Updated: **October 2026**

OMSA Ontario Medical Students Association

A Guide To Writing Position & Perspective Papers

OMSA Ontario Medical Students Association

AÉMO Association des étudiant·e·s de médecine de l'Ontario

Table of Contents

Table of Contents **1**
Introduction to OMSA **2**
What are OMSA Papers? **2**
Purpose of this Handbook **2**
Types of Papers **3**
What is a Position Paper? 3
What is a Perspective Paper? 3
How to Choose: Position or Perspective Paper? 4
Paper Topic Selection **4**
Submitting a Paper Proposal **5**
Position Papers: Selection, Writing, & Endorsement **6**
Selecting Position Paper Proposals 6
Writing a Full-Length Position Paper 6
Submission & Endorsement of Final Position Papers 7
Flowchart 1: Position Paper Selection, Writing, & Endorsement 8
Position Paper Expiry & Review 9
Perspective Papers: Selection, Writing, & Acceptance **9**
Selecting Perspective Paper Proposals 9
Writing a Full-Length Position Paper 9
Acceptance of Final Perspective Papers 10
Flowchart 2: Perspective Paper Selection, Writing, & Acceptance 11
Perspective Paper Shelf Life & Review 12
Writing Guidelines **12**
Brainstorming & Topic Selection 12
Research & Data Collection 12
Recommendations 13
Implementation Strategy 13
Paper Checklist 13
Implementation Action Expectations **15**
Implementation Expectations for Position Paper Authors 15
Implementation Recommendations for Perspective Paper Authors 15
Glossary of Resources **16**

OMSA Ontario Medical Students Association
AÉMO Association des étudiant·e·s de médecine de l'Ontario

Introduction to OMSA

The **Ontario Medical Students Association (OMSA)** is the dedicated voice for medical students across Ontario. It represents the interests and concerns of the diverse body of over 4,000 students across seven medical schools.

OMSA represents the voices and views of Ontario medical students to key external bodies, including the provincial government, health organizations, the media and the general public, and to medical schools themselves. Our initiatives involve members of both the Advocacy Portfolio and the Education Portfolio of OMSA. Through both council and member initiatives, OMSA advocates for changes in medical education, provincial health policy, legislation, and health care delivery that benefits both OMSA members *and* the communities we one day aim to serve.

What are OMSA Papers?

As the representative body for medical students across the province, it is necessary that OMSA has a voice that is well informed and clearly identifiable in order to have an influence on key issues. This aim is achieved in part through engaging in the public policy sphere and identifying our position on matters related to healthcare and medical education - **an objective in which the Position and Perspective Papers play an essential role!**

Each year, OMSA welcomes Papers submitted by medical students from across Ontario. Papers serve as an opportunity for medical students to share with a wider audience their perspectives about medical education and healthcare issues that they are passionate about. They also serve a key role in shaping OMSA's advocacy and educational initiatives.

Purpose of this Handbook

The following handbook contains guidelines that are intended to assist members that are interested in helping to advance OMSA's advocacy initiatives through writing a Position or Prospective Paper. It serves as a supporting document for OMSA's Policy on Perspective and Position Papers.

We highly encourage you to review this handbook in its entirety prior to submitting any Paper proposals.

OMSA Ontario Medical Students Association
AÉMO Association des étudiant·e·s de médecine de l'Ontario

Types of Papers

There are two types of papers that OMSA accepts: Position Papers and Perspective Papers.

All papers should outline a current issue, provide examples of successful solutions, and describe the benefits and risks if its recommendations were implemented. They should contain persuasive arguments to justify its positions and its policy recommendations. Moreover, they should also contain some component of actionability, with specific implementation recommendations.

What is a Position Paper?

Position Papers define OMSA's official stances on important issues, and serve as guiding principles in discussions both internally and with external stakeholders.

Position Papers provide a platform for OMSA to inform stakeholders of the medical student perspective. They provide justification for an opinion or stance that should be taken by the organization.

Position Papers are reviewed by OMSA Council, which consists of elected Executives and two representatives from each medical school. They undergo a formal voting process to either accept and endorse the paper, or to reject it. Each year, a maximum of six (6) Papers are endorsed: three (3) pertaining to Advocacy, and three (3) pertaining to Education.

