

Advocacy and Influence

Sequence, 7 sessions, one week

In this sequence of sessions, you deepen students' understanding of the factors that influence decision-makers to make change, and of the circumstances in which research can contribute towards change. Consider a broad range of 'decision-makers', including politicians, health-service managers, senior faculty, directors of research institutions, and community leaders.

In particular, students:

- Describe the advocacy process and ways of influencing decision-makers.
- Identify the factors that influence decision-makers and decision-making processes.
- Identify key advocacy strategies that are used to influence social change.
- Explain how to use evidence to influence decision-making on policy and practice through what is known as 'knowledge translation'.
- Identify opportunities to influence decision-makers, as well as the mechanisms that may be appropriate to each opportunity.
- Develop their capacity and skills in communicating research findings to maximise uptake and impact.

By the end of these sessions, each student produces a policy or knowledge brief from components of their PhD work.

Download [the curriculum](#) for this sequence.

Steps

Timetable

Use or adapt this timetable to hold these integrated sessions over one week.

Time	Step	Who
As needed	1. Present the benefits of work-life balance	Facilitator
As needed	2. Identify the signs of imbalance	Plenary
As needed	3. Design strategies for well-being	Individuals, groups
As needed	4. Handle stress differently	Plenary

Session 1. Stakeholder Analysis | 2-4 hours

To whom should a researcher direct their advocacy efforts? A process called stakeholder analysis, enables researchers to identify those to target in order to influence relevant policy and practice.

Outcomes

By the end of the session, students can:

- Identify potential stakeholders to be targeted for influencing policy relating to doctoral research findings.
- Develop a stakeholder analysis relevant to findings from their doctoral research.

Preparation

As facilitator

Create or source a presentation to define policy and advocacy.

Print copies or share links:

- Schemeer, K. (2000). [Stakeholder analysis guidelines](#). Policy Toolkit for strengthening health. Partnership for Health Reform, Abt Associates Inc, 2000.
- Hutahaeen, M.(2016). [The importance of stakeholders approach in public policy making](#). Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research, 2016, 84: 462-466.

Students

Read the two key texts

Assessment

Groupwork presentations and feedback from peers and facilitators.

Steps

Time	Step	Who
As needed	1. Define 'policy' and 'advocacy'	Facilitator
As needed	2. Develop a stakeholder analysis	Individuals
As needed	3. Discuss challenges of stakeholder analyses	Plenary

Step 1. Define 'policy' and 'advocacy'

As needed

Give a short explanation of the meaning of these two terms. Explain stakeholder analysis as the essential first step in developing an advocacy strategy: identifying those with the interest and influence to use these particular research findings to make change.

Step 2. Develop individual professional development plans

As needed

As guided by the key reading – (Schemeer, 2000) – each student develops a stakeholder analysis relevant to findings from their doctoral research.

Step 3. Discuss processes and challenges of stakeholder analyses

As needed

In plenary, students reflect on the steps involved in stakeholder analysis and any challenges they encountered, with input from you and any co-facilitators.

Session 2. How Research Can Influence Change | 2-4 hours

In this session, case studies demonstrate how research findings can inform new policies or improve the effectiveness of existing programs. Students learn about effective influence strategies in practice, along with policies that incentivise the collection of data and use of evidence. These approaches have primarily been applied to social and human-services programs, but a wide variety of government programs could benefit from building and using evidence.

Outcomes

By the end of the session, students can:

- Explain, step by step, how to use research to influence policy.
- Identify the diverse forms that knowledge brokers use to translate findings for decision-makers or the public.

Preparation

Read and share with students:

- Lavis, et al. (2009). SUPPORT tools for evidence-informed health policymaking (STP) 14: Organising and using policy dialogues to support evidence-informed policymaking, Health Research Policy and Systems, 2009, 7 (Suppl 1): S14. doi:10.1186/1478-4505-7-S1-S14.
- Hofman, K., and Tollman, S. (2013). Population health in South Africa: A view from the salt mines. www.thelancet.com/lancetgh Vol 1 August 2013: e66-e67 4.

Create or source a presentation to summarise the steps involved in using research to influence policy. (Step 1).

Source three suitable case studies. (Step 2).

Steps

Time	Step	Who
As needed	1. Explain how to use research to influence policy	Facilitator, students
As needed	2. Identify different means to influence policy	Pairs

Step 1. Explain how to use research to influence policy

As needed

Give your presentation: the steps involved in using research to influence policy and then involve students in discussion.

