

## BRIEFING

### CHECKS AND BALANCES: WHAT ARE THEY

Checks and balances play two key roles. First, they limit the power of the majority to act without regard to the views or interests of others. They ensure that the perspectives of those who are in the minority on a given issue are represented – for example, by guaranteeing that opposition voices are heard in the process of law-making. Second, at a more practical level, they ensure that policy is tested and behaviour supervised. This helps to improve the quality of decision-making, and prevent behaviour which



The media scrutinises politicians and public officials, operating as a check not only on the executive but on the political system more widely. It also provides a balance, ensuring that a wide range of views are heard  
importance of this role, with **broadcasting standards** intended to ensure that people have access

This series of briefings is produced by the Constitution Unit, a research centre based in the UCL Department of Political Science. We conduct timely, rigorous, independent research into constitutional change and the reform of political institutions, and work closely with other expert research organisations such as those named above. The briefings in this series form part of an ongoing [Constitutional Principles and the Health of Democracy](#)

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