

# Referendum on the voting system for UK Parliamentary elections

Counting Officers' expenses  
FAQ document

Version 6

Updated 12 December 2011

## Counting Officers' expenses FAQ's

Subject	Question	Advice	Cost head (where applicable)
ECU contact details	What are ECU's contact details?	<p>If you have any questions about the preparation or presentation of your claim, ECU is happy to provide help and assistance. They can be contacted at <a href="mailto:ecu@communities.gsi.gov.uk">ecu@communities.gsi.gov.uk</a>, tel. 030 344 43912 or by post to :</p> <p>Election Claims Unit, Hempstead House, 2 Selden Hill, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP2 4XN.</p>	
Claim deadline	When do I need to submit my claim by?	<p>The deadline for submission of claims is 8 months from the date of the referendum, which is Thursday 5 January 2012.</p> <p>In order to meet the deadline Counting Officers will need to submit both an electronic copy of the claim forms to ECU, and submit separately all supporting hard copy vouchers and invoices. These must be received by ECU by the deadline so please take account of any possible delays caused by the Christmas period when making plans for supporting vouchers and invoices to be delivered.</p>	
Forms	Where can I find the claim forms?	<p>All the forms and accompanying guidance notes for Fees and Charges can be found at the following page of the EC website, about two-thirds of the way down:</p> <p><a href="http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/guidance/resources-for-electoral-administrators/referendums">http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/guidance/resources-for-electoral-administrators/referendums</a></p>	
Claims – outstanding invoices	I haven't received an outstanding invoice yet – can I give estimated costs so that I can get my claim in?	<p>In order to ensure that all accounts are properly completed and settled both we and any other body wishing to examine the accounts (such as NAO) will need to have actual rather than estimated expenditure.</p> <p>You should confirm that the amount is still outstanding and keep pressing the company for the missing invoice. You could also</p>	

		<p>consider telling them that if the outstanding invoice is not received by a specified date then the Counting Officer will not be in a position to pay it as accounts will have been submitted and settled, there will be no funds remaining allocated for that purpose, and that the role and position of Counting Officer will have been completed.</p> <p>If you are unlikely to receive the invoice before the deadline of 5 January 2012 then you need to follow the procedure set out in paragraphs 6.7 to 6.10 of our guidance in respect of incomplete accounts. This does not however solve the issue of obtaining the missing invoice but rather will allow for a further period of time to try and obtain it.</p>
Claims - UKPGE	I'm waiting for feedback on my UKPGE claim	<p>Claims for the 2011 referendum are entirely separate from claims for the 2010 general election. We have provided guidance and resources to enable Counting Officers to complete their referendum claims with confidence, and there is no reason to wait for the completion of the general election claims process before submitting your referendum claim.</p> <p>If there is a particular question that you would like advice on before submitting your claim that is not covered in our guidance and resources, then please contact your local Commission office and we will do our best to assist you.</p> <p>If you have a query on the progress of your General Election claim, then please contact ECU at <a href="mailto:ecu@communities.gsi.gov.uk">ecu@communities.gsi.gov.uk</a> or on 030 344 43912</p>
Claims – quick settlement	How do I ensure my claim is settled quickly	<p>Currently, the main areas causing queries are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• missing vouchers</li> <li>• non-provision of original receipted invoices or vouchers, or consequent failure to endorse copies or explain why originals are unavailable. Photocopied vouchers should be accompanied by a <u>declaration to</u></li> </ul>

		<p><u>support unendorsed documents.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lack of explanation for high spending under a particular head</li> <li>• vouchers that do not give sufficient description of expenditure incurred to be able to identify whether the claim under a particular head is acceptable</li> <li>• Claims for election management software not properly identified. Further information on this cost can be found in chapter 14 of our <u>guidance notes on Counting Officers' expenses.</u></li> </ul> <p>Please make sure that you submit both an electronic version of the claim forms and hard copies of all supporting documentation. Your claim will not be considered until both have been received. Hard copies should be sent to: Election Claims Unit, Hempstead House, 2 Selden Hill, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP2 4XN. See Fees and Charges Bulletin No 4 and 5 for more information.</p>
Claims – copy invoices	I need to supply original copies of invoices to both ECU and somewhere else. What should I do?	<p>There is a form for submitting copies on the website:</p> <p><a href="http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/word_doc/0003/124437/ECU-Declaration-form-to-support-un-endorsed-documents.doc">http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/word_doc/0003/124437/ECU-Declaration-form-to-support-un-endorsed-documents.doc</a></p> <p>You can group vouchers together where they relate to similar items (like polling place invoices) and then just one wet ink signature is required from the CO or authorised Depute. You should also state where the originals have been sent to so it is clear why copies are being supplied.</p>
Solely attributable costs	What are solely attributable costs?	<p>The general principle of reimbursing Counting Officer expenses where the polls are combined (paragraph 5 of Schedule 5 of the 2011 Act) are that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The costs of running the combined polls, and any costs directly attributable to their combination, are to</li> </ul>