Step 2. Identify different means to influence policy

As needed

In pairs, students analyse one of three case studies.

Case study 1: The use of research findings to develop a drama to engage a local community to take up an issue.

Case study 2: Policy dialogue and ongoing engagement in Hofman, K., and Tollman, S. (2013).

Case study 3: Community members make a presentation to parliament or city council or health service managers, using findings from community monitoring.

Back in the plenary, each pair describes what they learned from the case study. Summarise the means that the pairs identify.

Session 3. Knowledge Translation and Transfere | 2-4 hours

Participants draw on the case studies in Session 2 and ask themselves:

How could my research influence various, relevant stakeholders?

And how best could I translate my evidence to reach and influence them?

Students examine current evidence around implementation strategies – the ‘translation’ of evidence into programs, policy, and practice. They deepen their understanding of:

- Knowledge translation and knowledge transfer.
- Assessing public-health evidence and its application.
- Engaging with multidisciplinary teams, stakeholders and citizens/the public to influence change.
- Implementing evidence in practice to improve safety, quality, and practice.

Outcomes

After this session, students can:

- Evaluate knowledge transfer models and frameworks.
- Identify the effectiveness of knowledge transfer strategies.
- Explain knowledge transfer and evidence-based practice.
- Identify which of the vehicles used by knowledge brokers to translate and transfer knowledge to decision-makers, or the public, may be most appropriate for their own research findings.

Preparation

As facilitator

Create or source an introductory presentation on knowledge transfer models and frameworks. (Session 1).

Create or source a presentation to explain knowledge transfer in relation to evidence-based practice. (Session 3).

Students

Read the resource articles

- Sudsawad, P. (2007). [Knowledge translation](#): Introduction to models, strategies, and measures. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, National Center for the Dissemination of Disability Research.
- Strauss, S., Tetroe, J., Graham, I. (2009). [Knowledge Translation in Health Care](#): Moving from Evidence to Practice. Wiley-

Blackwell.

- Grimshaw, J.M. et al. [Knowledge translation of research findings](#). Implementation Science. 2012, 7:50 Implementation Science.

Steps

Time	Step	Who
As needed	1. Present knowledge transfer frameworks	Facilitator
As needed	2. Discuss the effectiveness of the models	Plenary
As needed	3. Discuss knowledge transfer	Facilitator, plenary
As needed	4. Compare vehicles for knowledge transfer	Groups, plenary

Step 1. Present knowledge transfer frameworks

As needed

Give your presentation to explain knowledge transfer models and frameworks, including definitions of **knowledge translation and knowledge transfer**.

Step 2. Discuss the effectiveness of the models

As needed

Invite students to identify knowledge transfer strategies and discuss their effectiveness, with reference to their reading of Sudsawad (2007).

Step 3. Discuss knowledge transfer

As needed

Briefly introduce and explain knowledge transfer in relation to evidence-based practice, and invite participants to discuss their own experiences, and their responses to reading Strauss et al (2009).

Step 4. Compare vehicles for knowledge transfer

As needed

In small groups of four or five, with one as rapporteur, students identify and compare the vehicles that knowledge brokers use for knowledge translation to decision-makers. Each student thinks about which 'vehicle/s' may be most suitable to transfer the knowledge that will emerge from their own research study.

Session 4. Cases of Evidence Influencing Policy | 2-4 hours

Students deepen their understanding of knowledge translation by learning from the experience of advocates who have used research in different contexts to enable different kinds of change.

Outcomes

After this session, students can:

- Discuss how other researchers have used evidence to influence social change.
- Apply policy evidence approaches to their own PhD research.
- Analyse the complexity of policy change on diverse issues in diverse contexts, the potential roles of research in influencing policy or services or public perspectives, and the related challenges that arise.

Preparation

As facilitator

Create or source presentations to introduce:

- Case studies of policy-evidence strategies. (Step 1).

- The complexity of policy change and the roles and challenges of evidence to influence policy. (Step 3).

Students

Read the resource article:

Oliver, K., & Cairney, P. (2019). [The dos and don'ts of influencing policy](#): a systematic review of advice to academics. *Palgrave Communications*, 5(1), 1-11.