Once endorsed, these Papers guide OMSA Council members and representatives both in internal committee discussions and in meetings with external organizations. Therefore, these documents include a comprehensive background section on the issue and a persuasive argument to justify its position and its policy recommendations.

Position Papers are a significant undertaking, usually suited to current policy topics that align with OMSA's priorities.

What is a Perspective Paper?

Perspective Papers represent student perspectives on medical education or healthcare issues that matter to them. However, they are not formally endorsed and do not define OMSA's official stances on important issues.

A Perspective Paper (formerly called a Policy Paper), provides an opportunity for students to explore a wider breadth of topics, to share their advocacy, voices, and opinions. They serve as a platform to highlight medical students' opinions from across the province.

One key difference is that Perspective Papers are not officially endorsed or reviewed by OMSA Council, and thus do not represent the official stance or guide future advocacy efforts of OMSA. They are instead reviewed and approved by the appropriate committees under the Education and Advocacy portfolios at OMSA. An unlimited number of Perspective Papers may be accepted annually, as long as they are of sufficient quality.

All topics are welcome for submission. The topic of your Perspective Paper can be anything you are passionate about - medical education, health policy, or broader advocacy issues in Ontario.

How to Choose: Position or Perspective Paper?

Some things to consider when choosing a stream include the relevancy of your topic to OMSA's priorities, the intended audience of your Paper, and the level of influence you hope it will carry.

Reasons to consider submitting a **Position Paper**:

- Your topic aligns with current policy issues
- You envision the recommendations being formally endorsed by OMSA and adopted as the organization's official stance in the coming years
- You are prepared to make a strong, evidence-based case for change
- You seek a more structured, rigorous approach and approval process to your paper

Reasons to consider submitting a **Perspective Paper**:

- Your topic aligns is broader, exploratory, or less topical in nature
- You want to contribute to ongoing dialogue without requiring OMSA endorsement
- You want more flexibility and creativity, while still highlighting issues and proposing solutions

It is also important to note that select Position Paper proposals that were not chosen to advance to full-length development may still be considered for eligibility as potential Position Paper instead.

Paper Topic Selection

All topics are welcome for submission. We accept two categories of topics: Education papers and the Advocacy papers. Both Position and Perspective papers are eligible for submission under these two categories.

Medical education papers focus on issues related to the medical curriculum, trainee wellbeing, clerkship, and more!

Advocacy papers focus on issues related to local and provincial healthcare. Previous papers include the family medicine crisis, vaccine hesitancy, and more!

Regardless of the category, your paper topic should be important to medical students and fall within the scope of OMSA, which includes:

- Supporting the role of OMSA and its Advocacy or Education teams
- Representing the views and concerns of Ontario medical students
- Advocating for the health of Ontarians through changes in medical education, health policy, or health care delivery that will benefit Ontario medical students and/or the people they train to serve

See OMSA's Advocacy Values & Guiding Principles and previously published Position and Perspective Papers to support topic development.

Submitting a Paper Proposal

OMSA releases an annual call for Paper Proposals at the start of each academic year. Prospective authors are invited to submit a short proposal document for the topic and ideas they'd like to include in a future paper. **Please review the Proposal Template and make a copy to prepare your proposal.** The following information is requested in your Proposal:

- Personal Details: Author name, school, and year of graduation
- Part 1: Background and summary of the selected topic
- Part 2: Guiding principles for recommendations
- Part 3: Recommendations for change
- Part 4: Proposed implementation strategies
- References in Vancouver style

Proposals should be approximately one (1) page in length (excluding references). Do not modify the headings, font type or size, margins, or any other formatting within your Proposal. **A full-length paper should NOT be submitted at this stage.**

Please click here to view the Submission Form to submit your Proposal. You will be asked to indicate whether you are submitting a proposal for Position or Perspective paper, and whether it pertains to Advocacy or Medical Education.

The deadline to submit your Paper Proposal is Tuesday, November 3rd, 2026 at 11:59 PM EST. Proposals submitted after this deadline will not be accepted.

Position Papers: Selection, Writing, & Endorsement

Selecting Position Paper Proposals

In order to ensure position papers are reputable and present a unified, recognizable voice to the health policy community and to OMSA members, OMSA has developed a process for endorsing position papers that helps to maximize quality and relevancy. **As formally endorsed documents, Position Paper Proposals will be reviewed by OMSA Council to determine which will proceed to the development of full-length papers.**

Submitted Position Paper Proposals will be reviewed using a standardized rubric by the appropriate committee under either the OMSA Advocacy or Education portfolio. The scores from all reviewers will be averaged to determine the final score for each proposal.

