

# CAPE Policy Fellowships Contracts Guidance Note

PROCESS & KEY ISSUES



Capabilities in Academic  
Policy Engagement

## Overview

The guidance note provides a general overview of how CAPE Policy Fellows are initiated and highlights some common negotiation points in the development of contracts for Policy Fellowship schemes. The learning is aimed at university staff and intended to support enhanced understanding of **recommended processes** and **key issues** in contract negotiations.

### What this guide covers:

#### Contract Process

- CAPE's learning
- CAPE's process
- The role of the knowledge mobiliser

#### Contract Key Issues

- Understanding the context
- Language
- Common negotiation terms

## Why are we sharing this guidance note?

CAPE's experiences to date have shown that establishing a process for initiating a Policy Fellowship and finalising contracts for Policy Fellows can be time and resource intensive. This is because they have tended to require bespoke contracts that reflect the circumstances of each fellowship as well as the requirements of the university, host policy organisation and any third-party funder in relation to the fellowship.

This can be a challenge for university staff<sup>1</sup> who deliver Policy Fellowship schemes as it requires specialist and technical know-how that goes beyond a 'typical' **knowledge mobiliser** role. It is hoped that this guidance note can be used as a reference for university staff when seeking to establish a process and when discussing common contract negotiation points for Policy Fellowships. It is also intended to contribute to generating a deeper understanding of internal university systems and processes that support evidence-based policy making.



<sup>1</sup> Note on language: We use the term 'university staff', but in doing so we recognise that academic policy engagement work is carried out within a range of university based roles. The term 'knowledge mobiliser' can often be used to describe staff undertaking work to support academic policy engagement. We use both terms throughout this guidance note.

## Context

Policy Fellowships – placing university research and research services staff into policy organisations – is a fast-growing area of academic policy engagement activity. Over the past few years, the UK has seen a number of schemes take shape, primarily in the context of national governmental departments and Parliament. These have tended to be supported through UKRI funding.

## About CAPE Policy Fellows

CAPE has been exploring the role of universities in delivering Policy Fellowships (for academia into policy, and for policy into academia<sup>2</sup>) to support academic policy engagement. This guidance note focuses specifically on Policy Fellowships for university staff being placed into policy organisations.

CAPE has supported 12 of these types of Policy Fellows. The placements have varied from 6 to 18 months in duration. Policy Fellows have been trialled at a local, regional and national policy level.

CAPE Policy Fellows are funded through Research England (RE) funding first and foremost, with additional funding coming from policy partners, RE's Policy Support Fund (PSF) and Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) and UKRI Impact Accelerator Accounts. The funding is used to cover the researcher or research services staff time spent at the host policy organisation.



<sup>2</sup> For more information on programmes where policy professionals meet with academics to discuss their policy questions, please go to: <https://bit.ly/hosting-policy-fellows-guide>

# Contract Process



## CAPE's learning

### When best to introduce contracts into discussions when developing a Policy Fellowship opportunity

A key reflection from CAPE is that prior to recruiting to a Policy Fellowship, the contractual terms proposed to be used for that fellowship are considered with the host policy organisation. The parties need to be comfortable that the fellowship contract terms can align with the requirements of the university, host and any third-party funder (and other relevant agreements, if any) before advertising.

Discussing contracts early helps to ensure that a Policy Fellowship is the appropriate mechanism to use for this form of academic policy engagement and flags any issues that may prevent a Policy Fellowship from going ahead. For instance, a research project, collaboration funding, or a knowledge exchange roundtable/seminar, may be more suitable formats if differences between legal requirements cannot be resolved.

### Key point

Include your university's legal or other appropriate contracts teams from the outset, including at the funding and application stage. Suggest the same to the policy partner who should engage their legal/contracts team. Early conversations can help to establish the fundamental intentions of all parties for the arrangement(s).

## CAPE's process

### CAPE's Initial Process

**Diagram 1** shows how CAPE project partners approached the Policy Fellowships process initially. The process was developed from UCL's experience of running previous Policy Fellowship schemes. As the project progressed and the volume of Policy Fellowships increased it became clear that this process (namely the rapid movement through the stages) was not fit for purpose and that significant and reoccurring bottlenecks became apparent at step 6 (contract negotiations), which in reality took between 6-24 weeks.

### CAPE's Recommended Process

Based on CAPE learning, **Diagram 2** shows the steps taken to improve and reduce the time needed for contract negotiations. A key recommendation from CAPE, discussed further below, is to introduce common contract negotiation point discussions at step 1 with the policy partner. This can significantly reduce contract negotiation time at step 6 (Diagram 1).





Diagram 1



Diagram 2



\*Timings are indicative

## The role of the knowledge mobiliser in delivering Policy Fellowships

A knowledge mobiliser is crucial to the effective running of the Policy Fellowship process. They provide continual liaison between the parties involved to ensure contract negotiations progress towards conclusion.

