

Resource Information for Policy Brief Writers

If selected to write a policy brief for Division 15, writers should follow this template and use the check list below to guide their writing process. Figures/tables are welcome as long as they are clear and relevant to the arguments/recommendations.

Policy Brief Outline (should be 2-4 double-spaced pages long and include these key sections):

Introduction

- What is the issue/problem and for whom is it a problem?
- Why is it important?
- What are the costs of this problem (educational, academic, financial)?

Summary of Relevant Literature

- What do we know about the issue/problem and what don't we know about it?
- Where relevant, what do we know about this problem in terms of learning, motivation, cognition, achievement, instruction or assessment (i.e., educational psychology lens)?
- What do we know about potential solutions?

Recommendations for Policy

- Clearly stipulate recommendations (and supporting arguments) and the target policy audience (national, state, local—whichever ones are most relevant. Be clear)
- Clearly stipulate (where and when relevant), short-, mid-, and long-term recommendations
- Where relevant include financial issues/costs/benefits

Policy Brief Writer Check-in Checklist¹

1. Does my argument flow clearly? (aim is clear, conclusion is clear at outset, problem clearly stated and backed with evidence, recommended actions are clear and specific and flow from the evidence and arguments given).
2. Is my brief appropriate for the audience I intend? (audience is clear, recommendations are appropriate, understandable without specialized knowledge)
3. Is my language clear, concise, and engaging? (words are not unnecessarily complex, jargon is not used, sentences are not cluttered, text is engaging)
4. Is my evidence presented effectively (all data are necessary for argument, data are easy to understand, data are presented in the most appropriate format)

¹ Borrowed from Women's and Children's Health Policy Center at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health entitled "The art of crafting policy briefs"