If more than five (5) Position Paper Proposals are received for each of the Advocacy and Education streams, the top five (5) scoring Proposals per stream will be selected to present to Council.

Council will accept a maximum of six (6) Proposals for development of full-length Position Papers: three (3) within the Education stream, and three (3) within the Advocacy stream.

Position Paper Proposals may receive one of the following determinations:

a. Accepted for development into a full-length Position Paper
b. Redirected for consideration as a full-length Perspective Paper
c. Rejected

Writing a Full-Length Position Paper

Authors of accepted Position Paper Proposals must confirm their commitment to developing a full-length Position Paper by the stated deadline via email, given a maximum window of 2 weeks.

Position Paper authors are responsible for writing their full-length paper. Comprehensive writing guidelines can be found on Pages 12 to 14 of this Handbook.

The appropriate OMSA Education or Advocacy Committee will support authors by providing feedback, editing suggestions, and general writing assistance. **However, please note that**

while OMSA committees will offer guidance and support throughout the process, they are not responsible for drafting any portion of the paper.

Throughout writing, authors are also encouraged to consult external stakeholders and OMSA committee members for feedback, editing, and advice.

Submission & Endorsement of Final Position Papers

Authors will submit their final Position Paper draft by the agreed deadline. Final Position Papers will be distributed to OMSA Council for formal endorsement.

Position Paper authors will be optionally invited to give a presentation of a maximum of five (5) minutes to the Council during the Council meeting, to summarize the contents and recommendations outlined in their Paper. This may be done in person or via virtual call.

A two-thirds majority of the OMSA Council is required for a position paper to pass, ensuring that OMSA endorses papers that are representative of the larger majority of medical students.

OMSA Council will issue one of the following decisions regarding Position Papers:

a. **Approved for publication** – Approved and endorsed as submitted, pending copy edits from the appropriate Education or Advocacy committee

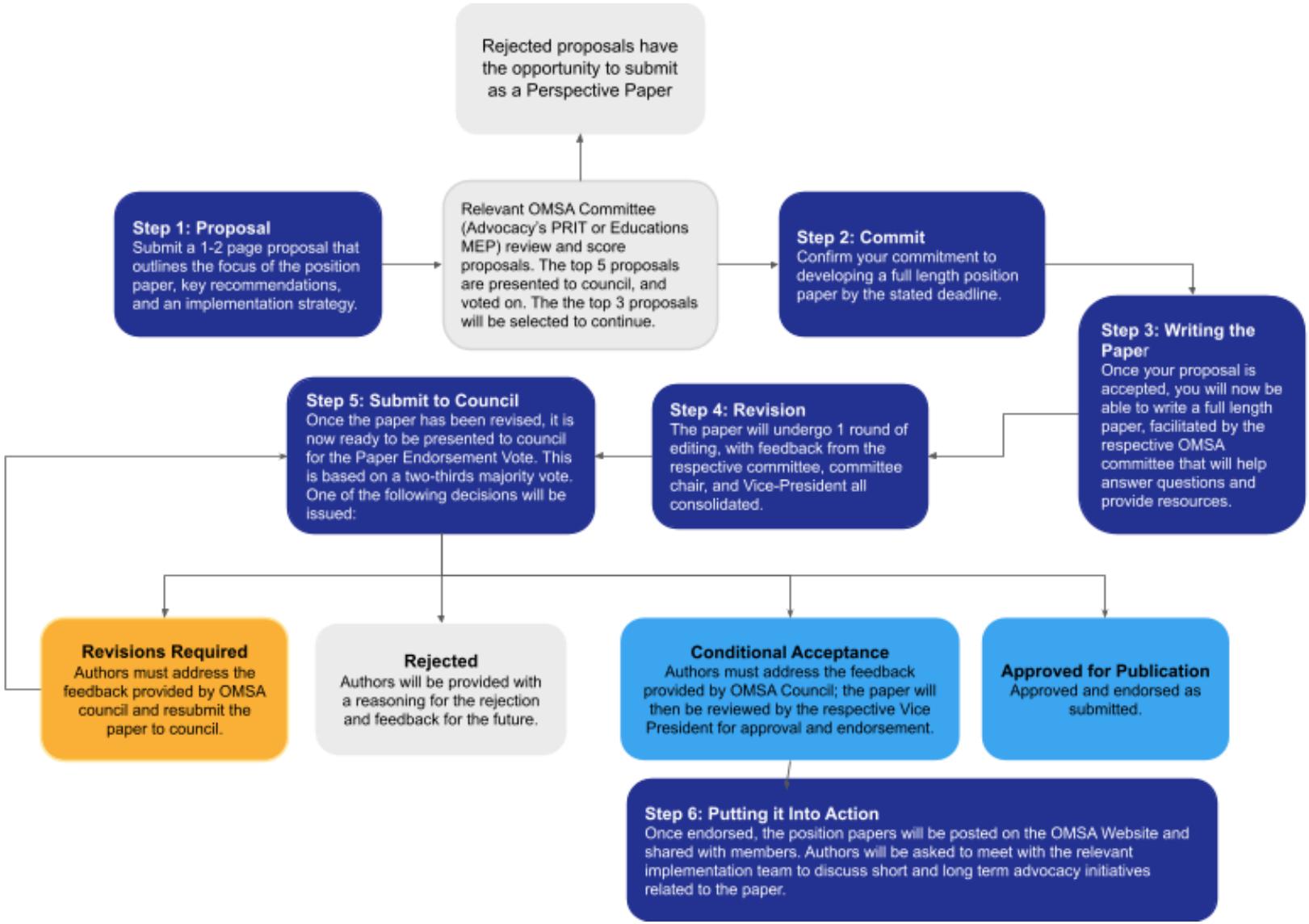
b. **Conditional acceptance** – Authors must address the feedback provided by OMSA Council, after which the appropriate Education or Advocacy Vice-President will review and approve the paper for endorsement and publication.

