Lisbon seminar 2022
Part 2

SESSION 2 - SUBMITTING YOUR PAPER

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Getting it right before you submit!

- This is a stage by stage process of writing and submitting your paper
- The paper will only be as good as the content and the methods you have chosen
- **Remember** to read the authors guidelines which are on the website page of every journal
- Getting simple things wrong like a referencing style or spacing or not anonymising etc will delay the process and frustrate the editor
- Do not annoy the editor!!

Contact your chosen journal (optional)

- Send a brief letter or email to your journal of choice with the paper's title and the abstract and ask if it is of interest.
- Also ask any awkward questions (flexibility on paper length, typical times for the peer review process) that may influence your decision on where to submit your paper.
- If the response is favourable, you can begin writing.
- If unfavourable, look for another journal. Ask colleagues for their advice, and always consult Chapter 3 of Publishing Addiction Science, which lists descriptive information of many addiction journals.

The importance of originality

- Too many researchers fail to make clear what is the original contribution of a paper. Science journals exist primarily to publish original knowledge.
- Describe what is original about your analyses in your initial letter to the editor. It should be evident in the Title (if possible), and the Abstract. It should also be described in the Introduction and in the Discussion (and/or Conclusion).

Title

Remember the title is crucial in the dissemination of your paper. This is what will show up in searches so it needs to describe the reseach issue and the importance of the paper

Write a title in the same style as other titles for your chosen journal. If unsure, read the Table of Contents for several issues to see what is current practice and style.

Avoid trendy and cute titles they are soon outdated and will be embarrassing to have in your CV.

Abstract

This summarizes how you carried out your research and what you learned. Use, if possible, a structured abstracts, this has become established practice for many journals and makes it easier to write and understand.

Mistakes to avoid: Do not go beyond what you establish in your paper, no non-significant results, no speculation, no telegraphic style, stay within the word count limit.

A good abstract is crucial as it sums up the whole paper. It is also what prospective readers will first see when the seach for your paper on indexes and data bases

Literature review (Introduction)

The conflicting goals of comprehensiveness and brevity make literature reviews difficult. Online help such as ***Publishing Addiction Science*** is available and recommended.

Include all relevant citations for each measure, Methods, Procedures, and Results. Ask yourself “If I were challenged to support why I chose this [measure, method, statistic] what citations will support my choice?”

Do not use many references to support each point, one or two are sufficient.

Go from the general point of the research area to the specific so the end of the introduction should be the refined research question.

Method

After reading this section, another researcher should be able to duplicate your research with another sample. Ask a colleague whether she could do this. With randomized control trials, editors may refer you to the Consort Statement for high standards and uniform methods.

Mistakes to avoid: Any suboptimal aspect of your methods should be followed by “see the Limitations section” and deal with it there. Do not try to hide or disguise poor methods; experienced reviewers will pounce!

Results

Here you describe the outcome(s) from your research. Verify that original findings to be discussed later are included. Include all the findings but without discussion of them at this point.

Mistakes to avoid: This section lends itself to over-writing, (it should be a report of what you have found) and underwriting, (not explaining fully what you have found).

Do not report non-significant results, do not say approaching significance or almost significant. If results are not significant they should be reported as such.

Results

- When quoting probabilities you should always use the format of $p<0.001$, $p<0.01$, $p<0.05$ etc and NS if not significant
- Probabilities should not be quoted as exact numbers
- I see too many papers using $p=0.0023$ etc.
- Probabilities can never be zero iep=0.000
- Probabilities are after all the "probable" outcome of this statistic

Discussion

Describe the place your results hold within addiction science (Per the lit review? Policy issues? New issues poorly addressed by others?) Cite the issues you included in the introduction but do not introduce new literature unless your findings confirm something unexpected. This is where your paper needs to explain those results thoroughly.

Mistakes to avoid: Limit speculation, outline future research in 1 or 2 lines. It is trite to say that "…more research is needed": of course, it's always needed.

Conclusions

It is now common to finish the paper with a brief section of conclusions, this is the place to reiterate the main findings and to show how important they are for the topic you are researching.

It is the opportunity to finish the paper by saying how important your research is!

