

## Scottish Parliament Academic Fellowship Scheme 2025/26

### Unlocking Data to Support Parliamentary Business

#### Objective:

To simplify the extraction of information from annual reports/accounts to support the scrutiny of [public bodies](#), such as NHS Health Boards.

#### Background:

The [Health and Social Care budget](#) in Scotland is the largest area of spend by the Scottish Government, accounting for spending of almost £22 billion. Of this, NHS Boards, both territorial and national, account for £16 billion. This project aims to collate data from the annual accounts of these boards into one dataset to support the scrutiny of the Health and Social Care budget. The mechanism developed should also be applicable to other publications, such as local government accounts.

#### Problem Statement:

SPICe gets asked to provide data to help scrutinise public bodies. The data required is often in multiple documents such as annual reports or accounts. Collating the data is time consuming and susceptible to human error.

#### Project Objectives:

Develop a mechanism to extract information from public bodies' annual reports/accounts.

Create a dataset from these reports to support the scrutiny of public bodies, specifically NHS Health Boards.

#### Expected Outcomes:

- A process for extracting data from annual reports/accounts.
- A dataset based on NHS board reports/accounts.
- A blog post on the SPICe blog outlining the project and highlighting its contribution to effective Parliamentary scrutiny.

#### Timeframe:

A commitment of 1 day a week is expected, with the aim of working from the SPICe office at the Scottish Parliament at least 2 days per month. The timeframe and working pattern are open to discussion based on academic commitments and further project scoping. We would ideally like the project completed for the start of the next parliamentary session, so looking to complete by April 2026.

### **Data Science Methods:**

It will be up to the applicant on how they suggest approaching the project. The primary resource used in SPICe is R, but we are open to alternative technologies. The main consideration is that anything that is produced can be supported by the Parliament and replicated so that it can be applied to other areas.

### **Funding**

It is up to the prospective fellow and their academic institution to set out the basis upon which their costs are determined and the sources of their funding.

Although funding cannot be guaranteed, the Parliament does have a limited budget which it can use to fund or part-fund fellows (previously, funding provided has typically been between £3-4,000). We can discuss funding in more detail with applicants once applications have been submitted and assessed.

### **Further information**

Please contact Andrew Aiton in SPICe if you wish to discuss further ([andrew.aiton@parliament.scot](mailto:andrew.aiton@parliament.scot))