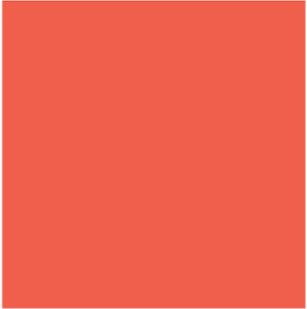# Agora
content guidelines :
How to write for us

agora

Agora is a foreign policy think tank. Our goal is to enrich the public debate on foreign policy with an innovative new model, based on voluntary participation of members from a diverse range of backgrounds. Through its grassroots structure, Agora functions as a platform and facilitator for ideas that represent original, innovative, high-quality and meaningful contributions to discussions of international affairs.

Introduction

This guide is designed to help contributors wanting to write for Agora. We issue guidelines to writers to be transparent about what we do and do not publish, to smooth the process of proofing and editing, and to maintain a level of consistency and quality in our published content.

Agora publishes work which is:

- Related to foreign policy or international affairs
- On topics of relevance or interest to the UK and its policy makers
- Falls within the scope of one of our Research Programmes
- Says something original or thought-provoking, by either highlighting an underreported issue or adding a new perspective to a better known one
- Is well researched, intelligently argued, and well written

All content submitted to Agora is judged on the merits of the ideas it contains and the language used to express them, and never on the background or identity of the writer.
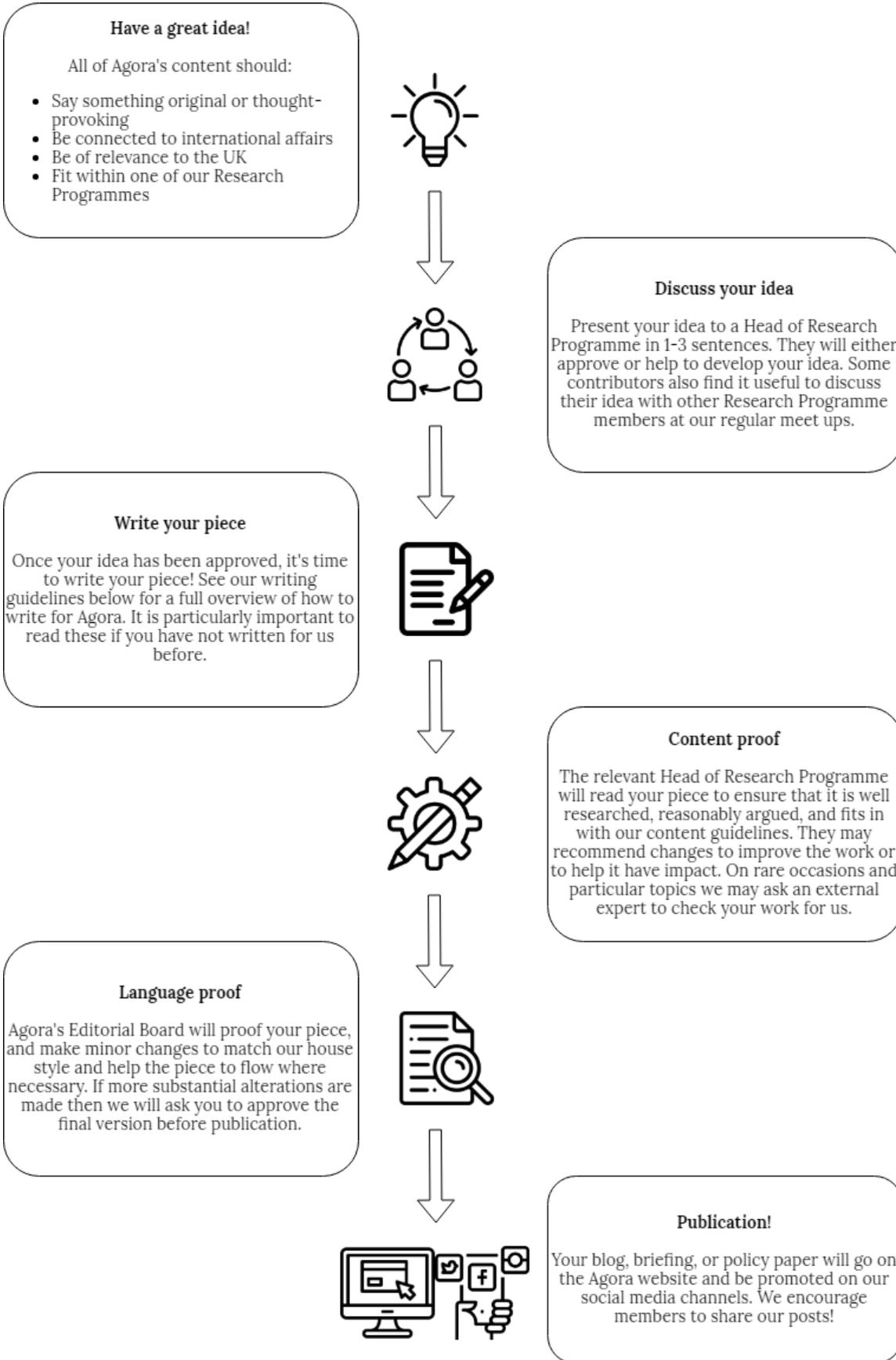
We publish content in three formats: blogs, briefings, and policy papers.

