

Policy brief author guideline for Submissions to Malawi Journal of Nursing & Midwifery

Policy briefs should have an executive summary, an introduction, an overview of the research or problem, an examination of the findings, and a concluding section that explains the policy recommendations and implications of the research. The maximum word count for policy brief is *1,500 words* excluding references

Executive Summary

Policy brief should open with a short summary. This overview should be engaging and help busy readers quickly understand your argument. The summary should be in a form of a short paragraph or two. This can also be structured as few bullet points. An effective executive summary should condense the essence of the brief down to a few sentences.

Introduction

The introduction should set up the rest of the document and clearly convey your argument. In one or two paragraphs, define why you are writing the brief and express the urgency and importance of the topic to your audience. A good introduction should contain all of the relevant information for your argument. Describe the key questions of your analysis and your conclusions. The goal is to leave your readers with a clear sense of what your research is about while enticing them to continue reading.

“What’s at Stake?” the introduction should vividly present the issues and relevance of the research in only a few short paragraphs. A succinct summary of the brief’s goals gives the reader a firm understanding of the shape of the rest of the paper.

Research overview

This is one of the most important sections of the brief because it explains the reasoning behind your policy recommendations. In effect, this section describes the problem that your policy recommendations intend to solve.

Provide a summary of the facts to describe the issues, contexts, and research methods. Focus on two main elements: the research *approach* and the research *results*.

- *Research approach*: explain how the study was conducted, who conducted it, how the data was collected, and any other relevant background information.
- *Research results*: paint a general picture of the research findings before moving on to the specifics.

Present the results in a way that lends them to your analysis and argument, but do not interpret them yet. By the end of this section, the reader should have a firm understanding of the research and be primed for your argument. Focus on highlighting the benefits and opportunities stemming from the research.

Discussion

This section should interpret the data in a way that is accessible and clearly connected to your policy advice. Explain the findings and limitations of the research clearly and comprehensively. Express research findings in terms of how they relate to concrete realities (instead of theoretical abstractions) so the reader will have a clear idea of the potential effects of policy initiatives.

Recommendations

This final section of the policy brief should detail the actions recommended by the research findings. Draw the link for your readers between the research findings and your recommendations. Ensure that all arguments are rooted firmly and clearly in evidence produced by the research. The recommendations should act as a call to action by stating precise, relevant, credible, and feasible next steps. It may strengthen your argument to demonstrate why other policies are not as effective as your recommendations.

References

Include a maximum of 15 relevant references in a policy brief to show that the brief is not merely opinion-based but grounded in verifiable facts. Policymakers are more likely to take recommendations seriously if they are backed by credible, peer-reviewed, or authoritative sources.