

Engaging with policymakers and Policy@Sussex

You will probably have heard ***influencing policy*** and ***working with policy makers*** mentioned as areas where researchers can engage. Historically, social science researchers have explored these avenues productively but there is definite potential for connections that build to both knowledge exchange and impact in this realm for those working in the arts and humanities – and to make a difference.

Examples of how arts and humanities research can inform policy taken from the [TORCH site](#):

- *Achieving policy impact is increasingly important in research agendas, and humanities disciplines can make a significant contribution to policy development. For example:*
- *Concepts developed in philosophy or theology can facilitate analysis of social issues (such as notions of justice or well-being, the influence of diaspora communities or the use of language), with implications for public policy.*
- *Historical research can highlight the changing nature of rules, behaviour and belief – illustrating that current policy is constructed from an understanding of the past that is fluid and open to multiple perspectives, influences and interpretations.*
- *Literature, art and other disciplines can provide compelling narratives, stories and case-studies to illustrate social and economic problems, increase understanding of the issues, and help build a case for change.*
- *Working with other disciplines to shape research questions. Humanities can be particularly powerful in collaboration with other disciplines, for instance from social or medical science, bringing new perspectives and understanding to research findings, working with law and business for example around intellectual and creative property policies, and supporting a range of different outputs and outcomes that engage users.*

Training and information on ‘Engaging with Policy’ for researchers in the arts and humanities

For the last 6 years the AHRC and the [Institute for Government](#) have run a 3-day [Engaging with Government programme](#) annually for researchers in the arts and humanities. They have jointly produced [a publication on how to engage with policy](#) with case studies from the arts and humanities.

What support is there to help researchers find out how to reach policymakers at Sussex?

Over the last REF period at Sussex, an informal group called [Policy@Sussex](#) (P@S) evolved working across the social science schools (Global Studies, ESW, LPS and the Business School) supported through funding from the internal [ESRC Impact Acceleration Award \(IAA\)](#). Members of P@S working with individual academics from 2016 onwards helped identify potential key stakeholders for their research, various ways to engage with policymakers and present the research to informed but non-expert audiences. The success of these interactions led to multiple impact case studies for the REF 2021. There are funds from the ESRC IAA to support policy work, for example developing a policy brief or covering costs to bring stakeholders together.

This month Policy@Sussex launched its website in March 2022 and has recently recruited a Strategy Manager for Policy Alex Waddington giving a central point of contact for the connected Schools, working with School-based contacts. Within Media, Arts and Humanities Medeni (who previously working in Global Studies for P@S) and Elena can offer advice and support in exploring policy engagement. The website has a huge range of information for researchers (and policymakers).

Connecting directly with Parliament

Based in the UK [Knowledge Exchange Unit](#) (KEU) works with HEIs to encourage academic contributions to parliamentary committees and parliamentary inquiries.

The [researchers' web hub](#) has lots of information and [training](#) about how to work with Parliament and how Parliament uses research. It includes pages on:

- [What interests Parliament?](#)
- [Why engage with Parliament?](#)
- [How Parliament uses research](#)
- [Ways to engage with Parliament](#)
- [How to guides](#)
- [Details of academic fellowships](#)
- [Training and events](#)
- [Stories from researchers who have engaged with Parliament](#)
- [Information on Parliament and REF](#)

The Research PS team will share relevant **select committee opportunities**. The [Digital, Culture, Media and Sport \(DCMS\) committee](#) in particular hold regular inquiries which may be of interest. However, it is also worth looking out in general for select committee inquiries where insights from the arts and humanities (for example in culture, philosophy, ethics, etc) may be relevant to inquiries on wider topic areas.

Select committees conduct inquiries into various topics. The inquiry process includes seeking written 'evidence' and holding oral evidence sessions. Anyone can submit written evidence from the general public to researchers with specialist knowledge. You can find out more about these here: ['Select Committees'](#).

Direct contact through All Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs)

There are many [All Party Parliamentary Groups in Parliament](#) which provide another way to reach those making decisions on all sorts of topics. These are informal cross-party interest groups that have no official status within Parliament. They hold meetings to exchange information around their subject area of interest, bring in experts to talk at events and sometimes conduct inquiries. Researchers can get involved with an APPG by contacting them and offering to deliver a talk or contribute to their work. [There is a register of them here](#) which also provides contact details.

Within Media, Arts and Humanities, [Tom Wright's and Arlene Holmes-Henderson's Speaking Citizens](#) project with the [Oracy APPG](#), led by the University of Sussex and funded by the AHRC and ESRC, brings together historians, linguists and social scientists to work with educators. It aims to provide new evidence for how citizenship can be taught through a focus on talk and dialogue.

If you're interested in meeting policymakers and sharing your research APPGs are a great way in. There are APPGs on many areas relevant to the arts and humanities. Some groups are more active than others. They are hosted by interested parties – often charities or NGOs – and are excellent ways to connect with organisations working in a specialist area. A few examples are below but your specialist interest may feature in an alternative group. If you want to approach an APPG do contact [Medeni](#) in the first instance. [Lenny Rolles, Associate Director for Public Affairs](#) who works with local MPs and parliamentarians can also be of help.

All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) connected to the UK Parliament

- [Media](#)
- [Archives](#)
- [Digital Skills](#)
- [Museums](#)
- [Music Education](#): The Group has a particular focus on Curriculum, the National Plan for Music Education, challenges facing higher education, and progression into the creative and cultural sector.
- [Oracy](#): Tom Wright and Arlene Holmes-Henderson: The APPG is committed to helping every child to be a confident communicator and find their voice, in order to succeed in school and life beyond. It aims to coordinate research, promote best practice and encourage the overarching principles of oracy in education and society at large.
- [Performing Arts, Education and Training](#): To support parliamentarians in discussions relating to: appropriate training, education, assessment and professional practices across the performing arts, particularly drama, dance and musical theatre; practitioners continuing professional development within the creative and cultural industries; wider benefits of engagement with the performing arts for students, practitioners and audiences.
- [Publishing](#): To promote the value of high quality publishing to UK society, culture and the economy. To foster a better understanding among parliamentarians about publishers, booksellers and associated fields, all of whom contribute to a world-leading publishing sector.
- [Theatre](#)

Lastly the [Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology \(POST\)](#) produces impartial, non-partisan, and peer-reviewed briefings, designed to make the latest research on key themes and issues accessible to the UK Parliament in the form of *POSTnotes* and *POSTbriefs*. POST list their [current programme of work here](#). These predominantly fall in the social science field but arts and humanities expertise is relevant too. For example a current briefing (which are written by doctoral researchers or postdocs on placement) on [The Impact of Digital Technology on Arts and Culture in the UK](#) is in the process of being written. Literature, interview and expert review can all be offered.

Working with policymakers can inform and enrich your research and take you in new directions.

If you are interested in exploring, contact [Medeni](#) and [Elena](#) in the Research PS team.