All content should be submitted as either a Microsoft Word file or an editable Google doc. Please do not attempt to format your work yourself, beyond bolding and italics.

We want everything that Agora publishes to be clearly and concisely written. If you are not a native-level English speaker or are not a confident writer then we recommend that you have someone read over your work before you submit it to us. Our Editorial Board should not have to rewrite work.

If in doubt about how to write for or submit to us then speak to the relevant Research Programme head or visit our website to see examples of previously published work.

The production process

Have a great idea!

All of Agora's content should:

- Say something original or thought-provoking
- Be connected to international affairs
- Be of relevance to the UK
- Fit within one of our Research Programmes

Discuss your idea

Present your idea to a Head of Research Programme in 1-3 sentences. They will either approve or help to develop your idea. Some contributors also find it useful to discuss their idea with other Research Programme members at our regular meet ups.

Write your piece

Once your idea has been approved, it's time to write your piece! See our writing guidelines below for a full overview of how to write for Agora. It is particularly important to read these if you have not written for us before.

Content proof

The relevant Head of Research Programme will read your piece to ensure that it is well researched, reasonably argued, and fits in with our content guidelines. They may recommend changes to improve the work or to help it have impact. On rare occasions and particular topics we may ask an external expert to check your work for us.

Language proof

Agora's Editorial Board will proof your piece, and make minor changes to match our house style and help the piece to flow where necessary. If more substantial alterations are made then we will ask you to approve the final version before publication.

Publication!

Your blog, briefing, or policy paper will go on the Agora website and be promoted on our social media channels. We encourage members to share our posts!

Blogs

Blogs are shorter opinion pieces, in a more journalistic tone. They may relate to current affairs, but are by no means required to and may instead simply discuss or give a perspective on an issue.

A good blog will clearly and concisely make a single point or argument. Although they will probably adopt and argue a position, it is important to remain measured and justify the points made. The language used should be accessible, avoiding the use of references and technical terms without explanation.

Blogs must be between 500-800 words. They should be submitted in the following form:

Headline – Keep it short and catchy.

Sub-heading – One or two sentences which say why the blog is relevant and sum up the core argument of the blog.

Main body – The blog itself. Try to write in short paragraphs. You may use in-text headings to break up the body of the blog if you wish.

