



Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995

1995 CHAPTER 46

PART XII

EVIDENCE

Witnesses

266 Accused as witness.

- (1) Subject to subsections (2) to (8) below, the accused shall be a competent witness for the defence at every stage of the case, whether the accused is on trial alone or along with a co-accused.
- (2) The accused shall not be called as a witness in pursuance of this section except upon his own application or in accordance with subsection (9) or (10) below.
- (3) An accused who gives evidence on his own behalf in pursuance of this section may be asked any question in cross-examination notwithstanding that it would tend to incriminate him as to the offence charged.
- (4) An accused who gives evidence on his own behalf in pursuance of this section shall not be asked, and if asked shall not be required to answer, any question tending to show that he has committed, or been convicted of, or been charged with, any offence other than that with which he is then charged, or is of bad character, unless—
 - (a) the proof that he has committed or been convicted of such other offence is admissible evidence to show that he is guilty of the offence with which he is then charged; or
 - (b) the accused or his counsel or solicitor has asked questions of the witnesses for the prosecution with a view to establishing the accused's good character or impugning the character of the complainer, or the accused has given evidence of his own good character, or the nature or conduct of the defence is such as to involve imputations on the character of the prosecutor or of the witnesses for the prosecution or of the complainer; or

Changes to legislation: Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995, Section 266 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 11 April 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

- (c) the accused has given evidence against any other person charged in the same proceedings.
- (5) In a case to which paragraph (b) of subsection (4) above applies, the prosecutor shall be entitled to ask the accused a question of a kind specified in that subsection only if the court, on the application of the prosecutor, permits him to do so.
- [^{F1}(5A) Nothing in subsections (4) and (5) above shall prevent the accused from being asked, or from being required to answer, any question tending to show that he has been convicted of an offence other than that with which he is charged if his conviction for that other offence has been disclosed to the jury, or is to be taken into consideration by the judge, under section 275A(2) of this Act.]
- (6) An application under subsection (5) above in proceedings on indictment shall be made in the course of the trial but in the absence of the jury.
- (7) In subsection (4) above, references to the complainer include references to a victim who is deceased.
- (8) Every person called as a witness in pursuance of this section shall, unless otherwise ordered by the court, give his evidence from the witness box or other place from which the other witnesses give their evidence.
- (9) The accused may—
- (a) with the consent of a co-accused, call that other accused as a witness on the accused's behalf; or
 - (b) ask a co-accused any question in cross-examination if that co-accused gives evidence,
- but he may not do both in relation to the same co-accused.
- (10) The prosecutor or the accused may call as a witness a co-accused who has pleaded guilty to or been acquitted of all charges against him which remain before the court (whether or not, in a case where the co-accused has pleaded guilty to any charge, he has been sentenced) or in respect of whom the diet has been deserted; and the party calling such co-accused as a witness shall not require to give notice thereof, but the court may grant any other party such adjournment or postponement of the trial as may seem just.
- (11) Where, in any trial, the accused is to be called as a witness he shall be so called as the first witness for the defence unless the court, on cause shown, otherwise directs.

Textual Amendments

- F1** S. 266(5A) inserted (1.11.2002) by [Sexual Offences \(Procedure and Evidence\) \(Scotland\) Act 2002](#) (asp 9), [s. 10\(3\)](#); [S.S.I. 2002/443](#), [art. 3](#) (with art. 4(5))

Changes to legislation:

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Changes and effects yet to be applied to the whole Act associated Parts and Chapters:

Whole provisions yet to be inserted into this Act (including any effects on those provisions):

- s. 5A inserted by [2010 asp 13 Sch. 7 para. 26](#)
- s. 13(1B)(1C) inserted by [2006 asp 10 s. 82\(2\)](#)
- s. 13(2)(aa) inserted by [2006 asp 10 s. 82\(3\)\(b\)](#)
- s. 13(3A) inserted by [2006 asp 10 s. 82\(4\)](#)
- s. 13(5)(ba) inserted by [2006 asp 10 s. 82\(5\)\(a\)](#)
- s. 13(6)(a)(iii) and word inserted by [2006 asp 10 s. 82\(6\)\(b\)](#)
- s. 13(8) inserted by [2006 asp 10 s. 82\(7\)](#)
- s. 22(5A) inserted by [2007 asp 6 s. 7\(2\)\(g\)](#)
- s. 22A(1A) inserted by [2023 asp 4 s. 1\(2\)](#)
- s. 23B(1)(1A) substituted for s. 23B(1) by [2023 asp 4 s. 2\(2\)\(a\)](#)
- s. 23B(6A) inserted by [2023 asp 4 s. 1\(3\)\(c\)](#)
- s. 23B(8)-(10) inserted by [2023 asp 4 s. 2\(2\)\(c\)](#)
- s. 23C(1A) inserted by [2023 asp 4 s. 2\(3\)\(b\)](#)
- s. 23C(3) inserted by [2023 asp 4 s. 2\(3\)\(c\)](#)
- s. 24(2C) inserted by [2023 asp 4 s. 4\(4\)](#)
- s. 24(2AA) inserted by [2023 asp 4 s. 4\(2\)](#)
- s. 73A inserted by [2004 asp 3 s. 2\(3\)](#)
- s. 167(7D)(7E) inserted by [2007 asp 17 sch. 4 para. 1\(3\)](#)
- s. 167(7D) words substituted by [2010 asp 13 Sch. 3 para. 16\(2\)](#)
- s. 167(7E) words substituted by [2010 asp 13 Sch. 3 para. 16\(3\)](#)
- s. 194ZA repealed by [2014 asp 18 sch. 3 para. 25](#)
- s. 200A inserted by [2016 asp 1 s. 85](#)
- s. 205A added by [1997 c. 48 s. 1\(1\)](#) (This amendment not applied to legislation.gov.uk. 1997 c. 48, s. 1 repealed (27.6.2003) without ever being in force by [2003 asp 7, s. 19\(3\)](#); S.S.I. 2003/288, art. 2, Sch.)
- s. 210ZA inserted by [2023 asp 4 s. 5](#)
- s. 249(4A)-(4D) inserted by [2014 asp 1 s. 24](#)
- s. 271D(4A) inserted by [2019 asp 8 s. 6\(4\)](#)
- s. 271F(2)(aa) inserted by [2019 asp 8 s. 10\(4\)](#)
- s. 271AA inserted by [2019 asp 8 s. 6\(2\)](#)
- s. 271BZD inserted by [2019 asp 8 s. 3\(2\)](#)
- s. 288AB288AC inserted by [2024 asp 1 s. 32\(3\)](#)
- Sch. 5A added by [1997 c. 48 s. 1\(2\)](#) (This amendment not applied to legislation.gov.uk. 1997 c. 48, s. 1 repealed (27.6.2003) without ever being in force by [2003 asp 7, s. 19\(3\)](#); S.S.I. 2003/288, art. 2, Sch.)