c. **Revisions requested** – Authors must address the feedback provided by OMSA Council and resubmit the paper for Council to review and motion for formal endorsement. A paper may only undergo one (1) round of revisions requested from Council. Upon resubmission, a paper may receive one of the following determinations by Council: approved as in decision a), or rejected as in decision.

d. **Rejected** – Not approved for publication

Acceptance and endorsement of Position Papers will be followed by publication on OMSA's website. They will also be used to inform future OMSA positions in internal discussions and communications with external stakeholders.

Flowchart 1: Position Paper Selection, Writing, & Endorsement



Position Paper Expiry & Review

Position Papers represent official OMSA stances and therefore must remain timely and relevant. The Advocacy and Education portfolios aim to review each position document every five years, though documents can be revised earlier than that if necessary. **Position Papers have a shelf life of five (5) years before they expire, after which point they can be revised or rescinded.**

The original authors or appropriate Education or Advocacy committee may propose revisions to outdated Position Papers. Any revisions must undergo the same approval process as listed above. If a revision or removal of a Position paper is sought before the five-year shelf life expires, a motion to rescind or revise the paper may be proposed at OMSA Council meetings.

Expired Position Papers will no longer serve as official OMSA stances, but will still be available to the public in an archive on the OMSA website.

Perspective Papers: Selection, Writing, & Acceptance

Selecting Perspective Paper Proposals

Perspective Paper Proposals will be reviewed by the appropriate Education or Advocacy committee to determine which will proceed to the development of full-length papers.

Submitted Position Paper Proposals will be reviewed using a standardized rubric by the appropriate committee under either the OMSA Advocacy or Education portfolio. The scores from all reviewers will be averaged to determine the final score for each proposal.

There is no minimum or maximum number of Perspective Paper Proposals which will be accepted for development of full-length papers.

Perspective Paper Proposals may receive one of the following determinations:

d. Accepted for development into a full-length Perspective Paper
e. Rejected

Writing a Full-Length Position Paper

Authors of accepted Position Paper Proposals must confirm their commitment to developing a full-length Position Paper by the stated deadline via email, given a maximum window of 2 weeks.

Position Paper authors are responsible for writing their full-length paper. Comprehensive writing guidelines can be found on Pages 12-14 of this Handbook.

The appropriate OMSA Education or Advocacy Committee will support authors by providing feedback, editing suggestions, and general writing assistance. **However, please note that while OMSA committees will offer guidance and support throughout the process, they are not responsible for drafting any portion of the paper.**

Throughout writing, authors are also encouraged to consult external stakeholders and OMSA committee members for feedback, editing, and advice.

