

Trusted Voice position statement methodology

Introduction

An academic position statement, also known as a position paper, is a type of academic writing that clearly communicates an author's stance on a specific topic or issue. It's supported by evidence, facts, and research to demonstrate why that position is valid. Unlike research papers, which aim to present original findings, position papers focus on advocating a particular viewpoint.

Position papers in academia enable discussion of emerging topics without the experimentation or original research typically found in academic papers. Commonly, such a document will substantiate the opinions or positions put forward with evidence from an extensive, objective discussion of the topic.¹²

Key characteristics of a position statement are:

- has a target audience
- clearly states a viewpoint
- provides rationale
- concise and focused
- can be used in various contexts.

Process for SIGN Trusted Voice position statement

- Select topic
SIGN Council identifies topics and votes to prioritise at a Council meeting
- Identify a lead from SIGN Council
A lead volunteers or is invited by the Chair
- Identify working group
- Council members volunteer for the working group, which may also include external experts or representatives from other organisations. The chair and working group determine if external group members are needed, eg from health or social care, Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS), Public Health Scotland (PHS) or the third sector.
- Identify HIS support
 - Admin (Secretary to SIGN Council - inviting group members, arranging meetings, consultation)
 - Project management (SIGN Programme Manager (operations) to run the programme as part of SIGN Council business, develop templates and SOPs, run online meetings and consensus exercises)

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Position_paper

² <https://www.grammarly.com/blog/academic-writing/position-paper/>

- Evidence searching and summary (HIS Research and Information Services (RISS) information scientist and health services researcher)
- Formatting (HIS Comms)
- Publication (on SIGN website)
- Dissemination and awareness raising (SIGN Council, Comms)
- Working group agrees on the scope:
 - issue to be addressed, with clarity about why it is not a guideline topic
 - audience, eg healthcare professionals, policy makers, Chief Executives, Clinical Directors, members of the public, or any of these, depending on the topic
- Working group agrees on methods, eg evidence review, formal consensus. Use existing RIS scoping and evidence-gathering methods, eg topic exploration.
- Gather evidence, intelligence, PHS data, safety data, variation in practice, service availability, etc
- Draft statements

The working group drafts the statement(s) and consensus voting at a SIGN Council meeting is undertaken to reach an agreement.
- Consultation or peer review carried out (if applicable)
- Governance. Sign off by SIGN Senior Management Team, SIGN Council, Evidence and Digital Directorate.
- Publish on the SIGN website and submit to a journal if applicable. Disseminate to colleges and broader stakeholders. Agree on the lifespan of the document

Published 3 December 2025