WHAT MAKES A GOOD JOURNAL ARTICLE?

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SUBJECT MATTER

• Does the dissertation address question(s) of interest to journal readers?
• Does the information assembled for the dissertation help usefully to answer those question(s)
  – Validity of methods
  – Statistical power
TYPE OF RESEARCH

• Does not matter provided methods are appropriate to the study question(s) and ethical

• Possibilities include primary research (quantitative or qualitative) and secondary research (systematic review quantitative summary/meta-analysis or qualitative review with innovative thinking)
EXAMPLES OF PUBLISHED PROJECTS

• Determinants of safe behaviour in farmers when working with pesticides
• OH needs of commercial fishermen in south-west England
• Health problems of professional musicians
• Employment and job loss in patients awaiting hip or knee surgery
WRITING A PAPER (1)

• Identify main messages and required length of paper

• Check journal requirements if have one in mind

• Draft tables and figures
  – Only use where more economical than text
  – Limits for paper journals
  – May be able to supplement online
WRITING A PAPER (2)

• Draft text for Results section

• Draft Methods section
  – Include only what is relevant to results presented
  – Needs to be clear how results were obtained
  – Some of the detailed aspects of statistical methods sometimes come better in Results section
WRITING A PAPER (3)

• Draft Introduction
  – Should set up study question(s) by explaining why the topic is important, what is already known, and what still has to be answered
  – May also refer to developments in methodology or new/special circumstances which now make it possible to address the study question(s) more effectively
WRITING A PAPER (4)

• Draft Discussion
  – Summary of main findings
  – Strengths and limitations of study method
  – Relevant findings from elsewhere and how the new findings fit in (taking into account the strengths and limitations of the study method)
  – Conclusions and recommendations for what is needed next
WRITING A PAPER (5)

- Add references and draft Abstract in format for chosen journal
  - Often easier to prepare in separate Word documents and then paste in (or use special software for references)

- Add title page, key words, acknowledgements, funding and any other sections required by journal
WRITING A PAPER (6)

• Check that all co-authors are happy

• Check style and language
  – Efficiency and clarity of communication
  – Elegance

• Submit
  – Usually online
WRITING A PAPER (7)

• Respond to reviewers’ comments if given opportunity
  – Answer each point raised, highlighting any relevant amendments to the paper
  – Rebut with reasons if reviewer is wrong, but be polite

• If rejected, consider reviewers’ comments and if appropriate, submit elsewhere with or without amendments.
ASSESSMENT OF JOURNAL ARTICLES
HOW JOURNALS OPERATE

• Preliminary checks on submission
• Initial review by Editor or Assistant Editor
• Reject or send to external reviewers
• Reject, accept or request re-submission
• Re-submission with response to reviewers’ and Editor’s comments
• Editorial decision with or without further external review or further iteration
REVIEWING FOR JOURNALS (1)

• Assess interest of study question(s), validity of methods, adequacy of discussion, and validity of conclusions
• Be thorough but constructive
• Distinguish between errors/clear problems and matters of personal taste
• Be aware of your own prejudices
REVIEWING FOR JOURNALS (2)

• Report according to format required by journal

• Distinguish between major problems (study question of no interest or unclear that study usefully addresses question); minor problems (need correction but do not seriously threaten validity or value of conclusions); and points for authors to consider