

Writing in the Natural Sciences

Rhetorical Situation Chart

Genre	Purpose	Audience	Role	Rhetorical Situation
Policy Brief	Evaluate and synthesize existing research to make concise policy recommendations	Medical staff at a hospital	Undergraduate intern	You are an intern at your local hospital. Your supervisor has asked you to compose a policy brief that addresses inequities within the hospital system with respect to Latina/o/x patients.

YOUR ROLE

You are an intern at a local hospital, and your supervisor has been tasked with making policy recommendations to the hospital that will help improve the quality of care for Latina/o/x* patients and build more equitable structures within the hospital for Latina/o/x staff members. Your supervisor has enlisted your help, asking each of the interns to explore an issue, and compose a [policy brief](#) that your supervisor will present to hospital staff. To create a well-rounded policy brief, your job is to summarize existing, relevant research on your chosen topic, relate the topic to the existing framework of your hospital, and offer clear, actionable policy changes.

Before composing your policy brief, you should review the UNC Writing Center's [Policy Brief Handout](#) and read [this sample policy brief](#).

FEEDER 1: DEFINE THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

Before you can draft your policy brief, you must first choose a topic and explore the relevant research related to the topic. **Your first step is to identify a subcategory for research.** For example, you could choose to research outcomes for Latina/o/x surgical patients, bias among doctors providing care to Latinas, or retention and recruitment of Latina/o/x MD students. Whatever you choose, it should be narrow enough that you can make actionable suggestions, but it should be broad enough to find multiple studies related to the topic.

In total, you will choose 4-6 sources from peer-reviewed, scholarly journals. When suggesting policy changes, a good science communicator can synthesize science with other relevant sources to make informed suggestions. To that end, you should have 2-3 sources from natural science or medical journals (I recommend using an advanced search on [PubMed](#) to find these sources) and 2-3 sources from journals in the social sciences or humanities ([UNC's library guide](#) for Latina/o Studies suggests several databases that you may find helpful).

Once you have chosen your articles, you will write a brief, annotated bibliography of your articles (~2 pages, double spaced, Times New Roman, 12-point font).

Your annotated bibliography will:

- Include 4-6 short annotations of peer-reviewed sources: 2-3 sources from medical or natural science journals and 2-3 sources from social science or humanities journals
- Use CSE citations to introduce each source
- Follow the suggestions given by the [Purdue OWL](#), including in each citation:
 - 1-2 sentences that **summarize** your source
 - 2-3 sentences that **assess** and evaluate your source
 - 3-4 sentences that **reflect** on how the source is relevant to your research
 - This section should be your lengthiest piece of the annotation. You might think about how this information will inform your policy brief, connects to another source that you've read, or adds extra depth to the issue you are studying.

In addition to your annotated bibliography, you will submit a rough draft of the “Scope of the Problem” section of your policy brief. A successful “Scope of the Problem” will:

- Follow the suggestions in the UNC Writing Center’s [Policy Brief Handout](#) which include (but are not limited to) the following guidelines:
 - Identify a well-defined problem that can be addressed at the level of a hospital
 - Frame the issue directly and clearly, including defining the problem, it’s scope, and the stakeholders
- Synthesize the issue carefully, using your secondary sources from the annotated bibliography to build your definition of the “Scope of the Problem”

FEEDER 2: POLICY ALTERNATIVES

Now that you understand the scope of the problem, the next step will be to apply your research to make policy alternatives for your setting. You will research a specific hospital’s existing policies in order to frame your recommendations for policy alternatives. You may choose to investigate a hospital in this area, or a hospital in or near your hometown. The information you find will depend on the hospital, and you will need to consult resources like the hospital’s website, newspapers, and more. In class, I will demonstrate some resources for finding information. From this information, you will develop the policy alternatives section of your policy brief.

A successful Policy Alternatives section will:

- Follow the suggestions in the UNC Writing Center’s [Policy Brief Handout](#)
- Outline the current policy approach
- Propose alternatives to current practices which will:
 - Be based on your research in Feeder 1 (note: you are welcome to incorporate new secondary sources in Feeder 2 if you find you need more information)
 - Consider the specificities of the hospital, including size, demographics, location, current policies, etc.

UNIT PROJECT: POLICY BRIEF

Now that you have familiarized yourself with your topic and drafted two sections of your policy brief, you will submit your finalized policy brief. When drafting your finalized policy brief you should review the UNC Writing Center's [Policy Brief Handout](#) and read [this sample policy brief](#).

A successful policy brief will:

- Include the following elements:
 - Title
 - Executive Summary
 - Scope of Problem
 - Policy Alternatives
 - Policy Recommendations
 - Appendices
 - Consulted or Recommended Sources
- The Scope of Problem and Policy Alternatives should fulfill all of the criteria outlined in Feeders 1 and 2, as well as incorporate feedback you have received from your instructor and peers
- Follow guidance from the UNC Writing Center on Policy Briefs
- Be concise and direct, with consistent and clear focus
- Be grounded in the research that you have conducted during Feeders 1 and 2
- Include correct CSE formatting

***A note on terminology:** Questions about terminology are part of a rich, ongoing conversation in Latina/o Studies and among Latina/o/x individuals (see some perspectives [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#). See also: *Spain's Long Shadow* by María DeGuzmán, pp. xxii-xxiii). In this unit assignment, I use the term Latina/o/x. When conducting your research, however, you should try searching with multiple terms to get a better picture of the studies available. For example, the US census uses the term "Hispanic," so many medical studies relevant to your research may use "Hispanic" instead of "Latina," "Latino," "Latinx," or "LatinX."