

SCRIPTS Knowledge Exchange Lab (KEL)

Toolbox for the Cooperation with Policy Actors



✕ What we mean by knowledge exchange

Research of the Cluster of Excellence ‘Contestations of the Liberal Script’ (SCRIPTS) does not happen in a vacuum. Most of the projects conducted by our researchers revolve around topics that are also salient in the current work of policy-makers, civil society institutions and practitioners of all kinds as well as in current debates in media and arts. At the same time, the practical world is often not readily accessible to researchers and located outside established academic career paths’ and incentive systems. To bridge this gap, SCRIPTS has established the **Knowledge Exchange Lab (KEL)**, one of the Cluster’s Cross Cutting Work Units with dedicated staff and budget. Its purpose is to enable various interconnections between the academic and non-academic world in the context of the Cluster’s research agenda.

Pursuing knowledge exchange is part of the Cluster’s mission in fulfilling its broader societal role. At the same time, it is also mutually beneficial: Practitioners get access to knowledge that otherwise remains mostly opaque, while academics are challenged to consider the implications of their work, are confronted with perspectives that are easily overlooked in academic discourse and they become an active part of societal debate and policy discourse.

Our idea of knowledge exchange goes beyond unilateral “transfer” of knowledge (a term still commonly used to describe the interface between research and practice). In accordance with the Berlin University Alliance (BUA), SCRIPTS defines knowledge exchange as “a **multidirectional process** in which academic ideas and research results are directed outward, and external perspectives and experiences are then fed back into research.” Knowledge exchange starts with the recognition that there are different types of knowledge about similar subjects. Academic knowledge can thus be brought into a fruitful exchange with practical, experiential and everyday knowledge. Professionally organized “translation” processes are a key condition for successful knowledge exchange, as is the openness of participants to other perspectives as well as the capacity to exchange. In this context, KEL connects ongoing research activities at SCRIPTS to public debates, distinct social knowledges and policy-relevant fields.

This “toolbox” gives an overview of the formal organization of SCRIPTS KEL and takes a closer look at the different formats and the multiple benefits of knowledge exchange with **policy actors**. The aim of the tool box is to give a) an overview of possible formats that have already been tried and tested in the policy world and b) inspire potential knowledge exchange ideas in SCRIPTS’ various research projects transferring – and developing further – our frames and formats. The tool box is shared with researchers at SCRIPTS as well as foreign policy practitioners at the German Federal Foreign Office.

✕ How SCRIPTS’ KEL is organized

KEL has **two main areas** in which it operates:

Through the already established close cooperation with the German Federal Foreign Office (FFO), “**KEL Politics (KEL POL)**” focuses mainly on foreign policy so far. Cooperation with other political actors such as the German Bundestag or political foundations are currently further developed. The close exchange with (foreign) policy is proving to be beneficial and valuable – for both sides: just as policymakers can rely on ongoing reflections and findings of the cluster, researchers can get a closer look into the policy “black box”, thereby enriching the individual research agenda. A research associate permanently seconded to the FFO since 2020 identifies knowledge gaps and opportunities in the FFO and develops formats of knowledge exchange.

Researching “contestations of the liberal script” means critical engagement with highly relevant matters of concern for present and future societies. “**KEL Culture**” outreach activities into arts and culture are part of a reflexive and translational practice that connects SCRIPTS researchers and research questions to public and cultural spaces of debate and interventions. KEL Culture’s knowledge exchange formats do not necessarily follow the same logic or formats of exchange outlined in this tool box. KEL Culture has established several event series (such as e.g. the series “Futuring the Liberal Script”) and it has – among other things – actively supported the curation of the exhibition “After Nature” in the “Humboldt Lab” in Berlin-Mitte (a highly visible and successful exhibition that has attracted around 60.000 visitors in 2021). While certainly more broadly applicable, the toolbox below focuses on the exchange with policy actors.

