

## Policy Brief Guidance and Template

### Guidance on developing your policy brief

#### **Award requirements**

Recipients of the New Zealand Aid Programme Awards are required to deliver a policy brief to the following address by the date shown in their Letter of Offer:

The Scholarships Manager  
Universities NZ  
PO Box 11915  
Wellington 6142  
scholarships@universitiesnz.ac.nz

The final Award payment (25% of Award) will be made upon receipt of an adequate policy brief that complies with the template provided and has been signed by the student's academic supervisor. Supervisors will confirm that the field research has been completed according to the proposal and that the policy brief is of adequate quality. Supervisors are encouraged to provide feedback or input to help awardees develop relevant skills and deliver high quality briefs.

The target audience of the policy brief is New Zealand development policy makers (specifically MFAT), and other New Zealand and international development organisations. The primary purpose of this exercise is to help students develop policy and research application skills. However quality policy briefs may also be used by MFAT and distributed to other development agencies.

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## **Purpose of the policy brief**

Policy briefs are designed to support more informed evidence-based policy-making or decision-making within relevant agencies or organisations.

A policy brief explains an issue, its context, stakeholders, scope and impact; it explores any known causes, links or relationships involved in the issue; and it identifies the implications of these findings for the key actors or the target audience. While findings explored in the policy brief will be built upon strong scholarly roots, a policy brief is targeted for a professional, rather than academic audience, who have limited time to consider background material before having to make practical decisions.

This policy brief exercise encourages awardees to practice and demonstrate skills that will be important and useful for work in the development profession.

Understanding the limitations of the research, the methods used and the findings identified, as well as the strengths of the research, will be important for extracting *accurate* lessons and maximising the potential contribution of the research to good development practice. As a researcher, exercising these skills throughout your work is important for helping you to ensure your findings are used, integrated into practice, and that they ultimately benefit the communities that contributed to your research.

## **How to write a high quality policy brief**

A high quality policy brief will clearly outline the research findings and will identify any implications of these findings for development policy and practice. It will understand the limitations of the research findings, be grounded in context, and will be mindful of over-generalising, simplifying or falsely attributing cause.

High quality policy briefs will be succinct, free of jargon and written in plain English, enabling the reader to quickly identify any key lessons and understand how and where these might be applied in practice. Accurately describing the context and stakeholder viewpoints will help the reader to determine the extent to which lessons can and cannot be extrapolated and applied to other cases.

For any policy brief there will be a trade off between providing this depth of context and also delivering something that is succinct, targeted, and digestible. Learning to balance this trade off is one of the key skills of writing for policy – meeting the 4 page limit of the template will challenge you to develop and exercise this skill.

For examples, the OECD and UN websites provide high quality policy briefs on development related issues.

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**Check list  
for your  
policy brief**

Ensure that your brief is:

- focused
  - grounded in context
  - outlining the key stakeholders involved and their viewpoints
  - identifying the implications of the research findings for the target audience
    - outlining what actions could be taken to address the issues, and
    - the potential implications of these actions or inactions
  - explicit about the limitations of the findings and lessons
  - professional, rather than academic
  - evidence-based
  - limited (to a specific issue)
  - succinct
  - understandable and accessible
  - practical and feasible
    - a brief action-oriented tool
    - providing recommendations that are realistic
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## Policy Brief Template

The policy brief must not exceed 4 pages

**Name** Enter name here

**Postgraduate programme** Enter title here

**Title of research** Enter title here

**Location of research** Enter location here

*[Purple text provides prompts as to what could be included in this section. Please delete when complete]*

**Define the context and the issue**

- *Stakeholders and actors involved*
- *Scale of the problem (numbers of people, costs etc)*
- *Why is the issue important – what impact does it have and how does it relate to development outcomes*
- *Background research*

Enter text here

**Findings**

- *What has been uncovered about the issue*
- *Links, dynamics, causes or relationships between different components of the issues*
- *Viewpoints of the stakeholders involved*
- *Why and how are current approaches are succeeding or failing*
- *Impacts of these dynamics on the stakeholders and broader development outcomes*

Enter text here

**Implications**

- *What do these findings mean for development actors*
- *What actions and appropriate roles could or should the different actors take to address the issue (such as MFAT, partner governments, New Zealand development organisations, international institutions)*
- *What might be the outcomes of recommended courses of action or inaction*

Enter text here

**Limitations and further research**

- *What limitations do the research findings and lessons have*
- *How do these limitations impact the implications or recommendations provided above*
- *What knowledge gaps still remain*
- *Why is it important that further research be conducted to investigate these knowledge gaps?*

Enter text here

**Award Holder Declaration and Signature**

**Declaration**

I confirm that I have completed the field research component of my [Masters/Doctorate] programme during [enter year] in accordance with the budget and research proposal submitted in my New Zealand Aid Programme Awards Application.

