

The process of writing and submitting a paper to a journal

Choosing the journal

- i) Decide on the audience
- ii) List the possibilities (professional and/ or academic)
- iii) Weigh up the importance of the journal. Will it be recognised by a research selectivity panel?
- iv) Sound out the journal and its scope (phone or e-mail if necessary)
- v) READ BACK ISSUES (It must follow on)

Write the article with the chosen journal in mind (i.e. decide on journal first, write article second!)

A journal that will be recognised in a research assessment exercise is more likely to have:-

- A peer review process. On the whole 'higher rated' journals will have a more rigorous review process.
- An editorial panel of international researchers from different countries, ideally including some well known good researchers.

G. Brewer (1996) (Ed) *Guide to British Educational Journals* Libraries of Institutes of Education is a rather dated book but provides some idea the rating of a journal. It is arranged into 3 categories used in Funding Council research assessment: academic and research journals, professional journals and popular journals.

Submitting the paper

- Submit to only one journal at a time.
- Follow the guidelines given to the letter. These can be found on-line or in each copy of the journal.
- Precede with a call or e-mail; accompany with a letter.
- Get a critical friend to read it first!

Prepare to wait

The review process usually takes several months.

What a reviewer will be looking for

- Coherence is needed with a clear and supported argument. (Many papers sent to reviewers and not well finished and are poorly structured making it difficult to understand the ideas being presented. A well written paper puts the reviewer into a good frame of mind from the very beginning.)
- Some originality is needed.
- There should be close link between the declared purpose of the paper, the literature review, any enquiry conducted, the conclusions reached and the implications for practice that are drawn.
- There should be a theoretical background showing wide reading but this should not be just name dropping.

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- Any empirical studies should be shown as conducted in a technically competent manner.
- Quantitative analysis should be clearly communicated for a non statistician to make sense of the tables.
- Parts of transcriptions or quotes from participants should be relevant and succinct.
- There should be a critical evaluation of conclusions and ideally a discussion of the implications of the research for the practice of science education.

Dealing with referees' comments:

Reviewers will recommend:-

- Acceptance (action: celebrate)
- Minor revisions (action: celebrate and just do them)
- Major revisions (strong drink, then take each point one by one)
- Reject: blame them for their ignorance and lack of foresight, make any changes that you are happy with, then send to another journal ASAP.

Most papers will come back with at least some revisions required. Once they are complete, it is helpful to resubmit with an explanation of how all the reviewers' comments have been addressed.

Wellington, Jerry (2003) *Getting Published: A Guide for Lecturers and Researchers*. London: [RoutledgeFalmer](#). Provides an excellent start for new writers. (See review of the book www.lib.msu.edu/corby/reviews/posted/wellington.htm).

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