Limitations

- Describe briefly the suboptimal aspects of your research. Most research has limitations such as the population researched or the size of the sample etc.
- Don’t apologise, but if you try to hide or avoid limitations it it will be picked up by reviewers or the editor.

Appendices, tables and figures

Do not include too many figures or tables. Remember the editor will have a page budget and the reader will not want to go through endless figures or tables. Only include those which are important for understanding the paper. A maximum of 5 of either should be sufficient.

Check with the editor about appendices (number, length) for decisions here can influence your text.

Mistakes to avoid: It’s easy to include too many pages as appendices. This is not so important if it is only to be published on-line but important for hard copy versions.

Some papers are submitted with supplementary files. The same applies to these as to appendices.

References

Keep in mind that the role of a reference list is to allow any reader to retrace all of the evidence that you cite. It must therefore be complete and accurate, In the text should either be just the surname of the authors (if more than two first author plus et al and date) for the APA or Harvard style and just the number of the reference as it appears in paper, then listed in numerical order in the reference list for the Vancouver style.

In the reference list if it is APA style then they should be in alphabetical order from the surname of the first author, in the Vancouver style it should be the order in which they appear in the text. The references should be full and not two authors plus et al unless there is a very large number of authors for the paper cited.

Verify if foreign language titles require translation. If they do, translate them in the first copy sent to the editor.

Feedback before submission

- Always ask colleagues or a friend to read the paper before you submit it. Even experienced authors and researchers can make mistakes which they fail to see on rereading the paper because of familiarity. Other people seeing it freshly will pick up mistakes and non-sequiters!

The process of submitting

Journals have a duty to avoid wasting referee time and undue delays in responding to authors and the final decision will depend upon:-

- Importance or originality
- Reviewers concerns
- Fatal flaws
- Journal philosophy
- Space available
- Editorial work required

Triage: Rejection Before Peer Review

Reasons for instant rejections

- Outside the scope of the journal
- Manuscript type unacceptable
- Ignores Instructions to Authors
- Major methodological weaknesses (eg too few subjects)
- Clear ethical problems
- Purely descriptive, parochial, no hypotheses, no conclusions.
- Statistical analysis lacking
- Nothing new in it.

Comply with Details of Instructions to Authors

- Ensure the Introduction summarises previous work adequately
- State the objectives of the work
- Doing something that has been not been done before is not enough, why does it need to be done?
- State the hypotheses to be tested, how will they be tested outline the plan of work
- Don’t include conclusions in the Introduction.

Responding to Referee Reports

- Construct a detailed reply to referees, Reply with numbered sections responding to referees points.
- Make revisions to deal with the major criticisms, then explain why you have not dealt with the rest.
- Describe each change you make, refer the reader to the relevant page in the revised manuscript.
- Highlight changes in the text in a different colour.
- If there are important or major changes recommended that you are absolutely sure are wrong, present a polite, logically argued rebuttal

- *If you don't want to make any of the changes take a break and look at it again another day!*

Responding to Referee Reports

- If you have made major changes by rewriting whole sections of the paper state that you have done so.
- If you have just inserted or deleted a few words make clear which words by track changes so that referees can see something has been done.
- If you are asked to shorten something, do so, at least by some extent and state by how much.

- *Engender trust: never claim to have made changes when you have not done so!*

Responding to Referee Reports

- Keep your reply as short as possible eg 1-3 single spaced pages. If the referee writes 3 lines and you need a page to rebut it, your argument will not be convincing.
- If the referee cannot understand your point try to see how the misunderstanding has arisen and make changes so that it will not happen again – *If one person does not follow what you have written the same may apply to other people.*
- Answer questions raised by the referee in the manuscript not in the cover letter.

Responding to Referee Reports

- Spend a significant amount of time getting your reply to referees as near perfect as you can.
- Maximise and stress agreements with what they write, acknowledge their contribution.
- Minimise disagreements (but not to the point of dishonesty)
- If you feel a referee shows a bias to a theoretical approach that differs from yours, you can explain that there are different approaches, that yours is equally valid, there is a genuine difference of opinion and you have a different but scientifically legitimate view. Don’t do this unless you have a strong case.