Steps

Time	Step	Who
As needed	1. Discuss policy-evidence case studies	Facilitator, groups, plenary
As needed	2. Apply policy-evidence approaches	Individuals
As needed	2. Apply policy-evidence approaches	Facilitator, plenary

Step 1. Discuss policy-evidence case studies

As needed

Give your presentation to introduce case studies of researchers who have used evidence to influence social change.

In small groups, students discuss the case studies. Each group focuses on a different case study and then groups take turns to summarise their case study in plenary.

Step 2. Apply policy-evidence approaches

As needed

In this practical exercise, individuals draw on the case study examples to outline an advocacy strategy to use the (potential) findings of their PhD study to influence policy.

Step 3. Analyse the complexity of policy change

As needed

Introduce:

- The complexity of policy change on diverse issues in diverse contexts.
- The potential roles of research in influencing policy, or services, or public perspectives.
- Related challenges that may arise.

In their groups and giving examples, students analyse the complexity and challenges of the policy–research nexus.

In plenary, groups present their conclusions. Peers and, finally, you and co-facilitators give feedback on the presentations.

Session 5. Policy Briefing Documents | 2-4 hours

Orient participants to policy briefs:

- What they are.
- How to create them.
- How effective they can be as a mechanism for facilitating knowledge transfer.

Students develop an understanding of how researchers and advocacy groups distil research findings into core evidence and arguments that are clear and brief enough to capture the attention of the targeted decision-makers.

Outcomes

By the end of the session, students can:

- Describe the key components of a policy brief.
- Explain the purpose of a policy brief for a particular context.

- Critique policy briefs.

Preparation

As facilitator

Create or source a presentation to introduce components and types of policy briefs.

Check equipment including sound if you are going to screen videos.

Prepare to screen the [video](#) 'Dandora E case' or share the link with students.

Identify and engage a guest to present their experience and example of translating research into a policy brief. Make sure that they are familiar with the session objectives as well as the participatory [CARTA approach](#).

Source helpful how-to videos on developing policy briefs to screen or share.

Students

Read the resource articles:

- Oliver, K., & Cairney, P. (2019). [The dos and don'ts of influencing policy](#): a systematic review of advice to academics. *Palgrave Communications*, 5(1), 1-11.
- Oliver, K., Innvar, S., Lorenc, T., Woodman, J., & Thomas, J. (2014). [A systematic review of barriers to and facilitators of the use of evidence by policymakers](#). *BMC Health Services Research*, 14(1), 2.
- Lavis, J., N., Permanand G., Oxman, A. D., Lewin, S., & Fretheim, A. (2009). [SUPPORT Tools for evidence-informed health Policymaking \(STP\) 13](#): Preparing and using policy briefs to support evidence-informed policymaking. *Health Research Policy and Systems* 2009, 7(Suppl 1):S13.

Assessment

Assign and assess an essay on the use of policy briefs to influence the tobacco industry. (Individuals).

Assess infographics. (Groups).

Assess contributions to and conclusions of group reflections on the Dandora case study.

Steps

Time	Step	Who
As needed	1. Describe types and components of policy briefs	Facilitator
As needed	2. Explain contextual policy-brief strategies	Video, guest, groups
As needed	3. Critique policy briefs	Groups

Step 1. Describe types and components of policy briefs

As needed

Give your presentation on the components of a policy brief and examples of the different types of policy brief.

Step 2. Explain contextual policy-brief strategies

As needed

Screen the [video](#) of the Dandora case or share the link.

Introduce a guest to describe (briefly) their experience of translating research into a policy brief.

Refer to examples from the video, the guest's experience, and the reading in order to explain how to develop a policy brief for the particular context. Include factors such as:

- The problem that the research addresses.
- The goals and interests of the relevant decision-makers.
- The interests and potential influence of groups and allies who could play an intermediary role in advocating change.

In groups and in relation to their own research or one of the cases, students work together to create an infographic for a policy brief.

Step 3. Critique policy briefs

As needed

With reference to [Lavis \(2009\)](#) and other resources, students work in groups to critique range of policy briefs.

In plenary, each group presents their critique.

Session 6. 'The Elevator Pitch' | 2-4 hours

To communicate research findings succinctly (in four to six short sentences) is a critical skill for capturing busy people's interest. In this session, students experiment in creating an 'elevator pitch' – a brief, persuasive speech to spark the busy listener's interest in one's research, project, idea, or product – or in oneself.

