# The Policy Corner Editorial Guide

# I) Overview of the Editorial Process

Submitted articles go through three phases: (1) vetting (2) review and (3) copy edit.

(1) During **vetting**, we check submissions against formal criteria to ensure they fit our website's basic style requirements.

(2) During **review**, reviewers give feedback and make edits in track changes with a focus on improving the article's content. The article goes back to the the author, who accepts or declines revisions and reworks the article.

After the review, the Editorial Board will decide if the revisions are sufficient. If not, the article returns to review. If so, the article proceeds to the next phase.

(3) During **copy-editing,** language edits only are made in track changes to improve the style and clarity of the article. The article goes back to the author, who accepts the edits.

The article will then be published if it meets all our criteria. Once published, the live version is checked again for mistakes. The process is detailed in the graphic below.

# II) Vetting Guide

Main contact Editorial Management: [submissions@policycorner.org](mailto:submissions@policycorner.org)

If you are responsible for **vetting** articles, it is your task to make sure that initial submissions meet the general, formal requirements of The Policy Corner, such as:

- **Title:** short, attention-grabbing (max. 8 words)
- **Argument:** main argument stated in one sentence in the introduction
- **Policy recommendations:** policy recommendations and a clear argument at the end
- **Structure:** clear and logical, easy to follow
- **Style:** well written, easily accessible, also for readers from a different field
- **Length:** 900 words (excluding references)
- **References:** at least 5 references in Chicago Style endnotes, sufficient and transparent use of evidence
- **Languages:** English (US-American), German or French
- **Format:** Word (.doc or .docx)
- **Name:** the name(s) of the author(s) should **not** be indicated on the manuscript

In addition to those points, your general impression about the article's conformity to our style and quality of the argument matters. Although articles will be significantly improved during review and edit, they should generally have the potential to make a good article.

After receiving the initial submission from the Editorial Management Team, within max. 2 days you should send the Editorial Team an Email containing the following:

- **Decision:** the article is a) either ready to go into the first review stage or b) should be returned to the author to align it with our general requirements

- **Justification:** please elaborate why should it go into the first review stage/be returned to the author; what is good about the article, what needs to be improved?

If you are unable to vet an article within the given deadline please always let the Editorial Management Team know as soon as possible.

# III) Review Guide

Main contact Editorial Management: [submissions@policycorner.org](mailto:submissions@policycorner.org)

## General Guidelines

1) All articles that meet our criteria will be sent to the relevant peer reviewer based on topic area expertise with a deadline. Within this time frame, you as a peer reviewer are asked to review the article with track changes and write a summary of the review.
2) Please make sure your review and your comments (track changes) are anonymous.
3) If you are unable to complete the peer review until the deadline, please inform the editorial team as soon as possible.
4) When reviewing articles, peer reviewers should strive to make appraisals as objective as possible. The aim is to provide comments that will help the author to write in a clear, well-structured, and engaging style. Your summary should highlight both the strengths and weaknesses of the text.
5) Please declare any conflict of interests regarding the article. E.g. if you know the person who submitted the article please let the editorial team know.
6) Be constructive in your review and never comment on the skill or integrity of the author.

## Overview of the Review Process

The review process consists of at least two review rounds. In between, the author has to incorporate feedback and accept changes. After the review rounds, the Editorial Board decides if the article can proceed to copy edit.

1) In the first review round, there are two peer-reviewers. The first reviewer reviews the article according to PC guidelines. This includes track-changes in the article document and a summary of important recommendations to the author using the form below.
2) The first reviewer sends both - track-changes document and summary - to the second reviewer and CCs the Editorial Management ([submissions@policycorner.org](mailto:submissions@policycorner.org)).
3) The second reviewer will read the article and add to the review and summary where necessary.
4) Within the deadline, the second reviewer sends the most up to date version of the article and the summary to the Editorial Management and CCs the first reviewer. The first reviewer should familiarize him or herself with the additional changes made by the second reviewer.
7) Editorial Management then sends these documents to the author who accepts revisions and incorporates any given feedback.
8) In the second review round, the second reviewer checks if all feedback was incorporated by the author and if track changes were applied. Where necessary, new track changes are made.
9) The second reviewer then sends the article to the first reviewer and CCs the Editorial Management.

10) The first reviewer will read the article and add to the second review where necessary.
11) Within the deadline, the first reviewer sends the most up to date version of the article to the Editorial Management and CCs the second reviewer.
12) Editorial Management then again sends these documents to the author who accepts revisions and incorporates any given feedback.
13) The Editorial Board then decides if the revisions were sufficient and the article can proceed to copy-edit. If this is not the case, the article is returned to the reviewers for additional rounds of review.