By-line – One sentence about yourself, such as where you work or study.
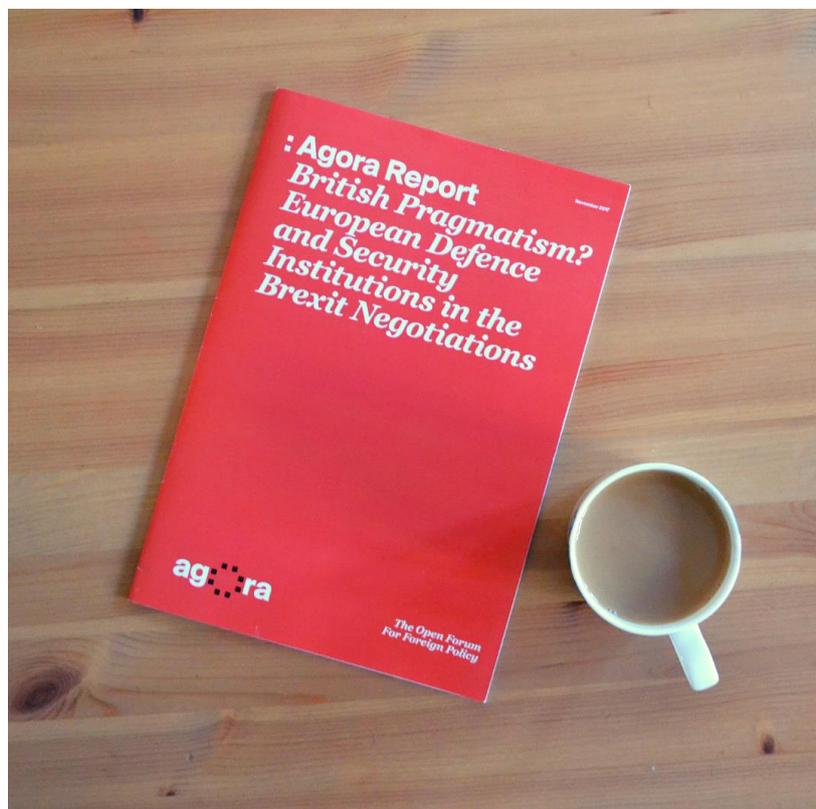
Briefings

Briefings are longer, factual pieces that outline what you need to know on an issue or events in international affairs. They should enrich the reader's knowledge and understanding of a topic by providing context and analysis.

They should be analytical as well as descriptive, and seek to add something to the debate around a topic. Briefings are not academic work and will focus on concrete policies and events, not theory.

Although they will go in to considerably more detail than a blog, the language should remain clear and concise, avoiding the use of technical terms without explanation.

Briefings are likely to be between 4-8 pages. They should be submitted in the following form:

Title

Executive summary – A summary of the entire publication, which must touch on the briefing's context, key points, and conclusions. This will also be used on the website as the 'blog' which links to the full publication.

Introduction – What is the context that the briefing sits in? Why is your work relevant and of interest?

Main body – The core content of the briefing, broken down in to thematic sections with sub-headings. Make sure that the sections follow logically on from one another, as with an essay.

Conclusions – What are the key points and main lessons from the briefing?

About the author – A short paragraph on yourself.

Endnotes – A list of sources referenced in the main text of the briefing. References should be numbered in-text and presented using Harvard style in end notes, in order that they appear in the text.

Eg. In text: The number of global assistance cases undertaken by the UK government fell by almost a quarter between 2010 and 2016 [1].

Endnotes: [1] Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Helping British Nationals Abroad 2015/16.https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/580501/161223_FCO_HBNA_Report__Double_Pages_.pdf

Policy papers

Policy papers are longer, more analytical research pieces which make concrete policy proposals for UK policy makers.

As with a briefing, they will examine the background and main facets of a challenge in the field of international affairs. However, the objective of these papers should also be to recommend innovative solutions which UK policy makers could put in to practice in the real world.

Although they will go in to considerably more detail than a blog, the language should remain clear and concise, avoiding the use of technical terms without explanation.

Policy papers Likely to be between 8-12 pages. They should be submitted in the following form:

Title

Executive summary – A summary of the entire publication, which must touch on the briefing's context, key points, and conclusions. This will also be used on the website as the 'blog' which links to the full publication.

Introduction – What is the context that the briefing sits in? Why is your work relevant and of interest?

Main body – The core content of the briefing, broken down in to thematic sections with sub-headings. Make sure that the sections follow logically on from one another, as with an essay. This section of the policy paper should explore and analyse the challenge which you are seeking to tackle.

Conclusions – What are the key points and main lessons from the briefing?

Policy proposals – Specific recommendations to UK policy makers working in foreign policy or international affairs. These must address the challenge outlined earlier in the policy paper, and be both original and deliverable.

About the author – A short paragraph on yourself.

Endnotes – A list of sources referenced in the main text of the briefing. References should be numbered in-text and presented using Harvard style in end notes, in order that they appear in the text.

Eg. In text: The number of global assistance cases undertaken by the UK government fell by almost a quarter between 2010 and 2016 [1].

Endnotes: [1] Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Helping British Nationals Abroad 2015/16.https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system

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