotland) Act 2000 asp 7

For UK Acts before 1962, the year may not be given but instead the regnal year

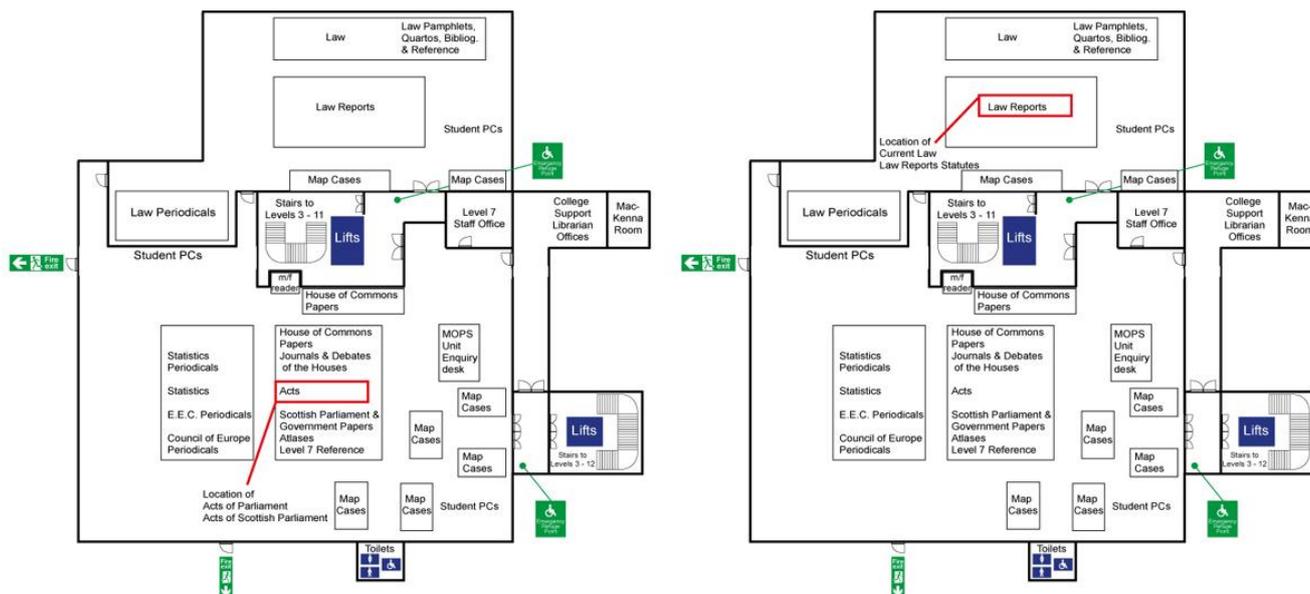
e.g.: *3 & 4 Eliz. c.18* - refers to the 18th statute enacted in the parliamentary session starting in the 3rd year and finishing in the 4th year of the reign of Elizabeth II

## Parts of statutes

Each statute is divided into sections and these are often further divided into sub-sections. In addition some statutes have schedules at the end and these may be further divided into paragraphs. For example:

- 1983 c.5 s.14      section 14 of chapter 5 of 1983
- ss.4, 6              sections 4 and 6
- s.41 (3)            section 41 sub-section 3
- Sch.2 para 4      schedule 2, paragraph 4

## Locating Acts of Parliament in the university library



The main collection of Acts of both the UK and Scottish Parliaments until 2010 and 2011 respectively, are on Level 7 in the Maps, Official Publications and Statistics Unit. There are a further two sets of Statutes shelved in the Law Reports sequence. The first is “Law Reports Statutes” and is almost identical to the set shelved in Parliamentary Papers. The second is the Current Law set, which differs slightly to the others due to the fact that the margins are annotated with notes. These copies are **not** amended when an Act is changed or repealed.

Westminster acts (from 1988 onwards), and Acts of the Scottish Parliament (from 1999 onwards), are available online in their original and un-amended form from <http://www.legislation.gov.uk>

Acts are arranged by year and chapter number (i.e. chronologically and then numerically). At the end of the last bound volume for each year there is an alphabetical index.