## Criteria for Peer-Reviews

When reviewing articles, peer reviewers should strive to make appraisals as objective as possible. The aim is to provide comments that will help the author to write in a clear, well-structured, and engaging style that aligns with the goals of our website. There are five key areas to focus on: clarity, evidence, style, structure, and relevance.

| AREA | CRITERIA |
|---|---|
| CLARITY | Is there a **central question/ thesis/argument**? |
| | Is the **topic and issue clear** e.g. has the background been explained? |
| | Is the **line of argumentation** clear? |
| | Does the article contain all of the components and information needed to make a **persuasive argument**? |
| | Does the author **answer the questions** he/she sets out to answer? |

| AREA | CRITERIA |
|---|---|
| EVIDENCE | Is the **information provided accurate** (fact-checking)? |
| | Has the author used **credible and unbiased sources** (source-checking) ? It is important that you **follow all the hyperlinks and references** provided by the author to check that their article is based on legitimate sources. |
| | Are all key arguments backed by **evidence**? |
| | Has the author given **context information** for unknown sources? e.g. when quotes are used and studies cited, is there information on sources and why they are relevant? |
| | Has the author given **examples**? |

| STYLE | Do the title and introductory paragraph **grab your attention** as a reader? Is there a hook? |
| | Is the article **easy to understand and enjoyable** to read? |
| | Does the author avoid **academic language** (e.g. "therefore") and complex jargon? |
| | Are all **technical terms and abbreviations** used in the text explained? |
| | Are the **references in Chicago Style ?** |
| | Is the use of quotes exaggerated? |
| | Does the **conclusion tie in with the introductory** paragraph? |

| STRUCTURE | Is the article **well-organized** e.g. do the arguments follow a logical order? |
| | Is there a **clear introduction and conclusion**? |
| | Are the sentences and paragraphs **short**? |
| | Is the article **under 1000 words**? |

| RELEVANCE | Does the article contain **policy ideas/ recommendations**? |
| | Is the article **relevant to current events** and policy debates? |
| | Does the author engage with **existing research** and/or policy debates? |

# How to do the Review

When reading the article, take note of things you like and don't like; findings that surprised or disappointed you; concepts that were well or poorly presented; anything that confused you; anywhere you feel an example would have helped; and anything that was unclear, even if the text clarifies it later in the article. Your summary should highlight both the strengths and weaknesses of the text.

Some aspects of the text, including written style and evidence, will be best dealt with by making comments through track changes. Where possible, changes should be implemented by the reviewers themselves. This means, for example, changing sections of the text that are unclear, grammatically confusing, overly long, or written in overly academic language. Wherever possible, please shorten, rephrase, clarify, or rewrite the article using track changes. More general issues with the article, that you do not feel comfortable with changing, should be addressed in the form of comments to the author or in the review summary. Minor mistakes regarding language, grammar and style will be dealt with in the copy-editing stage.

You are not expected to be an expert in the topic of the article, and most of our comments will be related to style and structure. Nonetheless, please draw on your own knowledge of the subject area where possible to make substantive comments about the analysis and argument in the piece. Where relevant, suggest arguments that could make the article more persuasive and point out any counter arguments that occur to you that were not dealt with in the article.

| Do... | Don't... | Be... |
|---|---|---|
| • Focus on how well the argument is supported, rather than whether you agree with it.<br>• Make comments as specific as possible.<br>• Explain why you're making particular suggestions.<br>• Identify what's missing, and what needs to be explained more fully and what can be cut. | • Don't get into debates over unresolvable questions of individual value and belief<br>• Argue with the writer. Simply suggest ways of strengthening the argument.<br>• Make vague, general comments, unless you then back them up with a number of specific, concrete examples. | • Pleasant. Even if the paper is awful.<br>• Helpful. Suggest to the authors how to overcome the shortcomings you identify.<br>• Empathetic. Reflect on how the comments will be received by the author<br>• Scientific. Your role is that of a scientific peer. Be as objective as possible. |

## Summary of Review

The author will receive both a version of his/her article annotated with track changes *and* a separate summary document (.docx or .odt). For a review template, please see below.

Include the following aspects:

1) The name of the article and date. Never include your name.
2) Remind the author that the comments to follow are intended to strengthen the work and align it with our editorial guidelines.
3) Begin the summary by highlighting the strengths of the piece.
4) Then start your critique with the most important aspects needing revision.
5) The rest of the details can then be included.

Please keep the summary as short as possible. Bullet points are recommended for key comments.

**Summary Template**

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Peer Review

The Policy Corner

Date

<div align="center">Article Title: XXXXXXXX</div>

<u>Overview</u>

State the strengths of the piece. Then highlight the main areas requiring revision.

<u>Recommendations</u>

The following comments are intended to help strengthen the piece and align it with the style guidelines of The Policy Corner:

- List the major points needing revision, ideally in concise bullet points. Refer to paragraph numbers so that the author can find specific point easily.
- Then list the less important points.

No conclusion is needed.

