Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Public Administration
of

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BA (Simon Fraser University, 2012)

“Judging the Quality of Systematic Reviews and Metaanalyses for Policy Analysis: An Exploratory Study of Utilization in Three Ministries in British Columbia”

School of Public Administration

Friday, June 23, 2017
1:00 P.M.
Human and Social Development Building
A373

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Evert Lindquist, School of Public Administration, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Rebecca Warburton, School of Public Administration, UVic (Member)
Dr. Lynne Young, Department of Nursing, UVic (Outside Member)
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Dr. Freya Kodar, Faculty of Law, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

Public policy analysts are often tasked with reviewing research or other forms of evidence in order to provide advice for policy decisions. Many have argued that systematic reviews that include meta-analyses (SRMAs) are the most rigorous forms of evidence, and thus, when possible, should form the basis of policy decisions. However, it is not yet clear to what extent policy analysts are aware of systematic reviews and metaanalyses, or to what extent they use them to inform policy work. Moreover, given the importance of evaluating the quality of research before using it for policy, it is not clear to what extent policy analysts feel able to judge the quality of systematic reviews and metaanalyses. An online survey was used to provide initial estimates of the extent to which policy analysts a) are familiar with SRMAs; b) use these reviews to inform their policy work; and c) are able to evaluate them. It further sought to explore other correlates of use, barriers to use, methods to increase use, and knowledge of factors that influence quality. Thirty-nine Ministerial policy analysts responded to the survey, 18 from the Ministry of Health, 9 from the Ministry of Environment, and 12 from other ministries. Policy analysts reported being fairly familiar with both systematic reviews and metaanalyses, although they were more familiar with systematic reviews than with metaanalyses. There were no differences between the Health, Environment, or Other groups with respect to familiarity. Respondents reported moderate scores on most indicators of use, with results suggesting the Health group having the highest rates of use, followed by the Environment group and then the Other group. Finally, there were relatively high self ratings on ability to judge the quality of SRMAs, with no differences found between groups. The results of other exploratory analyses are also presented, and implications and recommendations are discussed.