		<p>be apportioned equally between the polls; but</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any cost solely attributable to the referendum will be met from the funds set aside for this purpose.</li> </ul> <p>For example: if you have identified that the costs of the extra staff and any stations you have used are directly as a result of the Chief Counting Officer's directions on staffing, then the costs can be considered as solely attributable. This means that for those additional staff (and you will need to demonstrate this by reference to staffing levels at a previous comparable combined election) you can claim 100% of the cost against the referendum, including for fees, training and hire of additional polling stations. See paragraphs 6.15 to 6.21 of the 'Counting Officers' Expenses Guidance Notes' for further detail.</p>
Calculation sheet for solely attributable costs	In your Referendum Fees and Charges Bulletin June 2011 you referred to a separate 'Calculation sheet for solely attributable costs'. Do I have to submit this with my claim if I am making a claim for solely attributable costs?	No, this form does not form part of the official claim return. Its purpose is to help you to show and clearly explain the calculations for the elements you have included in the main body of your claim, and to give the ECU a better chance of understanding and reconciling those elements to the overall claim. Any claim for solely attributable costs must, in any event, be included within the main claim but if you do so and do not use the additional calculation sheet then you will need to make sure that you have fully identified them within the main body of the claim. If you don't make your reasoning clear, then it is much more likely that elements of your claim will be queried. If this is the case, ECU may request in any case that you use the form to provide the clarity that is needed.
Claims Progress	How many claims have been received so far and how many have been settled?	<p>We will provide regular updates on progress through the Fees and Charges Bulletin. As of 9 December::</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>190 claims out of 451 had been received (42%).</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Out of these 59 have been settled or had debtors' invoices raised</li> <li>• 97 have been checked and have queries raised with Counting Officers</li> <li>• 64 are being processed.</li> </ul> <p>This means that the remaining 261 Counting Officers have just 3 weeks to submit their claim before the deadline.</p>	
Claims Progress	How long do I have to respond if my claim is being queried?	You must respond to any queries raised with you by ECU within 14 days. If you do not then ECU will pass on any details of Counting Officers who have not responded to us and we will take further steps to resolve the queries with you.	
Superannuation	What is the latest information about the superannuation consultation?	Please refer to the Fees and Charges Bulletin Nos. 3, 4, 5 and 6 for further information on this. In summary, the consultation was launched on 5 December and will last for 12 weeks. The consultation covering letter and the Draft Local Government Pension Scheme (Miscellaneous) Regulations 2012 are available to view on the LGPS website <a href="#">here</a> and comments are invited by 27 February 2012.	Head E2
Superannuation	Who is entitled to receive superannuation payments?	See paragraphs 14.10 and 14.12 of the 'Counting Officers' Expenses Guidance Notes' for further detail.	Head E2
Superannuation	Can I make superannuation payments now?	Superannuation payments should not be made yet as the local government superannuation scheme won't allow it. In order that claims can be still be completed and submitted in the meantime, we would suggest that any intended claim for superannuation still be included so that money can be set aside to pay superannuation when it is permissible to do so. This amount should be recorded against the appropriate head (E2) on the claim form and the supporting voucher should reference the amount to be paid, along with details of the percentage applicable and details of the pension provider (see Fees & Charges June	Head E2

		bulletin for more information).	
Superannuation	Should I delay sending in my claim until superannuation is resolved?	No. Amounts due to be paid for superannuation should be included in the claim (see answer above).	Head E2
Superannuation	What happens if the legislation isn't passed?	It is our understanding that Government has every intention of making the required changes to legislation, and that application of the superannuation provisions should be retrospective to the date of the referendum. If it was the case, however, that legislation was not passed then claims would not be accepted or paid for superannuation contributions.	Head E2
Superannuation	My CO has left/is leaving soon. What should happen about superannuation pay?	Details of proposed superannuation payments should be included in the claim, and they will be paid as soon as the legislation permits.	Head E2
Counting Officer fees - payment	How much should I pay my Counting Officer and how do I show the outstanding amount on my claim?	Counting Officers are entitled (subject to adequate performance) to receive 75% of their fees for their services now, and the remaining 25% following submission and clearance of accounts. When submitting your claim we would recommend that you include on Form E the total amount for Counting Officer services. This should be supported by a voucher reflecting any payment already made, and a reference to the amount to be paid following clearance of the account.	Head E2
Counting Officers fees – 100% paid already	I've already paid my Counting Officer. What should I do?	A Counting Officer should only have received 75% of their fee for the referendum as the remaining 25% is only payable once the referendum accounts have been signed off by the ECU. Counting Officers who have taken the maximum fee have taken the money out of funds that were not made available for that purpose. They should repay immediately the 25% to which they are not yet entitled back into their election account where it should be properly used to cover other referendum expenses.	Head E2

