

GUIDE TO POLICY BRIEF

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THE ESSENTIALS

POLICY BRIEF

- a. Concise and clear summary of rationale for choosing a particular policy alternative or course of action in a current policy debate.
- b. Serves as an impetus for action.
- c. It is a shorter version of “Policy Study” whereby a brief maxed out at 7-10 pages.
- d. It serves as a propagation tool for advocacy effort.

TYPES OF POLICY BRIEF

- a. Advocacy Brief
- b. Objective Brief

tone and terminology

- a. Direct language for non-specialist reader.
- b. Jargons must be explained in glossary of terms.

FORMAT

- a. **Title** communicates the contents of the policy brief clearly.
- b. **Executive Summary** includes overview and proposed policy options.
- c. **Recommendations** must be short, realistic and related to the rest of the policy document.
- d. **Introduction** communicates importance of the problem and reasons to take action about it.
- e. **Main Body** short paragraph that communicates a single idea and support the call for action.
- f. **Policy Implications** advantages and disadvantages of each policy options can be detailed here.
- g. **Conclusions** is a one sentence statement to sum up the entire policy document.

POLICY BRIEF

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

It is a concise and clear summary for choosing a particular policy alternative or course of action in a current policy debate which then serves as an impetus for action.

WHO IS IT FOR?

It is aimed at policymakers and people who are interested in formulating or influencing policymaking.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

It serves as an impetus for action within Malaysian Medics International through evidence-based research and decision making.

HOW CAN IT BE DONE?

- *Advocacy Brief* argues in favour of a particular course of action.
- *Objective Brief* gives balanced information for the policymaker to make up his or her mind.

For both Advocacy and Objective Brief, they can be written in the following format:

- *Long Brief* takes the format of eight (8) to ten (10) pages long with attractive design.
- *Short Brief* takes the format of a singular page of 500-700 words with attractive design.

STYLE OF WRITING

The policy should be written with non-specialist reader language. Jargons must be explained in the simplest term in a specialised table called the “Glossary of Terms” in the brief.

FRAMING THE ISSUE

Recommendations and solutions to multiple problems can be formulated based on the basic formula, PASTEL, which is an acronym for Political, Administrative, Social, Technological/Science, Economic, and Legal. This formula allows for exploration of different perspectives on feasibility of policy options. Usage of this formula is detailed below:

Statement: Should all boys in Malaysia be vaccinated with HPV vaccination?

Possible Recommendations: Give all boys vaccination in Malaysia.

Subsidise HPV vaccination for boys in Malaysia.

Mandate for all non-heterosexual boys in Malaysia to get HPV vaccination.

Legends: (+) positive impact. (-) negative impact. (+/-) neutral.

Status Quo: Indicates the current state of action. Whether any effort is planned, made, executed or failed attempt.

Status Quo	+	+	+	+/-	-	-
Give all boys vaccination in Malaysia.	+	-	-	-	+	-
Subsidise HPV vaccination for boys in Malaysia.	+/-	+	+/-	+	+/-	+
Mandate for all non-heterosexual boys in Malaysia to get HPV vaccination.	-	+/-	+	+/-	-	-
Feasibility Criteria	Political	Administrative	Social	Technological/Science	Economic	Legal

Based on this chart, we can see that amongst the three recommendations for the one “statement of problem”, the most positive impacts “call for action” is to “subsidise HPV vaccination for boys in Malaysia” from all perspectives. Also, the perspectives are gathered either by literature searches, or discussion with experts in each particular field, e.g. economist, legal experts.

The next important point of view to consider is the stakeholders’ feasibility for these recommendations to run. In order to do this, a stakeholder’s chart should be developed. List of all stakeholders have to be developed prior to the construction of the table.

Legends: (+) positive impact. (-) negative impact. (+/-) neutral.

Status Quo: Indicates the current state of opinion.