Acceptance of Final Perspective Papers

Authors will submit their final Position Paper draft by the agreed deadline. Final Perspective Papers will be distributed to the appropriate Education or Advocacy committee Chairs and Vice-Presidents for review. **As Perspective Papers are not formally endorsed and adopted as official OMSA stances, they will not review approval by OMSA Council.**

The appropriate committees will issue one of the following decisions:

a. **Approved for publication** – Approved for publication as submitted, pending copy edits from the appropriate Education or Advocacy committee.

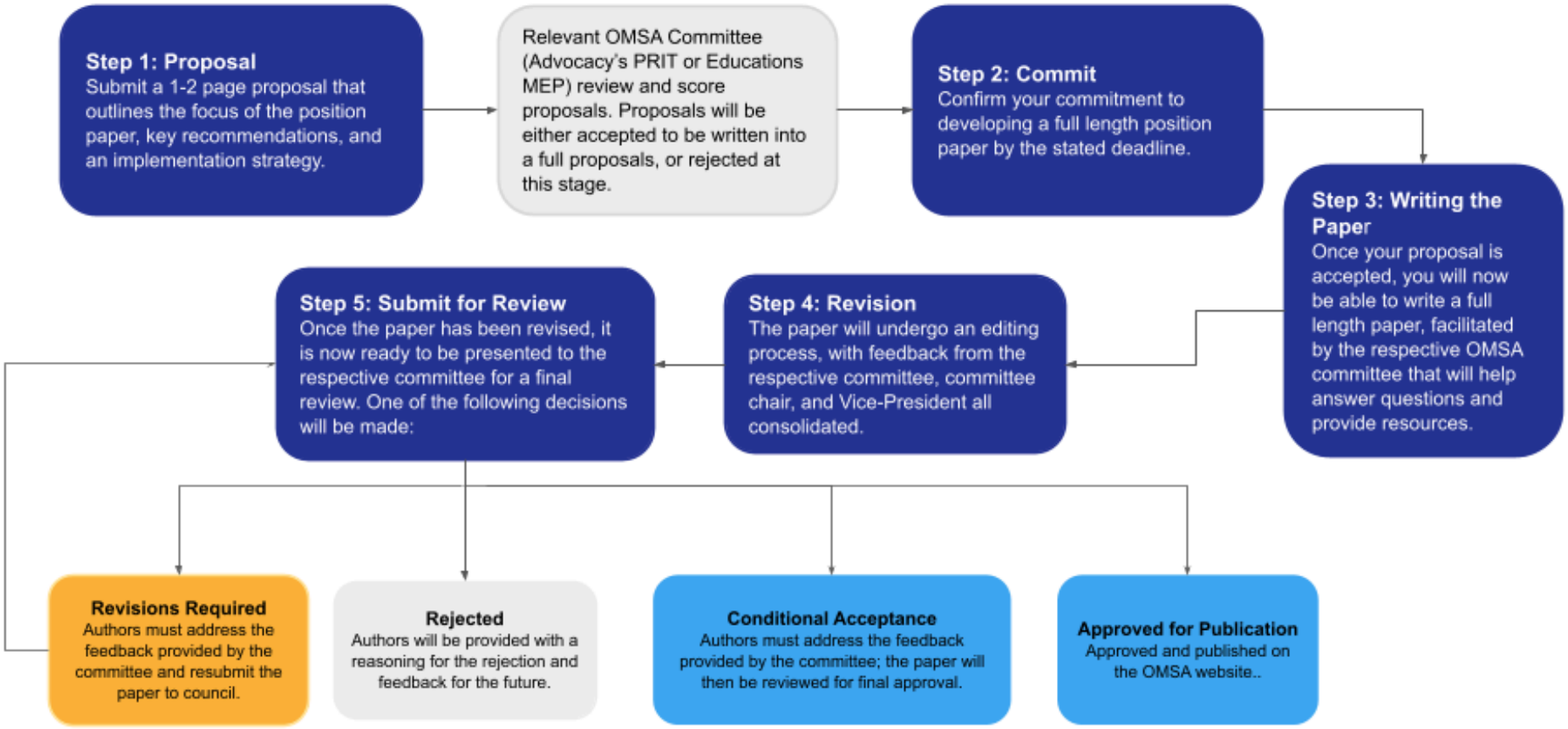
b. **Conditional acceptance** – Authors must address the feedback provided by the appropriate Education or Advocacy committee, after which the respective Chairs and Vice-President will review the paper for approval for publication.