Counting Officers fees	When I calculate the amount payable in respect of the Counting Officer's services, I don't arrive at the same amount as in the charges order. Has the 20% element for combination been included?	At first sight it can seem confusing when trying to work out the figures identified in the cost assumptions sheet and relating them to the amount specified in the fees and charges order. The reason for this is because the 20% additional element of the fee for combination is designed to be shared between the two (or more) polls that are combined. In effect, this means that, at a straight two-way combination, for the referendum you would be entitled to a 10% supplement on the basic fee, and 10% should come from the local government fees that you are also due. If you add 10% to the basic fee you should arrive at the figure specified in the fees and charges order. Paragraph 8.10 of the 'Counting Officers' Expenses Guidance Notes' explains this principle more fully.	Head E2
Counting Officers fees	My electorate figure doesn't seem to be correct	Cabinet Office assumptions have based the fee due to Counting Officers on an electorate of December 2009 rather than December 2010 as was previously stated in our guidance (paragraph 8.9). We have to abide by the figures published in the Charges Order 2011 which is based on the 1 December 2009 electorate.	
Moving money between cost heads	Can I move money from one cost head to another?	The fees and charges guidance is similar to previous years in that each cost head has an assumed spend. You can spend more or less under each head as circumstances dictate as long as you do not exceed the overall maximum allocated and you explain fully the reasons for this.	
Overtime payments	Can I claim for overtime payments?	Yes – see paragraphs 13.3, 13.4 and 13.30 of the 'Counting Officers' Expenses Guidance Notes'.	Head J1
Claim for fees and charges training	Can an Authority claim for training on Referendum fees and charges?	Yes providing the claim is reasonable and the overall claim does not exceed the maximum recoverable amount. See paragraphs 13.6 to 13.11	Head J3
Re-print ballot papers	The Commission has asked me to re-print my	If you had not technically breached a direction and were re-printing on our instruction and not as the result of an error by either the Counting Officer or a third party, then it would	Head F11

	<p>ballot papers. Although they were printed in accordance with original instructions, supplementary guidance on the official mark issued in the Spring Polls Bulletin and the nature of our official mark has led you to request us to reprint. Will you cover the costs of this?</p>	<p>be a cost consequent upon our instruction and we would bear that cost through fees and charges. In submitting your claim you should provide accompanying evidence of why your printing costs are greater than the assumed cost.</p>
Parish poll cards	<p>I am issuing poll cards for Parish Council elections separately. Can I share the overall costs of poll cards between the referendum, the principal area authority, and the parish?</p>	<p>There is no provision in the referendum legislation for parish poll cards to be combined. This means that attempting to share or assign a cost to the referendum that the law doesn't allow is not permissible.</p> <p>If a parish requests a separate issue of poll cards (as is their right up to 19 days before the poll) then the parish should pay 100% of the costs for the separate parish poll cards, and the poll cards for the referendum/principal area authority election would be split 50/50.</p>
Reclaiming costs of printing polling station handbook	<p>I didn't order enough copies of the polling station handbook and quick guide and will have to print some locally. Can I reclaim the cost through fees and charges?</p>	<p>As long as your costs were reasonable in relation to provision of materials for polling stations, and were within the overall maximum amount, then they would be likely to be met</p> <p>However, you will be expected to provide justification for the cost difference between what you paid (printing costs) and what you could have paid had you ordered sufficient copies originally.</p>
Polling Station Inspectors	<p>Is there provision for a</p>	<p>Yes, training fees for polling station inspectors can be claimed for in the same way as</p>

Head H3

Head F10

Head F6

training fees	training fee to be paid to polling station inspectors in the fees and charges order for the referendum?	training fees for polling station staff provided, of course, that they have undergone such training.	
Change in number of polling stations	The number of polling stations in the cost assumptions model is different to the number I actually have. Does this matter?	No. The cost assumptions model is a tool used to calculate a maximum overall recoverable amount available to you. You have the flexibility to spend differing amounts within and between heads. The only time this would be an issue is if you exceeded the overall maximum recoverable amount, in which case you would simply need to include a note of explanation as to the reason when submitting your claim.	Heads F1-14
Yes to Fairer Votes additional costs	We have had to hire additional temporary staff and work overtime to process postal vote applications caused by the Yes to Fairer Votes campaign. We have also incurred additional postal costs through surcharges on applications. Can I claim these costs through fees and charges?	No. The costs associated with the receipt and processing of postal vote applications is a matter for the ERO and not for Counting Officers, so costs relating to these are not reclaimable under the Fees and Charges Order for the referendum. This is still the case even if the applications were solely to vote by post at the referendum. This is the same arrangement as at any election which has a Fees and Charges Order and reflects the differences in law between the duties of the ERO and the Counting Officer. The Counting Officers' responsibilities in respect of postal voting are only for the issue and receipt of postal votes. All Counting Officers are obliged only to use any funds provided in accordance with the provisions of the Fees and Charges order, and this does not include ERO functions in processing applications.	Head G1