Status Quo	+	+	+	+/-	-	-
Give all boys vaccination in Malaysia.	+	-	-	-	+	-
Subsidise HPV vaccination for boys in Malaysia.	+/-	+	+/-	+	+/-	+
Mandate for all non-heterosexual boys in Malaysia to get HPV vaccination.	-	+/-	+	+/-	-	-
Interest Group	General Public	Ministry of Health	Healthcare Workers	Pharmaceutical Corporation	Political Support	NGOs

Based on the chart above, we can see that most stakeholders are in favour of feasibility for “subsidise HPV vaccination for boys in Malaysia.”

The final step to this process is to run a **SWOT analysis** - Strength Weakness Opportunity Threat Analysis. This helps in giving the perspective of surrounding environment to identify the strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and threats to the recommendations. This is done with a 2x2 chart.

	Helpful	Harmful
Internal Origin	Strength <list down the quality here>	Weakness <list down the quality here>
External Origin	Opportunities <list down the quality here>	Threats <list down the quality here>

The chart above allow for thought experiment to find out how the recommendation made would affect Malaysian Medics International as an organisation. The SWOT analysis allows for “Policy Implications” to be written.

WRITING THE BRIEF

The policy brief should be written in the following style:

- Single-Column:** Executive Summary, Recommendations
- Double-Column:** Introduction, Main Body, Policy Implications, Conclusions
- Perambulatory phrases:** Positional statement. This states all the issues that the policy brief needs to address. It may include reasons why the committee is working on this issue and highlight previous international actions on the issue.
- Operative clauses:** This states the recommendations or clause of actions which this policy is intended to address.

Perambulatory Phrases		Operative Phrases	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affirming • Alarmed by • Approving • Aware of • Bearing in mind • Believing • Confident • Contemplating • Convinced • Declaring • Deeply concerned • Deeply conscious • Deeply convinced • Deeply disturbed • Deeply regretting • Desiring • Emphasizing • Expecting • Expressing its appreciation • Expressing its satisfaction • Fulfilling • Fully aware • Fully alarmed • Fully believing • Further deploring • Further recalling • Guided by • Having adopted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having considered • Having devoted attention • Having examined • Having heard • Having received • Having studied • Keeping in mind • Noting with regret • Noting with deep concern • Noting with satisfaction • Noting further • Noting with approval • Observing • Reaffirming • Realising • Recalling • Recognising • Referring • Seeking • Taking into account • Taking into consideration • Taking note • Viewing with appreciation • Welcoming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accepts • Affirms • Approves • Authorises • Calls • Calls upon • Condemns • Confirms • Congratulates • Considers • Declares accordingly • Deplores • Designates • Draws the attention • Emphasizes • Encourages • Endorses • Expresses its appreciation • Expresses its hope • Deplores • Draws the attention • Emphasizes • Encourages • Expresses its appreciation • Expresses its hope • Further invites • Further proclaims • Further reminds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further recommends • Further requests • Further resolves • Has resolved • Notes • Proclaims • Reaffirms • Recommends • Regret • Reminds • Requests • Solemnly affirms • Strongly condemns • Supports • Takes note of • Transmits • Trusts

EDITORIAL

The editorial process should include checking of the following by at least two (2) independent reviewers who are not part of the writing process:

- Spelling
- Punctuation
- Format
- Unnecessary information
- Logical sequence of sentences
- Repetition of information
- Dense, heavy sentences
- Sequencing of paragraphs/ideas
- Clarity of the message
- Missing information
- Politically sensitive issues
- Paragraph coherence
- Unnecessary word repetition
- Grammatical mistakes

MALAYSIAN MEDICS INTERNATIONAL SPECIFICS

All policy briefs must first be endorsed by the two-third majority of the “Executive Council” of the term. Endorsement can be done through utilising the template and developing new endorsing document via Protocol No. ADV-2020-07.

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Disclaimer: The author wishes to acknowledge the contribution by Dr. Darien Liew Daojuin, Dr. Arisha Emily Yap, Low Wen Yan in reviewing the guide and for providing useful feedbacks in the writing of this document. The author declares the guide has been developed with adaptations for Malaysian Medics International specific requirements from the list of references in writing this guide. This guide is intended solely for the purpose of guiding the policy writing for Malaysian Medics International and must not be reproduced in any parts through any media without permission in writing from the author. The author is not liable to any damages as a result of usage of this guide. Malaysian Medics International, 2020.