

## THE ASSIGNMENT: Policy Memo DEADLINES

Policy Memo Draft 1 Due (Due **by class time** to get feedback from peers) – April 7

Policy Memo Draft 2 Due (Graded) – April 14 @ 11:59pm

Policy Memo Due (Graded) – April 26 @ 11:59pm

### What is a policy memo?

A policy memo is document often shared with a policy maker to quickly convey information about a topic. Policy memos vary in their intent. The writer of a policy memo has to consider if the intent is to educate the recipient on a topic, to provide policy options, or to outline policy recommendations. Whatever the intent, information has to be conveyed succinctly and accurately. The ultimate goal of a memo is to convey information to a policy maker, so that they can make an informed decision based on the information you, the writer, provide.

Adapted from Thompson Writing Program Writing Studio

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## PURPOSE & GOALS

Scientists have to communicate their research to many different audiences, including potential funders, other scientists, the general public, policy makers, among others. Knowing how to navigate research, synthesize information from many different journal articles, form informed questions based on research, and communicate research to different audiences are skills that are not only valuable for scientists, but for those individuals, who have to use science in their career. The skills you will use in this project will help you be a better communicator of science in whatever career you choose. In particular, for this project you will sharpen your skills on communicating research to a policy maker.

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## PROCEDURES

### Audience

The audience for the policy memo is a policy maker. You can choose any policy maker to which you would like to address your memo. For many of you this may be specific Duke administrators. For others, it may be Durham area policy makers.

### Collaboration

Science is a collaborative process. You may have noticed that very rarely do you see a research article with one author. Often articles have multiple co-authors, who have contributed to the project in different ways and to different extents. You will have the opportunity to collaborate with group members on the project proposal and literature review. You can write the project proposal and literature review together if you choose. **HOWEVER, you will individually each write a policy memo.** Endless creative solutions exist for any one problem, and I want to know yours. The policy memo will provide you the opportunity to

showcase your individual creative problem solving skills. At the end of the semester as a group you will present on some background related to your topic and the solutions you devised.

## Description of Policy Memo

### POLICY MEMO

Communicating science to elected officials is a valuable skill that can aid in the translation of science into policy. The policy memo will be 4-5 pages (2000+ words) and will include a detailed background of the issue and policy recommendations you have for addressing the issue. Policy recommendations will address ways in which the community or university can be a part of the solution to the problem. Although as a group you worked on the proposal and literature review, **you will individually write the policy memo.** Thus, everyone in the group will have the same topic and question for the memo, but it will be up to you to decide what will you argue in the memo, what is your ultimate goal for the memo, and what policy recommendations will you provide. You and your group members will come together at the end of the semester and present together on background about your topic and individually each group member will add a slide to the presentation with their policy recommendations.

### THE PARTS OF YOUR POLICY MEMO

Keep in mind these helpful tips from the Thompson Writing Program about writing policy memos. We will also review these in class. Please also keep in mind those tips that our guest lecturer will share with us in class. Also remember our review of good and bad memos discussed in class.

<https://twp.duke.edu/sites/twp.duke.edu/files/file-attachments/policy-memo.original.pdf>

Your memo will be 4-5 pages (2000+ words). Your memo should be divided into the following sections:

#### I. **Executive Summary (1 page)**

This section provides a couple of introductory sentences that give background on your project. A sentence or two stating your position (i.e. why this issue is important). A sentence or two with your recommendations toward a solution. And lastly, a concluding sentence reiterating the importance and urgency of the issue. Usually it helps to write the executive summary after you have written the other parts of the memo. Make sure you cite references.

#### II. **Background (1-2 pages)**

This section will give a detailed background of your issue. Make sure you cite references. This is where you set the stage for the argument you want to make. You will likely use parts of your literature review here. HOWEVER, keep in mind you do not want your policy memo to be too long. You may have to trim down your literature review language, so that your background is more concise. You will want to last paragraph of your background to be similar to your last conclusion paragraph of your literature review, as this is where you set the stage for your memo and make the transition from background section to your recommendation section. See the literature review assignment to remind yourself what this paragraph should look like. Cite your references.

#### III. **Recommendations (1-2 pages)**

Take a position. Provide 2-3 recommendations toward a solution. For each recommendation create a bullet point or subheading. Try to base your recommended solutions off your knowledge of the background. Try to think about the cost of implementing your solution. What

solutions are feasible? Solutions could take the form of educational programs, signage, policies, etc. The options are limitless. Be creative. Think about how the solutions you suggest will contribute to the well-being of the community and the representative's constituents. For example, you may want to emphasize how your recommended solutions will benefit the Duke community if your target is a Duke official. It may help to provide examples of other places (e.g. other college campuses), where such solutions have already been implemented. Make sure you cite references.

#### IV. Conclusion (1 page)

Summarize your position. And hit home the importance and urgency of the issue. Make sure you cite references.

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## OTHER DETAILS

### Sources

**[These are the same instructions for your literature review. You can use the same sources you used in your literature review].** You must have a minimum of 7 scientific primary sources (peer-reviewed scientific journals) for your policy memo **AND** one source (primary or secondary) directly related to your target audience for your policy memo. Sources can be the same for the literature review and memo. You will likely find that you need more than 7 sources to write a comprehensive review. I encourage you to use as many sources as you need to make a convincing case that your identified question is important (not to be less than 7). I want at least one source (primary or secondary) that is directly related to your target audience for your policy memo. For example, if your target audience is Duke Campus Farm, I want you to have at least one source related to the Duke Campus Farm, such as their 2019 annual report.