A good elevator pitch – or 'soundbite' – should last no longer than a short elevator ride of 20 to 30 seconds, hence the name. It should be interesting, memorable, and succinct. Each student must therefore convey what makes their research unique.

Outcomes

By the end of the session, students can:

- Provide a short, precise, verbal profile of their research.
- Summarise the key components of their research work in less than three minutes.

Preparation

Check equipment including sound if you are going to screen videos.

Prepare to screen the video '[The Elevator Pitch](#)' or share the link with students.

Create or source a short introduction to the value of communicating an issue succinctly. See the detail in Step 1.

Students

Read the resources:

- Uyen. (2013). [Elevator Pitches for Scientists: What, When, Where and How](#).
- Sumner, A., et al. (2011). [What shapes research impact on policy?](#) Understanding research uptake in sexual and reproductive health policy processes in resource poor contexts. Health Research Policy and Systems, 2011, 9 (Suppl1) S3. Section on Policy Ideas / Narratives pages 6–7.

Assessment

Peer and facilitator critique of one-minute elevator pitches.

Steps

Time	Step	Who
As needed	1. Write a summary of one's research profile	Facilitator, individuals
As needed	2. Present and review elevator pitches	Groups

Step 1. Write a summary of one's research profile

As needed

Show the [video](#) and give your short introduction to the value of communicating an issue succinctly, with examples of effective, brief communication for change.

Before you underline the need to be succinct, emphasise the importance of appropriate framing of the message to match the analysis of the interests of decision-makers in this specific context and moment in time. The narrative must address the current policy agendas of decision-makers.

The writer must be clear:

Who is my target audience?

What is the entry point to capture that audience's interest?

Students work individually to write 150 words – to take less than a minute to deliver – to summarise their research study (research profile), using this format:

What problem does my research address? (from the entry point of the audience's understanding of the problem).

What do my research findings indicate in relation to the problem?

Why are these findings credible? (quality/scope of research).

What recommendations emerge from my findings? (that your audience could act upon).

The most important difference this change will make is ... (define).

Step 2. Present and review elevator pitches

As needed

Divide the students into groups of five each and ensure that each student has seven minutes: one minute to present their message and six minutes for peers to give feedback and constructive critique.

Session 7. Develop a Policy Brief | 2-4 hours

Each student develops a policy brief on their own research findings. They identify their target audience: the decision-makers whom they aim to influence.

Outcomes

By the end of the session, students can:

- Identify key evidence and messages from their research that they should disseminate to relevant stakeholders to promote progressive social change.
- Draft a policy brief for relevant decision-makers.
- Identify key components and effectiveness of a policy brief.

Preparation

Draw on the resources to create two short introductions:

- To this session as a whole.
- To the essential components of an effective policy brief.

Check equipment including sound if you are going to screen videos.

Prepare to screen the video [How to Make a Concept Map](#) or share the link with students.

Prepare a wall or space for participants to display their briefs OR share the briefs in emails, OR organise a virtual space for sharing briefs.

Students

Read the resources

- Wiki: [Make a Concept Map](#).
- DeMarco, R., & Tufts, A. K. (2014). [The mechanics of writing a policy brief](#). Nurse Outlook 62: 21-224.

Peer assessment

All submit their policy briefs.

Each participant critiques the policy briefs of three peers.

As the facilitator, review and give feedback on the briefs.

Steps

Time	Step	Who
As needed	1. Identify key evidence and messages	Facilitator, individuals
As needed	2. Target the specific audience	Individuals
As needed	3. Identify components of an effective policy brief	Facilitator, individuals
Afterwards	4. Critique three peers' briefs	Individuals

Step 1. Identify key evidence and messages

As needed

This is the first step in developing a policy brief for each student's own research findings. Introduce the session and the process of generating a conceptual map.

After any necessary clarifications, students work on their own to create an infographic for the policy brief from their own research findings, drawing on the resources.

Step 2. Target the specific audience

As needed

Students draft a policy brief from their own findings, tailored to the specific audience they have identified.

Step 3. Identify components of an effective policy brief

As needed

Give your presentation, revisiting the components of an effective policy brief.

Students work individually, each developing a policy brief from their own research findings. When they are done, they print a copy or share by email, or on an online platform.

Step 4. Critique three peers' briefs

As needed

Each student now reviews the briefs produced by three peers. They share their critiques in person, or on the wall or on an online platform.