



edsa

European Dental
Students' Association

STUDENT POLICY TOOLKIT

2026



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Step 0: Choosing the Right Type of Policy Paper

Before you start writing, decide which type of paper best suits your goal. This will influence the length, level of detail, and tone.

Position Paper

States EDSA's official stance on a specific issue and explains the reasoning behind it. Usually concise and focused.

Advocacy Paper / Call to Action

Aimed at decision-makers. It stresses solutions and actionable steps, encouraging stakeholders to act.

Briefing Note

A very short (1–2 page) summary used to inform busy stakeholders or prepare EDSA members ahead of meetings.

White Paper / Discussion Paper

Explores a topic in depth, mapping out options and inviting consultation before an official position is adopted.

Internal Policy / Organisational Position

Defines EDSA's internal principles, values, or institutional commitments that guide the Association's functioning, representation, and partnerships. *Unlike thematic policy papers, these documents do not primarily propose external reforms but establish standards for how EDSA operates and positions itself.*

Internal policies may address topics such as human rights, equality and inclusion, organisational conduct, or cooperation with international bodies

Key Differences at a Glance

Type	Typical Length	Purpose	Tone	Audience	Example
Position Paper	2–4 pages	Declare stance, explain why	Formal, assertive	EDSA members, partners	Fundamental Human Rights (EDSA)

Advocacy Paper	3–6 pages	Persuade and propose action	Persuasive, clear	Policymakers, universities, EU	Dental Students' Mental Health (EDSA)
Briefing Note	1–2 pages	Inform quickly	Very concise	Delegates, board members	Briefing note prepared for EDSA delegates before a General Meeting
White/Discussion Paper	6–10+ pages	Explore and consult	Balanced, open	Experts, working groups	Sustainability in Dentistry (EDSA)
Internal Policy / Organisational Position	2–5 pages	Define organisational principles and commitments	Formal, normative	EDSA members, partners, stakeholders	Fundamental Human Rights (EDSA); EDSA Policy Plan 2025–2027

Step 1: Title

The title of the paper has to be clear, focused, and solution-oriented. It should reflect the problem and your perspective, as well as draw attention and may raise first thoughts about the topic.

EDSA's example - "THE EFFECTS OF SMOKING AND VAPING ON THE ORAL AND GENERAL HEALTH" ¹

Clear, concise, and directly signalling the thematic focus of the paper.

Step 2: Introduction / Executive Summary

5–10 sentences summarising:

- **The problem** (why it matters for oral health or education)
- **The evidence** (key data, trends, affected groups)
- **The solution** (core recommendations)

- **The impact** (expected outcomes if adopted)

This is the section most people read first – keep it sharp, short and informative. Here you get the idea what the paper is going to be about.

A better future is one that is more equitable, inclusive, and representative of the full diversity of our communities. The future is shaped by today's investments, and building inclusive, respectful, and empowering environments is a shared global responsibility.

Policy on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

EDSA' example – “FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS” ²

The problem

Persistent inequality, discrimination, and exclusion undermine dignity, equal access, and participation in education and professional environments, including dentistry.

The evidence

International frameworks such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights confirm ongoing global challenges related to marginalisation, social division, and unequal protection of fundamental rights.

The solution

EDSA promotes a human rights-based approach by embedding equality, non-discrimination, and inclusion across all organisational policies and activities, aligned with international standards.

The impact

A consistent human rights framework supports fairer, more inclusive educational and professional settings, reducing inequalities and strengthening dignity, justice, and participation.

Step 3: Background & Problem Statement

Describe the context and evidence base in 1–2 short paragraphs:

- Why the issue matters (public health, education, EU priorities)

- Key statistics (WHO, EU Commission, FDI, OECD)
- Who is affected (students, patients, educators)
- What is missing (gaps in policy, education, equity)

EDSA' example – "PUBLIC HEALTH IN DENTISTRY" ³

Element	Example content
Why the issue matters	<i>Oral diseases are among the most prevalent non-communicable diseases globally and represent a major public health burden requiring system-level responses rather than solely individual clinical care.</i>
Key evidence	<i>Approximately 3.5 billion people worldwide are affected by oral diseases, with higher prevalence among vulnerable and marginalised populations, as highlighted by WHO reports.</i>
Who is affected	<i>Patients, communities, and vulnerable groups experience disproportionate oral health inequalities; dental students and educators are affected through insufficient public health integration in education and training.</i>
What is missing	<i>Oral health remains insufficiently integrated into public health systems, prevention strategies, surveillance, and dental education, despite alignment with WHO Global Oral Health Action Plan and FDI Vision 2030.</i>

Step 4: Definitions (Optional)

Clarify key terms, especially those that could have multiple interpretations (equity, AI, vulnerability, teledentistry). Definitions should come from an official dictionary (for english language Oxford Dictionary).

EDSA' example – "SUSTAINABILITY IN DENTISTRY" ⁴ :

- **Sustainability:** *The capacity to operate without depleting natural resources or causing long-term harm to ecosystems.*
- **Sustainable Development:** *Development that meets present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own.*

- **Green Dentistry:** *A dental practice approach that delivers high-quality care while minimising environmental impact through resource efficiency, preventive care, and responsible material use.*

Step 5: Aim of the Paper

Merge purpose and objectives:

- **Purpose:** Why the paper exists
- **Objectives:** The main goals you want to achieve

EDSA' example – “DENTAL STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH” ⁵:

Purpose:

This policy paper aims to address mental health challenges among dental students. Taking steps to promote awareness, improve access to support systems, and recognise mental health as an essential component of dental education and training.

