

International Policy Fellowships - Open Society Institute

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE POLICY STUDY¹

The following short description provides an overview of the type of policy paper that you are expected to produce on the basis of your research in the IPF policy fellowship programme:

- **What is the purpose and focus of the policy study?**

The policy study is a targeted, communication tool which is intended to feed directly into a very specific policy debate. As such, the purpose of this type of policy paper is:

to develop a comprehensive and persuasive argument for the policy recommendations presented in the paper and therefore, act as a decision-making tool and a call to action for the target audience.

In practical terms, the policy study is a direct reflection of the relationship between advisor and decision-maker. When a decision-maker asks for advice, the simple question they normally ask is 'what should I do in this situation?'. The policy study is an extremely detailed and evidence-based answer to this question which provides:

- a rationale and focus for change/action (problem description section)
- a recommendation for the most suitable solution to best address the target problem given the current constraints and also the reasons not to choose the others being discussed (policy options section)
- guidance on how to implement the chosen solution given the current constraints (Conclusion and recommendations section)

This movement from problem to solution to application, as well as a detailed rationale for each step, are the key elements which establish the policy study as a decision-making tool.

- **Who is the intended target audience for the policy study?**

The main audiences for the policy study are other experts in the target policy field, as well as other informed, but non-expert audiences (decision-makers, journalists, NGO people, international organisations etc.). So, although you need to clearly illustrate your expertise in the target field, you also need to balance this by trying to keep the technical jargon and discipline-specific concepts to a minimum.

- **How is a policy study different from a standard research paper produced in academic settings?**

As well as the target audience and context in which the paper is produced, the policy study is different from a standard academic research paper in the following ways:

- The focus of the policy study is to develop an argument around a policy problem and its possible solutions based on the evidence generated through the research; this problem-solution relationship is at the core. In contrast, a research paper has more of a focus on presenting the research and then reflecting on its implications for theory, i.e. the common elements of a research paper are said to be IMRD (Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion) This does not mean that methodology is not important in policy research, but it is not the main focus of the paper.
- A policy study is developed to generate practical and actionable solutions for a specific policy problem in a given context. Although it is certainly theoretically-framed, unlike research papers it is not theoretically-focused. For example, the outcome of case study research in a policy context is the development of a set of applicable solutions to solve the policy problem in the given case study context, not a reflection on what this case study says about a current theoretical debate.

¹ This description was developed by Eóin Young & Lisa Quinn in consultation with IPF and is based on LGI/OSI policy writing guidebook: Young, Eóin & Lisa Quinn (2002) *Writing Effective Public Policy Papers*. Budapest: Local Government Initiative/Open Society Institute. [Available to download on the internet: http://lgi.osi.hu/publications_datasheet.php?id=112]

- A policy paper is commonly the result of multidisciplinary research (all aspects of the problem are covered - economic, legal, sociological, political, environmental etc.) not developed to feed into single disciplinary discussions. You do not have to be an expert in all these fields to effectively conduct policy research, but addressing the problem from a broad perspective is key.

- **What are the structural elements of the policy study?**

The policy study should contain the following elements:

- **Title**
- **Executive Summary**
 - No more than 2 pages providing the key insights in an overview of the whole paper
- **Table of contents**
- **Introduction**
- **Problem Description -**
 - the past and present of the problem;
 - a rationale illustrating the urgent need for action;
 - a model of the cause and effect relationships in the policy problem;
 - ending with a detailed description of how specifically the current policy approach is failing.
- **Policy Options**
 - the future of the problem - your predictions of what will happen if certain solutions are adopted;
 - a statement of the objectives and current constraints for any policy change and therefore, a set of evaluation criteria for all possible policy solutions (the framework of analysis);
 - an argument for one solution and against the others presented based on the evaluation of the options;
 - A consideration of between 3-4 alternatives drawn from the current policy debate.
- **Conclusion and Recommendations**
 - how to implement the chosen solution;
 - who should do what and when given the constraints of budget, capacity and political feasibility.
- **Appendices**
- **Bibliography**

For more insight into all aspects of the policy study, see the LGI policy writing guidebook (full reference in the footnote number 1)

- **What are the length and format requirements for the policy study?**

Length: 8-10,000 words (With the formatting requirements, this word limit comes to between 32 and 40 double-spaced A4 pages)

Font: Times New Roman, Size 12,

Spacing and margins: Double-spaced, Standard margins

Citation style: APA in-text citation style (For an overview of this style, see Appendix B, p.102 of policy writing guidebook - full reference in the footnote 1)

- **Where should I submit/post my policy study?**

Submission format: in Microsoft Word or PDF to the Policy.hu Wiki for further publication in the PDC.

- **What is the timeline for submission of the first draft and the final policy study?**

First draft submission date: 1 October 2006

Completed policy study submission date: 15 February 2007