Ethics Checklist 2 - Autonomy

Use this checklist to rate features of an ethical approach in parliamentary research & library services. Put a cross in the last column if this feature exists (is already 'in place') in your service. Feel free to write in features that you think should be listed, and rate them. Please add any comments in the box at the end.

'Autonomy' checklist		Very important	Useful	Not useful	Impractical / high risk	In place
2.1	Autonomy of the research / library / information service is defined in its mandate or other policy document	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.2	The autonomy needed for independent research is understood by the institution and respected in practice	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.3	The head of service reports directly to Parliament or to a Committee of Members dedicated to oversight of the service	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.4	The service has oversight by an ombudsman or committee of external experts - independent of the administration - intended to safeguard the quality & professional autonomy of the research service.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.5	The head and/or staff of the research/library/information service cannot be instructed on matters of professional judgement/good practice by the administration	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.6	Justified research cannot be blocked by administrative decision outside the service, formally or informally	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.7	Critical research into the parliamentary administration, to meet Member needs, would be freely permitted to proceed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

'Autonomy' issues

ʃ Parliamentary research/information services are *autonomous*, not fully *independent*. The greater the autonomy, the more that ethical choices can and should be made.

ʃ The ideal is delivery of unbiased information without partisan favour in service delivery. This is best achieved by **independent professional** analysis and information research.

ʃ 'Independence', however, is put in question by the location of the service (in most cases) within a wider institutional administration. The service is "accountable" to the administration, and reliant on it for resources and various forms of "support" (including e.g. some permissions to act and to use its resources).

'Autonomy' checklist		Very important	Useful	Not useful	Impractical / high risk	In place
2.8	Appointments to, promotions in, and dismissals from, the research/library service are made on a professional basis	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.9	There are minimum requirements for relevant professional qualifications for roles in the service	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.10	Research/library/information staff do not depend on the wider administration for their career progression	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.11	Delivery of 'controversial' research/information will not prejudice a career, (assuming the content is of appropriate quality)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.12	Budget decisions for the service are not linked to delivery of politically-acceptable research	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

'Autonomy' issues

⟩ Personnel, at least at leadership level, are most likely appointed by, and dismissible by, the wider administration if not by Members.

⟩ In some cases, personnel may be allocated from a general administrative pool and move in and out of services including research & library, meaning that their career depends on the wider administration and not the research service alone.

⟩ With less autonomy, ethics move beyond the control of the service and depend on the general ethical standards of the institution. Even in a best-case scenario, the specific ethical issues around research may not be recognised and are more likely to be accidentally compromised.

Comments Ethics Checklist 1 'Autonomy'