

## Provide a Solution

When communicating research for any specific purpose, it is crucial to make clear: (i) what the *problem* is; (ii) what the possible *solutions* are; and (iii) which one you would *recommend*.

### Constructing the problem description

- *Make a claim, then support it*: This is the way legal defence arguments are built up. It is the most effective way to build an argument if you are trying to convince someone.
- *Use coherent links*: One of the most basic features of good argumentation is coherence, which involves providing transparent links between each part of the argument so that a clear picture of the overall argument emerges. This can be achieved, for example, through:
  - o clear, descriptive section titles and numbering
  - o use the opening sentence of each section to drive the argument
  - o use the first (or last) sentence of each paragraph to make the most important point
  - o make effective use of paragraphing (for those readers who only skim)
  - o maintain coherence within the text

### Possible solutions: policy options

The policy options element:

- outlines, evaluates and compares the possible policy alternatives;
- provides a convincing argument for the preferred policy alternative;
- builds a clear and coherent link to the conclusions and recommendations element of the policy paper.

The argument for your preferred policy option must be the foundation and justification for your final recommendations. Therefore, it must be clearly linked to the recommendations section in the conclusion of the paper.

In the policy options element, the policy adviser needs to show his or her expertise and take the lead in the argument to strongly advocate for his or her chosen option. Remembering that policy science should be problem-oriented and targeted, this is the opportunity for you to prove that yours is a practical solution to the outlined problem, and therefore a valuable contribution to the policy debate and the policy community in general.

### Conclusion and recommendations

This final major element brings the policy paper to an end by synthesising the major findings of the research and outlining the writer's suggested course of action. Hence, the purpose of the policy paper as a decision-making tool and call to action is ultimately fulfilled in this

element. The fact that the conclusion and recommendations is the final major part of the paper also means that it is responsible for leaving a lasting impression of the paper on the reader.

Many readers read this section together with the introduction and abstract or executive summary as an initial stage before reading the detailed main body of the paper. The conclusion and recommendations element, therefore, plays a vital role in helping these readers to get a clear overview of the whole paper. Some readers are also particularly interested in the policy recommendations proposed in the paper and may start their reading by first looking at the recommendations and then at the rest of the paper.

#### **Checklist for the conclusion and recommendations:**

- Have you synthesised only the major findings of the study?
- Are your recommendations logically divided into separate measures and clearly presented?
- Are all recommendations effectively written?
- Does the conclusion provide a sense of completeness to the paper?

#### **Source**

- Young, Evin and Lisa Quinn (2002) 'Writing Effective Public Policy Papers: A Guide To Policy Advisers in Central and Eastern Europe', *LGI Documents*, <http://lgi.osi.hu/publications/default.asp?id=112>.

#### **Further resources**

- Musso, Juliet, Robert Biller and Robert Myrtle (2000) 'Tradecraft: Professional Writing as Problem Solving', *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 19(4):635-646.
- Bardach, Eugene (1996) *The Eight-Step Path of Policy Analysis: A Handbook for Practice*. Berkeley Academic Press.