An overview of the key roles and tasks of a knowledge mobiliser are as follows:

- Establish who at your university needs to input into the process (including legal, contracts teams, HR etc as appropriate)
- Liaise with the university's legal/contracts team and seek advice on terms (ensure the context and objectives of the Policy Fellowship are communicated to the legal/contracts team)
- Act according to advice given
- Liaise with the policy partner and their legal/contracts team
- Manage expectations (e.g. time frames, issues)
- Keep lines of communication open
- Make the academic aware of relevant terms in the contract that they may wish to consult on
- Make the decision on whether the contract terms satisfy the university's requirements (following advice from legal/contracts team) and ensure appropriate institutional approvals are sought
- Ensure relevant parties have signed the contract

The below are a list of prompting questions for knowledge mobilisers to consider when working with the policy partner and their own legal/contracts team in developing the contract terms:

- What type of Policy Fellowship is this?
- Are there funding terms or other agreements sitting behind the Policy Fellowship that the parties need to adhere to?
- Is the university's commitment to common negotiation points covered in this agreement? (**See next section**)
- If applicable, are the academic's interests in the opportunity (e.g. publications) covered in this agreement?



# Key issues in contract development for Policy Fellowships





## Understanding the context of the Policy Fellowship

In some contracts, additional terms may need to be factored in. Below, we discuss two factors common to CAPE: external funding, and employment. Where possible, these should be prioritised when first exploring a Policy Fellowship.

**Funding:** Some Policy Fellowships will be supported through external funding. For instance, this might be funding from a Research Council to cover the time of the person while they are on their Policy Fellowship. You will need to speak with your university legal/contracts team to check whether the contract terms of the university and the funder are covered in the contract.

**Employment:** In some instances, there might not be a university employment contract in place for the person you wish to support to take up a Policy Fellowship. In this instance, the contract terms of the contract template you are using may not align. You will need to seek advice at your university.

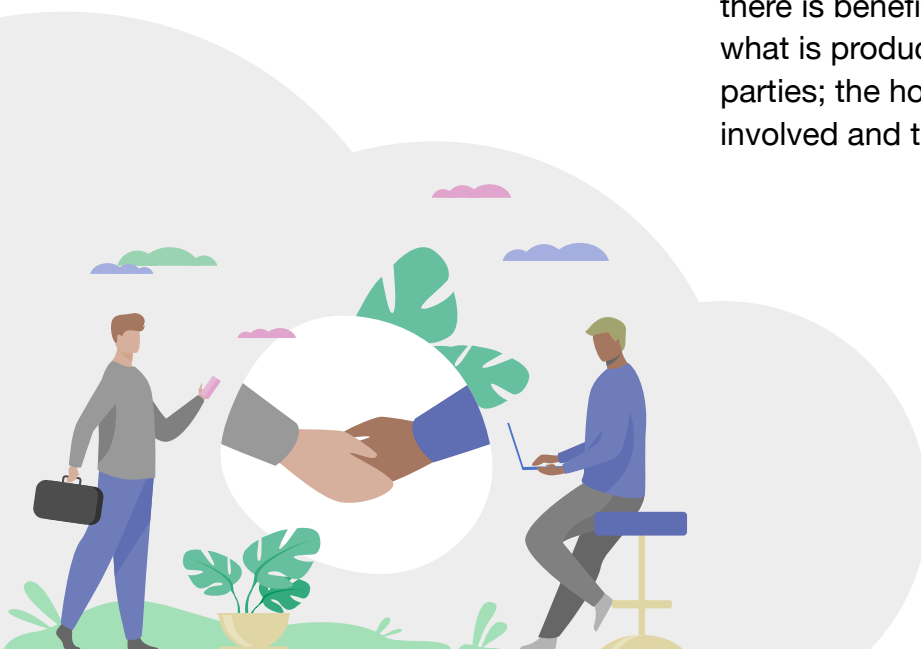
## Language: Fellowships and Secondments

While we use the term Policy Fellowships to describe this scheme, other terms such as secondments may also be used to describe this activity. Both terms are commonly used to describe a person undertaking a placement within a policy organisation while they are still employed by their university.

The terminology is not important from a legal perspective, however, for policy organisations, universities and the staff involved in discussions, a fellowship and secondment can mean different things. It is important for a knowledge mobiliser to be mindful of this during contract negotiations.

A secondment is usually a role that is focused on the secondee providing a service to the host. As such, the benefit of what is delivered in the secondment is primarily to the host organisation.

A fellowship is generally more focused on the fellow gaining experience relevant to their own career development and research. As such, there is benefit to this experience in terms of what is produced during the fellowship to all parties; the host organisation, to the individual involved and to the employer (university).



