Instructions for Report Authors

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The HEPI Publication Process

HEPI Policy Notes are subject to an internal review process undertaken by the HEPI team.

HEPI Reports and Debate Papers are subject to an external peer review process. This is completed by the HEPI Trustees and Advisory Board members, who are listed on the HEPI website. They meet three times a year – generally in January, May and September. When an issue is particularly time-sensitive, we may consult the Advisory Board and Trustees outside of their regular meeting schedule, but we aim to keep such instances to an absolute minimum, and authors should not assume this will happen.

General directions

1. View our AI policy on the 'Writing for HEPI' section of our website.

2. Remember the 'P' in HEPI's name stands for 'Policy'. We are a policy organisation, so a publication that criticises without proposing better alternatives is unlikely to be published by HEPI.

3. Do not assume all our readers have much prior knowledge. They may be new to higher education or may work mainly in a different sector. Write with intelligent-but-non-specialist readers in mind, as this will increase the number of people who engage with our output.

4. Constructive criticism is better than destructive criticism.

5. Our output is not dumbed down, but it is accessible, readable and clear. Killer facts and short snappy sentences are our trademarks.

6. It is important that publications are engaging. It is helpful to bear in mind what could be included in the press release for the report. Always include some little-known or wholly new facts that are likely to grab the attention of the reader and the wider media.

7. Many HEPI papers are controversial in that they challenge existing assumptions and push an alternative point of view. Stimulating controversy can be an effective way to increase engagement, but HEPI papers should never be controversial for the sake of it – only when the evidence justifies it.

8. Some of our reports provide evidence that strengthens conventional wisdom. However, our reports often provide counterintuitive evidence and challenging narratives, particularly where we find policymakers or others are not following the evidence. We also welcome publications that offer an alternative viewpoint to our previously published work.

9. Our output differs from that of peer-reviewed journals. The main differences are that HEPI papers:

a. are written in a more accessible style for non-specialist readers (as well as specialist readers);
b. avoid academic terms; and
c. have a quicker turnaround time and aim to have a more rapid impact on policy.

10. Feedback on our reports suggests our readers particularly value case studies. However, case studies should be from a range of places and not only from the author's own institution.

Grammar and style

1. Avoid abbreviations wherever possible. The only abbreviations that are generally acceptable are those for organisations that eschew the longer form (such as UCAS and the OECD). Even then, the name should be written out in full the first time, with the short form in brackets afterwards.

2. We write out 'higher education' in full, so do not use the shorthand 'HE'.

3. We tend to refer to higher education providers or higher education institutions, rather than universities, because the majority of higher education institutions do not have University Title.

4. If referring to the current Government or a specific Minister, use a capital letter. If referring to government in general, then use a lower-case first letter. So it is 'research has long received public funding from government, including under the Coalition Government of 2010 to 2015'.

5. Similar rules apply to universities. When writing about universities in general, use a lower-case first letter. When writing about a specific university, use a capital letter and check how the institution styles itself. For example, it is the University of Oxford but Oxford Brookes University.

6. Avoid terms like 'this year', 'last March' and 'next election'. We aim for our reports to have longevity and you do not know when someone will be reading what you have written.

7. We avoid using contractions. So use two words rather than 'don't', 'didn't' and 'can't'.

8. Use prose wherever possible. So write ‘for example’ rather than ‘eg’ and avoid ‘ie’ and similar terms. Never use ‘etc’.

9. For quotations, we use single speech marks, except where there are quotations within quotations, when double speech marks are used. If, and only if, the end of a quotation is also the end of a sentence in the original source, then the punctuation should appear inside the speech marks. Never change the punctuation or spelling in a quotation, even where it is different to HEPI’s house style, except where it is necessary to use double speech marks.

10. Avoid using ‘speech marks’ or *italics* to give extra emphasis to individual words. Clear sentences do not need them.

11. Compound adjectives should generally have a hyphen – for example, high-tariff institutions.

12. Foreign words, unless they have been fully assimilated into English for a long time, should be italicised.

13. Where z and s can be used interchangeably, we use the ‘s’ for the sake of consistency and simplicity. So it is ‘organised’ not ‘organized’.

14. Avoid American spellings. So use ‘the labour market’ rather than ‘the labor market’.

15. ‘Data’ is the plural of the singular word ‘datum’. For this reason, it should take a plural verb in HEPI publications.

16. Use standard punctuation. Dashes are often a clear way to mark out a sub-clause – like this – and can sometimes be used in preference to commas. Dashes are longer than hyphens.

17. Do not be scared of full stops. If a long sentence can be written as three sentences, do it.

18. We give academic disciplines a capital letter and write them out in full. So it is ‘Mathematics’, not ‘maths’.

19. Use brackets very sparingly indeed. Never hide a killer fact inside them.

20. Make sure apostrophes are used properly – for example, after the ‘s’ with a plural and to denote the possessive (where something is ‘of’ something else).

