

CREATING AND MAXIMISING POLICY IMPACT

*A guide for Geary academic researchers to engage with,
inform, and impact public policymaking*



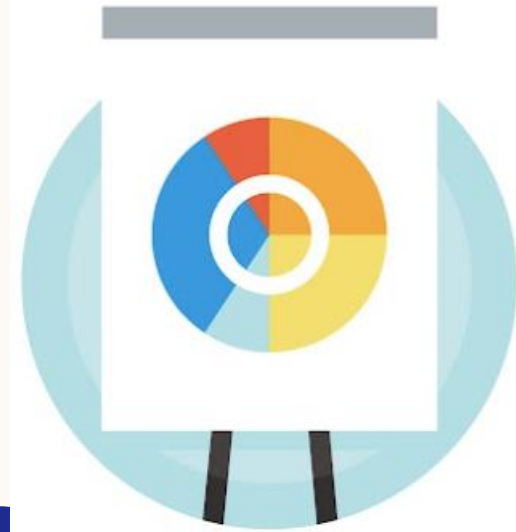
This **guide** seeks to provide Geary Institute Fellows and Researchers with tools that enables their academic research to inform economic, social and environmental policies and effectively disseminate relevant research findings to policymakers and interested citizens.

Why is this important?

Academic values: Commitment to the topic. Achieving more than research for research's sake. Improve people's lives. Make sure the voices of research subjects are heard.

Better Strategies and Organisations: Policy and operating environment for the organisation or profession improves. Profile of the organisation or profession among policymakers improves.

Careers: Adds variety and challenge. One of the criteria for academic promotions in UCD. Increasingly important for research grant capture. Acknowledged by awards e.g., Irish Research Council research impact. Part of the UK Research Excellence Framework.



Academic research is significantly **underrepresented, underused, and misunderstood** in policymaking ([Kenny, 2017](#)) 3

But why is this?

Research can be *poorly presented* and *mistimed* for the policymaking environment.



- Academic research is often **long on diagnosis** of problems and critique of existing policies, while;
- **Short on prescriptions** for policy reform and ideas to fix the policy problems identified
- Often consists of **technical, academic jargon**, making it hard to understand.
- Much of the research is **too long** and not upfront with policy outcomes and/or recommendations
- Academic submissions for consultations and calls for evidence are usually **submitted late** or **not received** in the first instance
- Lack of awareness or prioritisation by academics of the **key windows to influence** decision-making compared to private and voluntary sectors.

Identify the policy changes you wish to make

What type of policy change? To be placed on the policy agenda? Advocation of specific policy adoption? Policy blocking? Specific policy design? Maintenance of a particular policy? Policy reform or changes in implementation arrangements?

Think about your broad approach

Confrontation (public meetings, commissioned research by advocacy groups, twitter, newspaper opinion pieces) or *Cooperation* (policy briefs, papers, government commissioned research, boards of policy implementation agencies, expert policy advisory groups, evidence to parliamentary committees).

INFLUENCING POLICY

Consider timing of policy windows

Before election manifestos are drafted, during preparation of white papers/policy statements, 'calls for submissions', pre-legislative scrutiny stage by parliamentary committees and Second Stage of bill.

Target key stakeholders

Ministers, senior civil servants, government advisors, government policy agencies (e.g., NESC), chairs of parliamentary committees, members of boards of agencies (e.g., EPA/Tusla), government backbenchers, opposition T.D.s, local government.

How PublicPolicy.ie can help maximise your policy impact



POLICY-RELEVANT PAPERS FOR PUBLICPOLICY.IE

- PP.ie provides writing styles and editorial assistance to ensure papers are accessible to policymakers and clear on policy recommendations/outcomes
- PP.ie provides targeted outreach to policymakers and key stakeholders to raise awareness of specific papers and the value of the platform
- Promotes policy papers on mailing list & Twitter



POLICY BRIEFS FOR PUBLICPOLICY.IE

- A policy brief can be used to synthesise your arguments in an accessible format for policymakers
- PP.ie has a policy brief template with guidance on structure and content (see next page)
- Targeted outreach and promotion on social media and mailing list



IDENTIFY ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Through the Geary Bulletin, Geary Researchers are informed of relevant public consultations, calls for evidence, and opportunities for appointment to state boards or expert committees

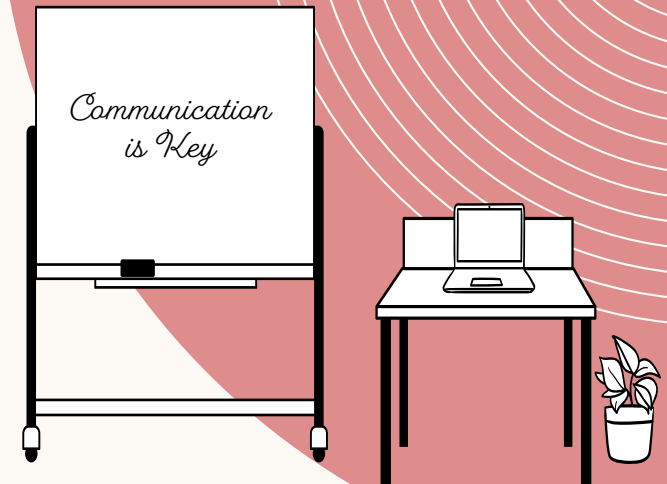
To reduce time constraints, as well as challenges due to constant changes in ministerial and senior civil servant posts in Ireland, employ strategic and targeted engagement by leveraging publicpolicy.ie

Double-click Policy Brief icon above for full pdf version

Always keep in mind

Communication to policymakers requires a different style and focus from academic communications.

- Propositional not oppositional
- Focus on ideas which will solve the problem, not just analysing the causes of the problem
- Concise and to the point
- Identify clear, practicable policy recommendations
- Communicate clearly in layperson's language, no academic jargon.
- Display awareness of media/public opinion on these issues
- Don't equivocate, be as definitive as possible, while not over simplifying
- Timing is crucial



Helpful Resources

[Dáil Debates and Parliamentary Questions](#)

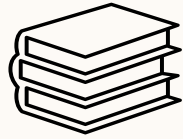
[EU Consultations](#)

[Irish Government Consultations](#)

[Oireachtas Committees](#)

[Oireachtas Library and Research Service](#)

[Who Does What.gov](#)



Further Reading

Evaluation Support Scotland (2017), *Charting the Waters: A guide for the third sector on how to evaluate policy influencing work*, Edinburgh: Evaluation Support Scotland (available online).

Ffrench-Constant, L (2014), *How To plan, write and communicate an effective Policy Brief: Three Steps to Success*,

<https://www.researchtoaction.org/2014/10/plan-write-communicate-effective-policy-brief-three-steps-success/>

ORI (2017), *10 things to know about how to influence policy with research*,

<https://odi.org/en/publications/10-things-to-know-about-how-to-influence-policy-with-research/>

Sienkiewicz, M, van Nes, M, Deleglise, M-A, (2020), 'Achieving Policy Impact' in, Šucha, V and Sienkiewicz, M (eds), *Science for Policy Handbook*, Amsterdam: Elsevier (open access).