## ⚠ Key point

An example of the implication of the use of the terms fellowship or secondment from a contractual perspective is that a **secondment contract** may favour the intellectual property (IP) created during the placement being held by the host organisation. Whereas in a **fellowship contract**, it may favour the IP being hosted by the fellow or university.

Parties will need to consider whether the proposed contract covers the necessary terms for the remit and nature of the placement. This is important to the individual involved, so that they understand what they can do (or not do) following the end of the fellowship/secondment.

**(Top tip:** Some policy partners may require the use of their own template. When using a policy partner's contract, make sure to pay attention to whether the template is suitable for the type of role the Policy Fellow is undertaking.)

## Common areas for contract negotiation

The most common areas for negotiation during contract negotiations for Policy Fellowship contracts occur in relation to the following terms:

- Intellectual Property
- Liability
- Insurance
- Confidentiality
- Rights to publication

You should seek advice from your legal/contracts team if there are issues with agreeing these terms with the policy partner. If the 'front loading' is done in terms of considering these matters at inception of the project then this is less likely to become an issue later on in the process.

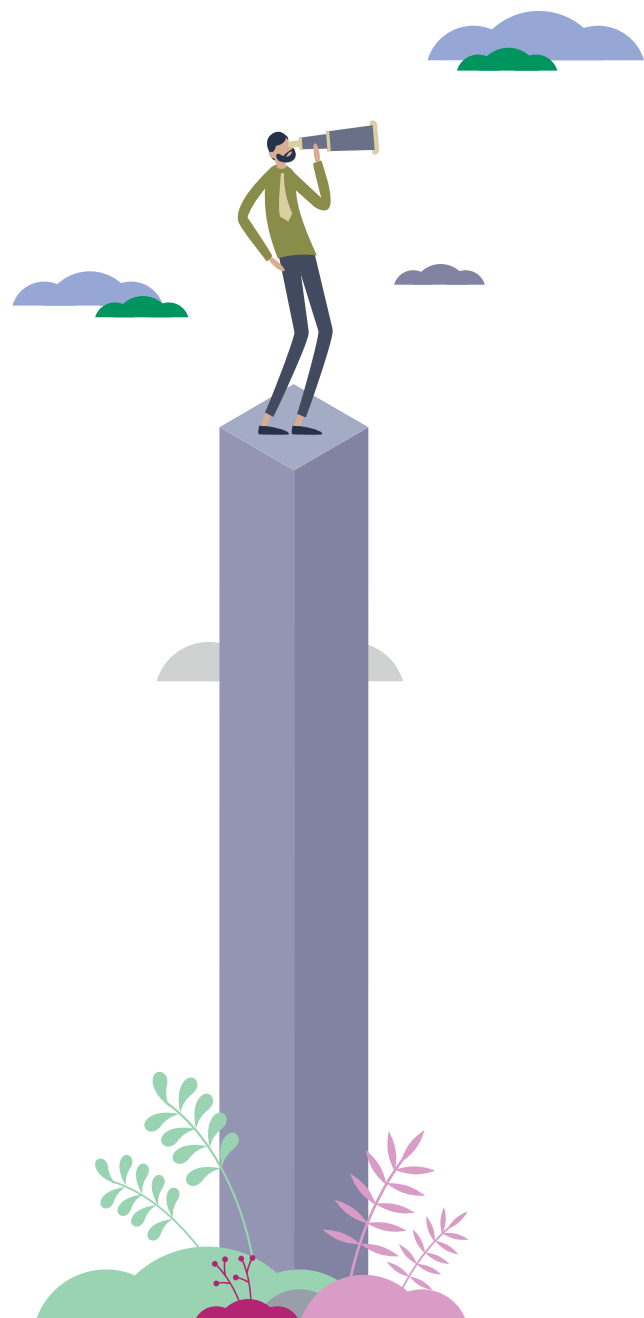




# Next steps

CAPE will continue to share its learnings of running Policy Fellowship schemes. Please sign up to the [CAPE newsletter](#) to stay up to date.

CAPE would also like to hear of your experiences in developing Policy Fellowships and whether you would make changes to this guidance note. If you would like to share your experiences, please contact CAPE ([cape@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:cape@ucl.ac.uk))



## About CAPE

Capabilities in Academic Policy Engagement (CAPE) is a knowledge exchange and research project that explores how to support effective and sustained engagement between academics and policy professionals across the higher education sector from 2020–2024, funded by Research England.

We are a partnership between UCL and the Universities of Cambridge, Manchester, Northumbria and Nottingham in collaboration with the Government Office for Science, the Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology, Nesta and the Transforming Evidence Hub.

We believe that policy which is informed by evidence is stronger, more effective, and provides better value for public spending. By using research expertise, we can make a positive difference to the UK economy, our wellbeing and the world around us.

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