### Indexes to the Statutes

- **Chronological Table of the Statutes:** Includes both repealed and in force Statutes, in date order. There is a pre-current edition shelved in the Law Reports sequence. At the rear of the second volume there is a separate section which lists the pre-Union Acts of the Parliament of Scotland.
- **Index to the Statutes:** contains comprehensive cross-referencing by subject. Each section starts with a chronological list of the Acts in force on that subject followed by a detailed breakdown of the subject with reference to the appropriate Acts. This indexes Acts dating 1235 to 1990 and is therefore extremely out of date, but is still highly useful when starting research on a particular subject.
- **Current Law Statute Citator:** this set comprises several volumes dating from 1947 until present. They are arranged in chronological order and provide information such as the date of Royal Assent and whether it has been repealed or amended since 1947. In the volumes covering 1972 onwards you will also find an alphabetical table of the statutes at the front, which is useful if you just need to find out the year and chapter number of an Act. The Service File updates the bound citators.

## Is it in force?

An Act is not necessarily in force even if it has received Royal Assent. However, if the text of an Act does not specify an actual commencement date or methodology for bringing the Act into force it can be assumed that it will be the date of Royal Assent.

Acts that do not come into force, in their entirety, on the date of Royal Assent will contain a section dealing with 'commencement'. This can be found at the end of the sections but before the schedules. This section may specify a date on which the Act, or parts of it, will come into force. Alternatively it may state that all, or part, of the Act will be entered into force by statutory instrument (SI), on a day to be appointed by the Minister concerned. In the latter case this section is the power by which the Minister can make such orders and the citation of this power can be used to trace these orders. Statutory Instruments are secondary legislation. They can provide details of: how an Act will operate; include rules, regulations and orders; bring sections of an Act into force and make changes or amendments to an existing Act. For more information on Statutory Instruments see the separate guide.

To find whether an Act, or a section of it, has come into force and when:

1. Look at the **text of the Act** as this may give you the answer. If all or part of the Act is to be brought into force by a SI make a note of the section number stating this and use the **Current Law Statute Citators** to find SIs issued under this section.
2. Look in Westlaw (see below), where the date of commencement will be at the head of the section or schedule.
3. **Is it in force?** (ask at the Level 7 Enquiries Desk) is a publication that gives commencement information for statutes passed from 1960 onwards. It also has a listing of Legislation Not Yet in Force. This is issued annually and then updated in the service binder of the **Stair Memorial Encyclopaedia**.
4. Go to the **Current Law Service binder** (Law Reports SC344) which has a '**Legislation Not Yet in Force**' section which covers all Acts passed since 1949 which are not yet in force, either wholly or in part and is up to date. If your section is listed in here then it is not yet in force
5. If the Act is too old to be included in any or all of the above use the **Current Law Statute Citor** (Law Reports SC344). Look in each volume of the Citor since the Act was published to ensure your information is as current as possible. This information can be updated by using the Citor section in the loose-leaf service binder of Current Law. Commencement orders (Statutory Instruments bringing part or all of an Act into force) are listed under the title of the Act. Acts of the Parliament of Scotland are covered in separate sequences at the beginning of each volume.

## Amendments and Repeals

To find out whether an Act or a section of an Act has been amended or repealed:

1. Look in Westlaw (see below), where there will be a symbol to the left of each section or schedule detailing the status.
2. Check the relevant parts of the **Current Law Statute Citor**. Amendments and repeals are noted under each section number, using abbreviations such as *r.* for repealed and *am.* for amended. Look in each volume of the Citor since the Act was published to ensure your information is as current as possible. This information can be updated by using the Citor section in the loose-leaf service binder of Current Law. Acts of the Scottish Parliament are covered by this service.
3. Alternatively, look up the Act in the Chronological table of the statutes. If the entry is in *italics* the whole Act has been *repealed*. If it is in **bold** type it is **wholly or partly in force**, details will

be given of any repeals or amendments. Acts of the Parliament of Scotland (pre-Union) are given in a separate sequence at the end of volume two.

## Finding Acts of Parliament on



24 hour customer support 0800 028 2200, +44 207 449 1110, [customer.service@westlaw.co.uk](mailto:customer.service@westlaw.co.uk) THOMSON REUTERS  
We want to hear your [feedback](#)

Westlaw includes a number of legislation databases containing the full text of all UK and Scottish statutes and statutory instruments in force, which you can search by keyword, name of Act etc.

Select the Legislation tab to go to the search page. Here you can search directly for legislation, or browse legislation by country, then year and title below.

To search for the status as a specific date in time (from 1992 onwards), select Advanced Search.

It also contains a **Legislation Locator** which is an index to legislation, in which you can find:

- links to the full text of the legislation (section by section)
- links to other legislation applying or referring to the Act
- links to cases citing the legislation
- a list of secondary sources (articles in journals) with links if they are on the database
- **A-Z Statutes list** which you can browse.

Westlaw also contains historic databases for UK law in force, statutes and statutory instruments, which allow you to look at the legislation as it was at a certain date. This goes back to 1992.

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