**Description of the Data Collection Methods**

(This is a slightly extended version of the description to be found in the ESRC End of Award Report)

A range of methods were employed in both settings to facilitate triangulation and enhance the study’s validity. These included a review of the national press, documentary analysis, in-depth interviews and observation. However, it is appropriate to begin this section by discussing the main challenges to the project and how they impacted on its execution before moving to look at specific aspects of data collection. The original research proposal identified the political and institutional uncertainty in Ukraine as the predominant threat to the project, and particularly to the ability to collect comparable data, and indeed this proved to be far more extensive than any specialists could have predicted as Ukraine’s ‘orange revolution’ of autumn 2004 precipitated far-reaching constitutional changes and a period of prolonged (and still ongoing) political instability. This, along with changes to the political climate in Moscow, necessitated making adjustments to the data collection process and the regrettable but appropriate abandonment of a systematic comparison in favour of pursuing two single case studies.

The ongoing political uncertainty in Ukraine led to a one-year postponement of field research in Kyiv, which was the longest period feasible within the timeframe of the project. This was therefore conducted during autumn 2006, at a time when the new constitutional changes had just come into force and the new government formed for the first time by the Verkhovna Rada (under Prime Minister Yanukovych) after months of wrangling had only been working a few days. This meant that the fieldwork took place in sub-optimal conditions from the perspective of investigating institutions and routine practices, as not only were the parliament and the government new, but due to the new constitutional arrangements, the formal relationship between the executive and legislature had fundamentally changed. At best, a process of ‘bedding down’ could be expected, at worst, extended and escalating inter-branch conflict over the unclear division of powers. Unfortunately, in Ukraine the latter scenario was (and, as of 2009, still is) playing out. This meant that although 30 semi-structured interviews were carried out, less than a year later pre-term elections to the Verkhovna Rada were held. This meant that the interview and observation data were derived from a parliament that proved unable to function and survived for just a year, thus raising important questions about the appropriateness of comparing this data with that derived from the Russian case. It seemed most appropriate to take a more ideocratic approach where the conduct of oversight activities could be contextualised in the unfolding power struggle in Ukraine. While this meant that the objective of comparison envisaged in the original proposal was compromised, the Ukrainian case study complements Dr Whitmore’s previous work on the Verkhovna Rada.

The different levels of openness to foreign researchers in Russia and Ukraine also presented a significant challenge to the goal of comparison during the project. These became much more pronounced in the period after the project proposal was written (summer 2004) due to the altered political atmosphere following the Beslan school siege in Russia in September 2004, the ‘orange revolution’ in Ukraine in autumn 2004 and the impending presidential elections in Russia due in 2008. In sum, the political climate in Russia in general and in the Federal Assembly in particular became considerably more closed and less receptive to foreign researchers, while in Ukraine the political system remained relatively open and transparent. This meant that it proved impossible to collect the same types of data for both countries. For example, Dr Whitmore conducted regular observations of committee and plenary sessions as well as in-depth interviews with parliamentary and especially committee staff and extensive work in the parliamentary library and archive in the Verkhovna Rada (see below), while the official permission required to do this was denied in the case of both chambers of the Federal Assembly. It proved possible to partially circumvent this official refusal as some deputies and senators were willing to help Dr Whitmore conduct observations and provided some archive and documentary material to her, but in the case of the Federation Council insufficient data was collected to draw meaningful conclusions about the process and output of oversight. While in the State Duma although a rich wealth of data was obtained, it was decided that this was not broadly comparable with that collected in Ukraine. Thus, for both reasons detailed, it was considered infeasible to compare the results of the Russian and Ukrainian cases. Instead, the most fruitful approach was to analyse and write them up as separate case studies, and adjust the emphasis on comparison in the objectives accordingly.

The project used a multi-method qualitative approach, beginning with an extensive survey of Russian and Ukrainian national newspapers from 2000-2006 accessed via the *Eastview* database. This facilitated the contextualisation of oversight activities within the broader political and parliamentary setting over time, background detail on the unfolding of salient processes (for example, the Beslan parliamentary investigation in Russia and the privatisation of the Komsomol’ Iron Ore factory in Ukraine) and the identification of actors interested in the theme of parliamentary oversight.

Figures on oversight activity were obtained from various official publications, although the data collected and published on activities in the Verkhovna Rada were much more extensive and detailed than those from the Russian Federal Assembly, and in both cases it was possible to build up a picture of the extent and trajectory of oversight activities conducted, although on Ukraine covering a longer time period was possible. In addition, deputies and committee staff were sometimes willing to provide additional internal documents, and in the case of Ukraine, Dr Whitmore was able to have unrestricted access to the parliamentary archive, which provided a very rich data set. In both countries, the official parliamentary website was also a valuable source of official documentation and stenograms of debates.

32 semi-structured interviews were conducted in Moscow during January-March 2006, (with four follow-up telephone interviews in October 2007) and a further 30 in Kyiv during October-December 2006. In both cases, Dr Whitmore began by interviewing authoritative local experts for in-depth contextualisation, before moving on to deputies, parliamentary staff and actors from other relevant bodies (the government, the Accounting Chamber, the Ombudsman on Human Rights). In terms of the sample of deputies interviewed, the aim was for diversity across the factions represented in the parliaments, but due to the closed nature of some factions (particularly United Russia in Russia and the Party of Regions in Ukraine), although more deputies from these factions were approached, many refused to participate in the study. Nevertheless, the sample interviewed reflects the political diversity of the legislative bodies which is appropriate for a qualitative approach. In addition to the faction membership, the sample aimed to reflect a range of committee memberships (large and small, influential and less so, and cover a range of themes: financial, industrial and social). At the same time, parliamentarians known to be interested in oversight (as identified through the press and their participation in certain activities) were approached, because although it is acknowledged that such deputies were likely to be more interested in oversight than many of their colleagues, such deputies were able to provide in-depth insights into the process and their activities. Those deputies also tended to have been elected more than once, and thus were able to offer perspectives on the trajectory of oversight over more than one convocation, but the final sample included a mix of ‘interested’ deputies and their ‘less-interested’ colleagues in both countries. An open-ended question schedule was used which asked deputies about how they conceptualised oversight, the forms of work they undertook, its relative importance and their attitudes and motivations towards such activities. For parliamentary staff and officials from other relevant bodies these were adapted as appropriate. The interviews were conducted in Russian and Ukrainian by Dr Whitmore, then transcribed by a native speaker. They were then translated by Dr Whitmore, with points of clarification provided by a native speaker. The transcripts were analysed by a process of multiple close readings of the texts leading to the emergence and identification of categories and themes.

Observations were conducted of parliamentary and committee hearings, Government Day (Ukraine)/Government Hour (Russia) and committee meetings in both countries. However, given the extensive access granted to Dr Whitmore in Kyiv (she obtained a ‘diplomatic’ pass to access all areas of the parliament save the chamber floor itself), it proved possible to conduct many observations in the Verkhovna Rada and build up a detailed view of the functioning of oversight in several committees. In Russia, Dr Whitmore relied on the generous help of a number of deputies, who invited her to a parliamentary hearing, a budget committee meeting and allowed her to observe Government Hour several times on the televisions in their office or provided access to the Duma press room (as journalists cannot enter the chamber balcony they watch parliamentary sessions via a live television screen nearby).