



Voluntary Sector Review

Advice for preparing Policy and Practice Papers for the Journal

There is often an accepted pattern assumed for academic papers for journals¹ but Policy and Practice papers are an opportunity to deviate a little from these conventions and also to stress reflections and implications that are of relevance and value for policy makers and practitioners. A Policy and Practice paper can draw on a study or research project but this is not essential. What is vital is that there is some insightful policy analysis and practice-based lessons that are spelled out and would be useful to policy makers or practitioners.

Papers should be 3000-4000 words including an abstract of 75 words. Further guidance on language, style and references is provided on the journal's website and inside the journal's back cover. See the 'Instructions for authors' section of the website: <https://policypress.co.uk/journals/voluntary-sector-review>.

If you are considering submitting a practice paper to the journal it is very useful to take time to refer to practice articles in previous issues. The points below are intended to provide guidance and a possible framework (rather than a blueprint!).

1. Papers should start by stating the policy, issue, challenge or problem and explain why it is important and relevant to the concerns of voluntary organisations, those that lead and manage them or those that develop policy to support their work. You should also state briefly how the paper is structured.
2. The paper should then offer a brief account of what it will draw on to provide a better understanding of the policy, issue or challenge the paper is presenting. This might be a piece of policy analysis or research but it might also be a description of a practical activity and some reflections on that experience. In either case this part of the paper needs to establish the basis for the author's claims to the insights offered that will inform his or her conclusions.
3. The main body of the paper would then focus on the relevant findings from, for example, the detail of the policy analysis, an empirical study, or the main lessons learnt from the experience of a

¹ For example: review of relevant literature; explanation and rationale of research design; findings from a study; and discussion in terms of what has been contributed to knowledge and understanding.

project, programme or activity (such as, for example, an evaluation of a small piece of action research or reflections on a project or practice would clearly).

4. The next section of the paper would then normally discuss the application and implications (including limitations) of the findings for policy makers or practical settings. This is not to exclude any reflections on the contribution of the findings to the development of policy or theory but for this type of paper these would be secondary to their practical application.

5. Finally, the paper should aim to conclude by highlighting how the learning reported enables readers to deal better with the opening challenge, policy development or issues presented.

Referencing

In a paper focused on policy and practical lessons, references are likely to be more limited than for a conventional journal article. However, supporting the text with parallel examples or similar approaches, already published, is helpful. Any references included should follow the referencing system (custom version of the Harvard system) of the journal – a guide is provided at the back of the journal, and on the journal's website.

A note on submission

You may submit your paper directly to the appropriate part of the online system, as indicated on the journal's website. However, some people have found it helpful to check their ideas on early drafts with the Practice Editor before submission. In that case, one of the co-editors a.m.body@kent.ac.uk or Chris Dayson, C.Dayson@shu.ac.uk can advise you on your draft before you decide to submit.