1 <https://www.berlin-university-alliance.de/en/commitments/knowledge-exchange>

✕ Formats of knowledge exchange with policy actors

There are a few aspects that need to be considered when establishing a bi-directional exchange between research and practice. As each institution follows its time frames and “codes of conduct”, the KEL has to be **flexible** and **context-sensitive** in conceptualizing different formats. Exchange, therefore, can be established on a short- or long-term basis and on a smaller or larger scale. Our previous experiences range from large-scale conferences, events with receptions, workshops and discussion series to smaller discussion circles following “Chatham House Rules”. Smaller formats can be sequenced with (larger) follow-up formats. They can be organized on a national or international level. The **impulse** of establishing a KE format can come either **from the practitioner’s or the researchers’ side**. All formats are conceived from “research to practice” and “from practice to research”. **Reciprocity** in knowledge exchange inputs is often established along long-term cooperation processes.

(1) PRE-EXISTING FORMATS

Institutions have pre-existing formats in which they operate. KEL uses those formats as a platform in order to integrate SCRIPTS’ research into practice and practical knowledge to SCRIPTS formats.

★ **“From research to practice”**: There are several “internal” formats in the policy world that researchers from SCRIPTS can contribute to. Inviting external expertise by giving inputs is a common feature in these formats. Examples include:

- **Brown Bag Lunch Series** in different divisions and directorates
- Weekly **Jour Fixes** of different divisions and directorates
- **“Referatsklausuren”** (internal retreats for divisions and directorates)

★ **“From practice to research”**:

- **Workshops**: Inviting practitioners as guests to SCRIPTS’ broad range of workshops can prove to be beneficial in the exchange of knowledge (e.g. SCRIPTS Workshop on Postcolonialism).
- **Participation in SCRIPTS’ meetings**: SCRIPTS Jour Fixe, RU meetings and workshops (see above), project workshops, SCRIPTS conference. Here, we focus on the exchange with policy actors.

- **Appointment procedures**: Practitioners can take an informal consulting role in the appointments at the Cluster. Thereby, valuable exchange on the policy-relevance of research areas and questions can be integrated into the process.

★ **Joint/Symmetric**:

- **Colloquium** for “embedded scientists” and interested practitioners in FFO: A range of topics are discussed in a smaller circle from a research proposal to a doctoral exposé.

(2) SPECIFIC FORMATS

KEL can also create new frames where practice and academia can exchange.

★ **“From research to practice”**: Publications are not only addressed to an academic audience. The findings of a research project are often highly relevant to the daily work of practitioners. However, reading long and detailed publications is often time-consuming. This is why findings have to be “translated” into practice-fitting formats. Here, KEL establishes events and discussions which can take various formats:

- **Launch events** of recent policy-relevant publications with several **inputs by researchers and practitioners as well as a discussion among panelists and guests afterwards** (e.g. launch event for the 75th edition of the Political Science Journal “International Organization” in October 2021)
- **Launch events** of recent publications which are critically reflected by a discussant from research or practice (e.g. Book Launch Börzel/Risse “Governance Under Anarchy” in June 2021)

During these exchanges, publications are discussed from different perspectives which might lead to a broadening of the research question, further ideas for future research or new methodological approaches.

★ **“From practice to research”**: SCRIPTS’ research agenda touches upon many topics that the policy world is dealing with every day. In KEL POL, a seconded research assistant identifies the most pressing issues and debates in the FFO and brings them back into research through:

- Workshops and workshop series
- Discussion series (e.g. a newly established discussion series on the “Future of the Liberal Script”)
- Conferences
- Events (e.g. “Parlamentarischer Abend”)
- Roundtables

Thereby, communication of the practice perspectives to researchers and feedback can be established.

✳ **Joint/Symmetric:** The above-mentioned formats can be established in a joint way.

All formats can be organized in varying, context-fitting, ways. They can take place in a digital, hybrid or offline formats for a specific group of practitioners and researchers or in a broader manner, including interested researchers and practitioners from SCRIPTS and the FFO, respectively. Panelists and discussant roles can be taken by researchers and/or practitioners. They can also be organized in a sequenced manner, e.g. a conference following an earlier held workshop. External expertise by researchers from other universities and/or Think Tanks can prove to be a beneficial addition to a knowledge exchange format.

