

PADP 6950: Foundations of Policy Analysis

Assignment notes for Initial Sketch of Policy Analysis Paper

(1-2 pages, double-spaced)

Submit on course @eLearning page by class time on week 5.

For this assignment you will briefly and succinctly describe the policy analysis project that you wish to undertake as part of the course. Here is a brief overview of the overall project:

This paper should be no more than 1250 words (3-4 pages). Your assignment is to provide a short economic evaluation of some existing or proposed policy. You should 1) assess the problem addressed by the policy, 2) describe the policy, 3) explain how the policy addresses the problem, 4) use economic reasoning in your explanations, 5) provide at least one possible unintended consequence of the policy, and 6) offer one policy recommendation that directly follows from the explanations or consequences provided in the memo. The details of the policy should be reviewed using available information from the news and academic outlets (include citations). The analysis should appeal to an explicit economic model discussed during the course (graphs and jargon may be used as appropriate). Your topic should be in an area that is of particular interest to you. Your policy memo will be graded on the six items listed above as well as on the clarity of the writing overall.

For any option, you will choose a hypothetical audience for this report (e.g. a lawmaker, agency head, executive director of an advocacy organization) so that your analytic report can also be tailored to the specific practical and political implications of the topic.

Your initial sketch of your project idea should contain:

1. The policy issue you are examining. This could be: (1) how an existing policy does (or does not work); (2) a proposed policy in recent political discussion such as a carbon tax or school vouchers; or (3) a policy that you design/propose yourself in response to a current policy problem
2. Tell the reader not only the topic of your report, but also the general economic problem on which you will focus. Indicate one or more key questions that will motivate your project. These questions will evolve as you develop your report, but doing your best to identify specific questions will help focus your work going forward.
3. Rationale for the topic you have chosen. As best you are able (given the fact that we will cover this material as the course unfolds), provide an argument for economic concepts underlie the “theory of action” for the existing policy [option 1], proposed policy [option 2], or help to explain the existence of a current problem [option 3].

4. Describe what groundwork (if any) you have already done in this area.
 - a. Literature that you know well or are at least familiar with: What do these literatures say about your policy problem and/or policy?
 - b. Previous work in this area: Do you have previous experience working in the area that you are examining? Applied experience actually working on or with this topic?
 - c. Other groundwork: What other sources give you insight into the problem at hand?
5. Puzzles and issues yet to resolve. What are your biggest questions at this stage about how to do this project? What puzzles you the most about how to create a viable report?