The Award funds I received were used only for approved purchases as set out in the Award Regulations and my proposal budget.

I confirm that I have sought approval from Universities New Zealand for any significant changes to the budget and research proposal that occurred during the year of my Award.

The full duration of my field research was greater than four week and I conducted the research in a professional and ethical manner.

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**Signature**

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**Date**

Enter date here

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**Name**

Enter name here

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## Confirmation and Approval from Academic Supervisor

To be completed by the Academic Supervisor of the Awardee and delivered to Universities New Zealand along side a policy brief completed the Awardee.

**Name of Awardee** Enter name here

**Postgraduate programme** Enter title here

**Title of research** Enter title here

**Confirmation and approval** I confirm that *[enter Awardee name here]* completed the field research component of their [Masters/Doctorate] programme during *[enter year]* in accordance with the budget and research proposal submitted in their New Zealand Aid Programme Awards Application and any approved changes during the year of the Award.

The full duration of the field research was greater than four weeks. To the best of my knowledge the Awardee conducted the research in a professional and ethical manner.

I have viewed the Awardees completed Policy Brief and confirm it is of adequate quality.

**Supervisor Signature**

**Date** Enter date here

**Name** Enter name here

**Title** Enter title here

## Questionnaire

### Questionnaire for Award holders:

This questionnaire is a self-assessment of the skills you have developed as a result of your Award and field research experience. The questionnaire also provides you with the opportunity to provide feedback on the Award processes and requirements and to make recommendations for improvements.

*Awardees please complete the following questionnaire using the drop down options and entering text in the spaces available. Please return the Questionnaire to Universities New Zealand with your completed signed Policy Brief by the date specified in your Letter of Offer and Acceptance Form.*

1. Did your field research experience help you to develop deeper **practical knowledge and understanding of development**? Please rate the extent to which you believe your knowledge developed over the course of your research:

Scale:

No change			Moderate improvement				Significant improvement		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Choose your rating here: **N/A**

2. Did your field research experience help you to develop stronger **analytical and research skills**? Please rate the extent to which you believe your research skills developed over the course of your research:

Scale:

No change			Moderate improvement				Significant improvement		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Choose your rating here: **N/A**

3. Did your experience in applying for and completing the Award requirements help you to develop stronger **policy and professional skills**\*? Please rate the extent to which you believe your policy and professional skills developed over the course of your Award:

\* Note: examples of policy and professional skills include the ability to identify implications of research findings for policy, and the ability to deliver targeted knowledge products for use in policy and practice.

Scale:

No change			Moderate growth in skills				Significant growth in skills					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	or	N/A	

Choose your rating here: **N/A**

4. What aspects of the Award process and requirements were particularly useful for helping you to develop these skills?

Enter text here

5. How could the Award processes and requirements be improved to enhance the skills students develop?

Enter text here

6. As a result of your field research experience, to what extent did your overall level of **interest in development issues** strengthen or change?

Scale:

Decreased interest in development issues			No change		Moderate increase in interest				Significant increase in interest				
-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Choose your rating here: **N/A**

7. Do you intend to pursue a career within a development-related field?

Response: **yes**

8. As a result of your field research and Award experience to what extent did your **interest in your particular research theme/issue and region** strengthen or change?

Scale:

Decreased interest in the specific issues or region			No change		Moderate increase				Significant increase in interest				
-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10



Choose your rating here: **N/A**

9. Do you intend to pursue more research or job opportunities within the sector/topic/theme and region on which you conducted your research?

Response: **yes**

10. To what extent do you believe the experiences and skills you have developed through this Award and your field research will assist you to obtain a job in the development sector or your chosen career?

Scale:

No help		Somewhat helpful/advantageous					very helpful/advantageous					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	or	N/A	

Choose your rating here: **N/A**

11. Do you have any other suggestions for how the Awards could be improved?

Enter text here

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*Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire – your responses will be very helpful in our efforts to improve the Awards for the future*  
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