(3) TEACHING

Education and training is another area where knowledge exchange can be established:

✳ **“From research to practice”:**

- Seminars on current research themes organized by researchers can be included in pre-existing formats in education and training, such as the **training of future diplomats**.
- Researchers can be invited as speakers to the FFO’s various **training courses** for their employees as one-time guests.
- Teaching by university staff for an FFO audience

✳ **From “practice to research”:** Practitioners can be “included” in SCRIPTS’ teaching activities in the form of:

- Guest **inputs** in seminars
- Public **guest lectures**
- **Conceptualization and teaching** of seminars over the whole semester

✳ **Joint/Symmetric:**

- Full co-organizing and co-teaching of a seminar, either for an FFO audience or at the university

(4) RESEARCH

✳ **From “research to practice”:** The close exchange with policy-makers can be used as a resource for academic research:

- As an empirical source (e.g. interviews)
- As a broker for empirical/field contacts
- Participation in academic workshops

✳ **From “practice to research”:** The FFO can make specific requests to academic research:

- Commissioned research
- Suggestions for academic research (identification of gaps)

✳ **Joint/Symmetric:** From a long-term perspective, KEL aims to support joint research programs in which researchers and practitioners both work together. This can take various forms:

- Joint **research projects** and joint conduction of research projects on mutually identified topics (joint application, e.g. to SCRIPTS)
- Joint **publications** (e.g. journal contributions, policy papers, working papers)

(5) STAFF EXCHANGE

✳ **“From research to practice”:**

- Through **permanent integration** (secondment) into the FFO’s daily operations, research associates identify and explore areas of mutual interest within foreign policy practice and SCRIPTS (> 1 y)
- Short term postings of academic staff in the FFO (~ 6 m)

✳ **From “practice to research”:**

- **Short-term** (~ 4 w) and **long-term** (> 3 m) **fellowships** for FFO members at SCRIPTS

✳ **Joint/Symmetric:**

- Mutual exchange programs

“KNOWLEDGE-EXCHANGE TOOLBOX”

FOR THE PURPOSE OF COLLABORATION BETWEEN SCRIPTS AND THE GERMAN FEDERAL FOREIGN OFFICE (FFO)

(Tried & tested exchange formats in bold)

	PRE-EXISTING FORMATS	SPECIFIC FORMATS	TEACHING	RESEARCH	STAFF EXCHANGE
RESEARCH -> PRACTICE	Academic participation in FFO's pre-existing forums: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Brown Bag” lunches • Weekly Jour Fixes • “Referatsrunden” • “Referatsklausuren” (academic guests) • “Donnerstagsrunden” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication of research results to practice with feedback, e.g.: • Publication Launch Events • discussant format • panel format 	Academic participation in FFO education and training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-organization • One-time guest • Teaching by university staff for an FFO audience 	FFO as a resource for academic research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FFO as an empirical source (e.g. interviews) • FFO as a broker for empirical/field contacts • Participation in academic workshops 	Posting of Academic Staff in the FFO: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • short-term (~ 6 m) • long-term (> 1 y)
PRACTICE -> RESEARCH	FFO-participation in SCRIPTS events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RU meetings/workshops • Project workshops • SCRIPTS' meetings • Appointment procedures • SCRIPTS conference 	Communication of practice perspective to researchers with feedback: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops • Workshop series • Discussion series • Conferences • Events • Roundtables 	FFO participation in academic teaching at university: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest inputs in seminars • Public guest lectures • Conceptualization and teaching of seminars 	FFO with specific requests to academic research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioned research • Suggestions for academic research (identification of gaps) 	Fellowships of FFO-members at SCRIPTS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • short-term (~ 4 w) • long-term (> 3 m)
JOINT/SYMMETRIC	Colloquium for “embedded scientists” and interested practitioners in the FFO	Events with equal weight of both perspectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roundtables • Workshops • Workshop series • Conferences 	Full co-organizing and co-teaching either for an FFO audience or at university	Joint research programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint research projects (joint application e.g. to SCRIPTS) • Joint publications 	Mutual exchange programs



To learn more about opportunities of knowledge exchange, visit the [website](#) or get in touch with the KEL team:

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SCRIPTS

CLUSTER OF EXCELLENCE

Contestations of the Liberal Script