c. **Revisions requested** – Authors must address the feedback provided by the Chairs and Vice-President and re-submit for review by the Vice-President for potential acceptance. A paper may only undergo one (1) round of revisions requested. Upon resubmission, a paper may receive one of the following determinations: approved as in decision a), or rejected as in decision d).

d. **Rejected** – Not approved for publication.

Acceptance of Perspective Papers will be followed by publication on OMSA's website. They will also be used to inform future OMSA positions in internal discussions and communications with external stakeholders.

Flowchart 2: Perspective Paper Selection, Writing, & Acceptance



Perspective Paper Shelf Life & Review

Perspective Papers do not have a shelf life, and therefore do not expire.

They may be revised or removed by the original authors or appropriate Education or Advocacy committee at any time. Any revisions or removals require approval from the appropriate Vice-President, without requiring input or a motion from OMSA Council.

Writing Guidelines

Brainstorming & Topic Selection

Before starting, authors should characterize the problem (i.e. monetary issue, governance issue, program issue, etc.) and identify prior research. Has the issue received media attention? Are other stakeholders suggesting policies on this issue?

Identify the stakeholder the recommendations are aimed at (i.e. Council of Ontario Universities, the Government of Ontario, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, OMSA etc.).

Research & Data Collection

Strong evidence and data are critical for any guiding document, especially for supporting recommendations in a position paper. Data collection can involve both primary and secondary research.

Examples of **primary research** include conducting surveys and consulting relevant stakeholders. A position paper on mental health may involve surveying medical students, healthcare providers, or members of your local community to identify problems in care delivery. Contacting stakeholders, including the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, the Canadian Mental Health Foundation, or content experts, can guide and strengthen a guiding document. In addition to using these resources for initial research, authors may also contact these organizations or individuals for feedback on their recommendations at later stages in your writing.

Secondary research includes literature searches, case studies, and news or media reports. Using these sources is also encouraged to provide the evidence required for policy recommendations. Peer-reviewed research is preferred over news articles, though use of the latter can be useful when discussing a recent topic or an issue at the centre of public debate.

Recommendations

Recommendations are the lifeblood of any advocacy document, informing the reader what OMSA wants and why. They should be **concise but actionable**. Recommendations should be listed (**in bold**), with related evidence and rationale discussed in following body paragraphs.

Having too many recommendations (five or less is preferable, with no more than ten) may draw attention away from your points and confuse the reader.

Your recommendations should clearly identify the responsible party. Recommendations can target stakeholders in the healthcare system, including hospitals, health care organizations, and commonly, the government. If targeting the government, make sure you identify the level of government and the relevant Ministry. Recommendations can also be geared towards universities, including the faculties of medicine, especially if the policies are related to medical education. Lastly, recommendations can be internal, seeking change or action by OMSA members, committees, and/or leaders. Recommendations that are clearly defined and actionable will help strengthen your paper and promote adoption.

Evidence should be presented to support the recommendation and demonstrate why your suggestion is the preferable solution to the problem. To ensure quality recommendations, use the acronym **SMART** (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable/**A**ssignable, **R**elevant and **T**ime-bound) as a guide. Policy is often influenced by societal values, beliefs, and norms; frame your recommendations in a way that will be relevant to your target audience.

Implementation Strategy

Position papers are required to include implementation strategies corresponding to their recommendations. This is recommended for Perspective papers, but not mandatory.

Implementation strategies are suggested actions that may be undertaken by various stakeholders, and should describe how the proposed recommendations might be implemented. **One or more implementation actions** should be within reasonable scope to be carried out by medical students or by OMSA. Consider the mnemonic **SMART** (Specific, Measurable, Attainable/Assignable, Relevant, and Time-bound).