Objectives:

The objectives of this policy paper are to:

- *strengthen mental health literacy and awareness within dental education, including prevention, self-care, and early recognition of distress;*
- *improve access to timely, confidential, and inclusive mental health support services for dental students across Europe;*
- *promote safe, supportive, and equitable learning environments that prioritise student wellbeing alongside academic performance;*
- *encourage student-led and peer-support initiatives as integral components of mental health promotion;*
- *support monitoring, evaluation, and accountability mechanisms to ensure sustainable and effective mental health policies within dental institutions.*

Step 6: Policy Recommendations

Provide actionable, numbered proposals. Each should start with an action verb: *promote, encourage, advocate, support, collaborate*. Stay factual and reference stakeholders' positions if needed.

EDSA' example – “POSITION ON CORPORATE DENTISTRY” ⁶:

1. **Encourage** the integration of public health principles into corporate dental care frameworks to address oral health disparities.
2. **Promote** preventive and population-based approaches within corporate dentistry to reduce inequalities in oral health outcomes.
3. **Support** research on the population-level health impact of corporate dental care models to inform evidence-based policymaking.
4. **Advocate** for regular evaluation and accountability mechanisms within corporate dental healthcare systems.

Step 7: Roles & Responsibilities

Define who should do what:

- **EDSA's role:** advocacy, education, networking
- **Stakeholders' role:** universities, ministries, industry, NGOs

EPISA' example – “MENTAL HEALTH POSITION PAPER” ⁷:

Student organisations:

Coordinate mental health advocacy, raise awareness, collect student input, representing students' needs at institutional and European levels.

Universities and educational institutions:

Integrate mental health support into curricula and academic environments, ensure access to confidential services, and allocate resources for student wellbeing.

Academic staff and educators:

Promote supportive learning environments, recognise signs of mental distress, and contribute to stigma reduction and psychosocial safety.

Students and student representatives:

Engage in peer-support initiatives, mental health advocacy rising the co-creation of wellbeing policies and support measures.

Step 8: Strategic Alignment

Link to international frameworks to strengthen legitimacy:

- WHO Global Oral Health Action Plan 2023–2030 (Actions 2.3 & 3.3)
- FDI Vision 2030 and FDI AI Policy Statement
- CED Resolution on Artificial Intelligence in Dentistry
- ADEE Curriculum Framework and strategic plans
- Research Papers (if available)

EDSA' example – “WHO GLOBAL STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN ON ORAL HEALTH 2023–2030”
8:

*The **WHO Global Strategy and Action Plan on Oral Health 2023–2030** serves as a key reference for policy development in oral health. The strategy emphasises the integration of oral health into broader public health systems, prioritises prevention and health promotion, and calls for action to reduce oral health inequalities across populations. It also highlights the importance of strengthening the oral health workforce, improving access to essential oral healthcare services, and embedding oral health within non-communicable disease strategies and primary healthcare systems.*

Step 9: Review & Update Plan

WHO and FDI review policy papers regularly – propose a review every 2 years to keep your paper current.

EDSA' example – “POLICY ON EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION”¹⁰ :

“This policy will be reviewed every two years by the current Policy Officer of EDSA.”¹⁰

Step 10: References

Use a consistent system.

- **Numbered (Vancouver):** Preferred for policy papers.
 - *In-text:* “AI literacy must become a part of curricula (3).”
 - *List:* Number sources in order of appearance.
- **APA style:** Common in academic writing.

EDSA' example – “ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE IN DENTISTRY” ” (Numbered APA):

1. Amann S, Neef K, Kohl S. Antimicrobial resistance (AMR). *Eur J Hosp Pharm.* 2019;26(3):175–177.
2. World Health Organization. *Antimicrobial resistance. WHO; 2023.*

Additional

Writing & Referencing Options

Referencing Options:

- **Vancouver / Numbered:** Compact, common in WHO/FDI/CED papers.
- **APA (Author-Year):** Good for academic tone, but heavier visually.
- **Footnotes/Endnotes:** Useful for reports or where space is limited.

- **Hyperlinked References:** Ideal for online-first documents or newsletters.

Alternative Structures:

- **Q&A format:** Frames the paper as answers to key policy questions.
- **Problem-Solution-Impact:** Describes the issue, the solution, and the expected benefit.
- **Case Study Inclusion:** Adds a short real-world example to illustrate each point.

Tone Options:

- **Formal-neutral:** Standard for FDI/WHO.
- **Advocacy-focused:** Slightly more urgent (“EDSA calls on...”).
- **Student-friendly:** Clear, accessible, no jargon.

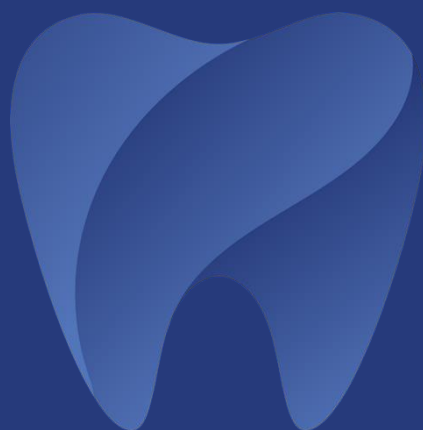
Tips:

- Avoid jargon unless you define it.
- Use short, active sentences (“Promote integration...” not “Integration should be promoted”).
- Include data where possible, but keep it simple – one key statistic per point is enough.
- If the paper will be shared online, add hyperlinks to key documents (WHO, FDI).
- Present facts clearly and make recommendations sound necessary without exaggeration.
- Keep headings, numbering, and terminology uniform throughout the paper

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11. World Health Organization. *Antimicrobial resistance*. WHO; 2023.



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