21. We do not use the Oxford comma unless it is absolutely necessary to ensure understanding, which is rare. For example, we would write ‘universities, colleges and schools’ and not ‘universities, colleges, and schools’.

22. We write out the numbers from one to nine in full (except when it is a percentage), but use numerals for numbers above this. We avoid starting

sentences with a number – where an author deems this to be essential, the number should be written out in full (so 'Fifty-eight per cent of people say … ').

23. We generally write out 'per cent' (including the word space) rather than '%', except in data-rich reports – including reports based on polling – when the symbol is used. It is vital, however, for authors to take care in distinguishing between 'per cent' (or '%') and 'percentage points', which always needs to be written out in full. A doubling from 20% to 40% is an increase of 100%, but it is an increase of 20 percentage points.

24. Italicise the titles of publications, including newspapers and academic journals. So it is the *Independent* and the *Oxford Review of Education*.

25. Avoid putting a double space between sentences.

26. Avoid overusing the word 'that'.

27. Avoid double negatives.

Formatting

1. Our designers need the text to be delivered to them in a straightforward fashion – so avoid complex formatting or document templates. Use 12-point justified Verdana text.

2. For longer reports, break these into chapters and number the chapters. Chapter titles should be centre-aligned and emboldened. We only use initial capitals in titles.

3. Use sub-headings to break up the text. Make top-level subheadings bold and make second-level headings bold and italicised.

   Therefore, your formatting should look like this:

1. Title of chapter **Top-level subheading** ***Second-level subheading*** Your text will look like this – 12-point Verdana that has been justified.

4. Charts, tables and diagrams that aid understanding are welcome. They should have an italicised title above them and, if lifted from elsewhere, a clear reference to the source immediately underneath.

5. Lists should begin with a colon and the items should be separated by semi-colons (with an 'and' after the final semi-colon). Use bullets or numbers to set the list apart from other text and provide variety for readers. Each bullet point should begin with a lower-case letter.

6. Quotations of more than three lines should be italicised and indented and do not need speech marks.

Endnotes

1. We use endnotes rather than footnotes, in a simple standard format, like this:

   The standard format is:

   Lisa Bloggs, 'Title in speech marks', *Name of Publication*, Month and year, p.X http://www.url.com

   Specific examples for different types of sources are shown below:

   - **Book:** Author Name, *Book title*, Year, p.X
     - David Willetts, *A University Education*, 2017, p.8
   - **Chapter from an edited collection:** Author Name, 'Chapter Title', in Editor Name (ed), *Book title*, Year, pp.X-XX Linked URL
     - Rose Luckin, 'AI and human intelligence', in Giles Carden and Josh Freeman (eds), *AI and the Future of Universities*, October 2025, pp.35-40 https://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/AI-and-the-Future-of-Universities.pdf
   - **Journal article:** Author Name, 'Article title', *Journal Title*, Volume X, Issue X, Month and year, pp.X-XX Linked URL
     - Maryam Hussain and James M Jones, 'Discrimination, diversity and sense of belonging: Experiences of students of colour', *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, Volume 14, Issue 1, March 2021, pp.63-71 https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2019-22454-001
   - **Newspaper article:** Author Name, 'Article title', *Newspaper name*, Date, month and year Linked URL
     - Nathan Standley and Lucy Fesmer, 'Most university students working paid jobs, survey shows', *BBC News*, 22 June 2023 https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/ education-65964375
   - **Blog:** Author Name, 'Blog title', Website Name, Date, month and year Linked URL
     - Harriet Dunbar-Morris, 'The Lifelong Learning Entitlement is not just a funding reform. It is a pedagogical challenge', HEPI blog, 15 April 2026 https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2026/04/15/the-lifelong-

learning-entitlement-is-not-just-a-funding-reform-it-is-a-pedagogical-challenge/

- **Webpage (general):** Organisation, 'Page title' Website URL
  - Gov.uk, 'Student finance for undergraduates' https://www.gov.uk/student-finance
- **Webpage (report)**: Organisation, 'Report title', Month / Year of publication, pp.X-XX Linked URL
  - Office for Students, *Financial sustainability of higher education providers in England*, 2025 https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/financial-sustainability-of-higher-education-providers-in-england-2025/

2. Where an endnote is marked in the text, there should be an Arabic numeral (1,2, 3 not i, ii and iii) in superscript and it should appear at the end of the sentence, after the full stop. Do not place endnotes in the middle of sentences.

3. There should be no more than one endnote referred to at the end of a single sentence, though the accompanying reference can include multiple sources.

Thank you for taking the time and trouble to consider writing for HEPI.