Paper Checklist

The following checklist includes questions you should ask yourself as you write, edit, and refine your final, full-length Position or Perspective Paper. It is included here as you may wish to consult it during the organization of your proposal summary as well. **Most papers are between 5–10 pages.**

OMSA Ontario Medical Students Association
AÉMO Association des étudiant·e·s de médecine de l'Ontario

Title	☐	Does the title **succinctly** describe your paper? (avoid acronyms)
Background: Define your problem and provide context for your recommendations (1-3 pages).	☐	Have you included all features to construct a **coherent introduction** (i.e. timeline of the issue, problem definition, relevant historical/legal/political/social/economic context, major stakeholders and impacted communities)
	☐	Is the context **brief** and **focused** on the problem?
	☐	Have you communicated the nature/significance of the problem?
	☐	Are there key studies/research/laws that either contributed, sought to address, or otherwise interacted with your topic that should be mentioned?
	☐	How has your problem been addressed in the past / elsewhere?
	☐	What are the differing opinions on the problem?
Principles: List the guiding principles for your recommendations.	☐	Do your principles reflect the **mission** and **values** of OMSA? (see Advocacy Values & Guiding Principles document).
	☐	Are your principles stated as general beliefs that can be broadly applied to a variety of issues?
Recommendations: List your policy suggestions and provide reasoning for each recommendation. At least one of your points must be actionable (2-5 pages).	☐	Do your recommendations reflect your stated **principles**?
	☐	Are your recommendations **logically divided**?
	☐	Are your recommendations **SMART** (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable/**A**ssignable, **R**elevant, and **T**ime-bound)?
	☐	Are the targets of your recommendations clear? Who will be held accountable to your recommendations?
	☐	Are there recommendations that are actionable by OMSA?
	☐	Are there recommendations that facilitate action on your part?
	☐	Have you considered alternative policy options to yours, along with their benefits and harms/costs?
	☐	Are your recommendations backed up by research evidence or validated in other jurisdictions?
Implementation Strategy: Please describe how the proposed recommendations could be implemented.	☐	Does each recommendation have specific success metrics that can be objectively evaluated?
	☐	Are foreseeable barriers to implementation clearly identified?
	☐	Have alternative strategies for implementation been listed in case the suggested strategy doesn't work?
	☐	Have the authors included how the OMSA can support implementing the position paper recommendations? Examples: formal endorsement, connecting with stakeholders, social media promotion
References	☐	Is your referencing style consistent? (Vancouver-style preferred)

Implementation Action Expectations

During the academic year following acceptance of your Paper, OMSA's relevant Education and Advocacy committees will endeavour to engage in actions to implement select recommendations. Implementation action stemming from Position Papers should generally be prioritized, although implementation actions from Perspective Papers will be considered.

Examples of Implementation Actions may include:

a. Writing and publishing a news media or op-ed piece
b. Speaking about the document and its contents with a relevant stakeholder
c. Writing a media release for distribution by OMSA via social media channels

Paper authors are encouraged to serve as consultants on implementation projects, through actively engaging with the relevant Committees to implement actions aligning with the recommendations in their Paper. **This is highly recommended, but not mandatory.**

Paper authors are also welcome to **engage in ongoing implementation efforts aligning with the recommendations in their Paper independently of OMSA**, recognizing that many authors have other involvements aligning with the contents of their Paper. They should endeavour to communicate major implementation action updates with the relevant Committees, for documentation purposes.

Implementation Expectations for Position Paper Authors

Each Position Paper author will be <u>required</u> to have at least one (1) meeting with the relevant Committees at the start of the academic year after acceptance of your paper, to discuss recommendations, their potential for implementation, and their impact within the current political and/or medical education climate. You may then determine your chosen level of involvement with OMSA's implementation committees following this meeting.

Implementation Recommendations for Perspective Paper Authors

Each Perspective Paper author will be <u>encouraged</u> to have at least one (1) meeting with the relevant Committees at the start of the academic year after acceptance of your paper, to discuss recommendations, their potential for implementation, and their impact within the current political and/or medical education climate. **This is highly recommended, but not mandatory.** You may then determine your chosen level of involvement with OMSA's implementation committees following this meeting.

OMSA Ontario Medical Students Association
AÉMO Association des étudiant·e·s de médecine de l'Ontario

Glossary of Resources

- Finding and using research evidence: Summary Sheet. Prepared by the McMaster Health Forum, last updated on September 19th, 2022.
- OMSA's Advocacy Values & Guiding Principles.
- OMSA Position & Perspective Paper Policy (September 2025)
- Published OMSA Position and Perspective Papers