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# IV) Copy-editing Guide

Main contact Copy Editing: [copyedit@policycorner.org](mailto:copyedit@policycorner.org)

Welcome to the Copyediting Guide! Below you will find our guidelines for good writing, based on extended discussion and research. Please refer to these guidelines when copyediting.

## What do I do as a Copyeditor?

1. Make changes to the title, summary and text (in track changes) regarding punctuation, grammar and style.
2. If you think the author will not understand why you are making changes, provide comments to explain.
3. Edit the references. If information is missing or it is done in a completely different citation style, ask the author to edit the references themselves.

## Style Guidelines

### Style Rules

1. Keep the title short (8 words or less).
2. Keep the summary short (maximum 50 words).
3. Keep sentences short.

4. Keep paragraphs short (maximum 5 sentences).
5. Begin all paragraphs with a <u>topic sentence</u>.
6. Always prefer the <u>active tense</u> to the passive. E.g., "A could create B," not "B could be created by A."
7. Use US-American English.
8. Don't use a long word where you can use a short one. (e.g. use not utilize) and prefer everyday language to technical (e.g., let not permit; buy not purchase). Avoid scientific jargon if you can think of an everyday synonym.
9. Avoid academic words like thus, hence, henceforth, due to, and/or, respectively, factor, therefore, and phrases like "in the process of" and "this article will argue that…".
10. Cut out all words that can be cut without changing the meaning. E.g., "any time soon" should be "soon" and "the question as to whether" should be "whether".
11. Titles and subheadings should all be capitalized, except for minor linking words like of, to or and.
12. If you quote someone, say who it is and why they said it. If who said it is not important, don't quote them.
13. Avoid abbreviations (e.g., GFC should be Global Financial Crisis) unless they are very well known, e.g., the US or the EU.

## Style Recommendations

1. Try to make the title catchy. Puns can be good if they're clever (e.g., "Trumping the Politics of Torture"), and questions can work well too ("Is Microfinance a Sustainable Solution to Poverty?").
2. Don't summarize what you are going to say. Just say it. Avoid constructions like "This article will discuss the three ways that…"
3. Remember that the end of a sentence is the place of emphasis (E.g., not "The place of emphasis in a sentence is at the end"). Put unimportant information in the middle and important information at the end.
4. Do not overload your sentences. Choose one of three parts of the sentence (object, verb or subject) and only make one of them long. For example: "A sentence with too much in all three of its parts can ruin a paragraph" has a complex subject ["a sentence with too much in all three of its parts"] connected to a simple verb ["can ruin"] and a simple object ["a paragraph"]).
5. Try to maintain a logical flow of sentences. Link the sentences using the structure (AB)(BC)(CD).
6. Avoid elegant variation. E.g., do not use "industrialization" and "growing structural differentiation" as synonyms. Choose one word and stick to it.
7. Provide brief explanations for technical language, including legal cases or economic terms that may not be known to all readers
8. "However," should generally be in the middle of the sentence, enclosed by commas. E.g., "His approach, however, was fatally flawed."

# Referencing

- Use Chicago Style (16th edition) endnotes:

  *Book:* Paul Krugman, Obstfeld Maurice, and Marc J.Melitz, *International Economics: Theory and Policy*, (New York: Pearson Publishing, 9th Edition, 2012).

  *Website:* Zachary Laub, "International Sanctions on Iran," Council of Foreign Relations, 2015, accessed November 29, 2015, http://www.cfr.org/iran/international-sanctions-iran/p20258.

- Use in-text links to websites the reader might find interesting or helpful to understand your argument. If those are used as reference material, please also include them in the endnotes.

# Grammar and Punctuation

- Punctuation should always go inside of quotation marks ("... protecting its global reputation.")
- Endnote numbers should always come after punctuation at the end of the sentence. Only place the number in the middle of the sentence (after a comma) if this reduces ambiguity when referring to multiple sources in a single sentence.
- Always use double quotation marks ("..."). Single quotation marks ('...') should only be used for quotes inside of quotes.
- Use the Oxford comma.
- When citing sources, use the past tense. E.g., "As Human Rights Watch states" should be "Human Rights Watch recently stated that…"
- Be careful when using quotation marks for words other than quotes. It often connotes derision and is usually unnecessary. If you feel uncomfortable using a word, use another.
- Write out numbers in full up to nine (so, one, two, ... nine). 10 and above can be written in numeric form. Exceptions include percents ("8 percent") and millions/billions ("2 million").
- "E.g." should always be followed by a comma, and in articles is generally only used for lists (e.g., thing A, thing B, thing C). Otherwise "for example" is usually preferable.
- When mentioning cities, always include the country after it, unless it is very well known. E.g., "Melbourne, Australia," but simply "Berlin".
- Add a hyphen between multiple adjectives before a noun, but not after. E.g., "high-quality articles," but "the articles were high quality."
- Always write foreign words and latin words in italics. E.g., *status quo*, and *déjà-vu*.

# Sources

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