# Transcript of video ‘The article submission process’

If we keep that that slide up, then let me just talk you through the submission process – and apologies if this is familiar to you, but it's probably just worth talking you through this for those of you are not familiar.

Just the stages of process of your paper. So you've got your masterpiece. And I do realise here that in this talk, I'm talking much more about form and substance; I'm not talking about the substantive research that you're doing. I assume that's very good; it's more about how you find a home for it.

Okay, so let's just look at that slide and we'll just talk about the stages of process after submission. So you submit your paper; it's all online these days. You normally get an automated response saying ‘yes, we're processing your paper’.

There's usually an initial screening by an editorial assistant often. They check that you've got the right word count, it's formatted correctly, sometimes they run it through the plagiarism software to check that it's okay from that regard. And once they think it's a clean piece of work, it goes to the chief editor the journal.

The chief editor does a screening, and the reason for this is that for most good journals 80+ percent of work rejected. So they don't want to send it all to review. They're going to screen it for two reasons.

One is ‘does it fit the journal?’ Does it belong in this journal? So when I use to edit the *International Journal of Management Reviews*, which is a Wiley journal, we desk rejected things because we were sent empirical papers and it's not an empirical journal. It was a reviews journal / conceptual journal. So you know, it only took you a couple of seconds to work out it's an empirical piece, and it's a straight desk reject.

Obviously often that rejection for fit is less clear-cut than that. People just say ‘yeah, this kind of work doesn't really fit in the kind of mission we've got in our journal’, so you get desk rejected for fit.

And there's also initial screening for quality. Now the editor will do this fairly quickly, but they'll kind of have a look, flick through the paper to see (a) is it right for the journal? That it’s a fit. And (b) does it have a chance of passing the reviewers?

If they think it doesn't have a chance of passing through the reviewers, they're just going to desk reject it straight off. If they think ‘it's got a case, we should send it out to review’, then they need to identify and invite reviewers.

Now when you're an editor and you've done that process; you face your screen, whichever publishers have got different kind of systems, and on the keywords that you've got for your paper, there'll be a series of drop-down possibilities of referees. Usually it's referees in that journal first, and then it's referees often, say, within the same publisher, and so on. So you want to make it easy for the editor by having the appropriate keywords, and also the appropriate references within your reference list. That makes it easy for the editor to find the referees.

Now getting reviewers is not an easy process. Obviously it varies depending on the topic. I've been guest editing a journal recently, I no longer do main editing, I'm no longer chief editor of a journal, but I do guest editing and to get my three reviewers, I need to send the invite to I think 15 or 16 individuals. So that takes quite a period of time to do, because you send an invite ‘would you like to review this?’ Sometimes people say ‘yes’, which is fantastic. Sometimes they say ‘no’ which is okay, you can move on. Sometimes they don't reply; you’ve just got to keep going until you can get the reviewers.

Remember the referees aren't paid for this. So it's kind of like a duty to the academic community to do it. And in the last couple of years or so, for obvious reasons with Covid, it's been harder to get reviewers because they've been hard-pressed, or they've been unwell, and so on and so forth.

Most journals will get between two and four reviewers, and they can take somewhere between three and six months to get the first set of reviews. Once you've got the first set of reviews, you've got a decision of ‘your paper’s rejected’, usually with a letter from the editor explaining why and those reviews.

You've got ‘unlikely to be an accept’, that's very rare straight away these days. More likely to be ‘minor or major revisions’, and then you get the editor explaining what you need to do.

And you kind of get three or four months to respond to that, and send another revise and resubmit, and that goes for another round. And then the round again. So it's not uncommon to have three or four rounds, and each of those rounds can take three or four months.

So it can be quite a long process, and that creates pressures, particularly on PhD students and early career researchers who don't have so many papers in the system. They're very reliant on that paper getting through the process. So with a bit of luck and a following wind, you get your paper accepted, but at each stage of that process your paper can be rejected.

And that's, you know, very hard for you, because you're back to the beginning again. You're back to another journal. So you might have spent 18 months in that process, and you have to start all over again. I mean, you've got to look on it as ‘you've got some feedback from expert reviewers’, and there's work you can do to revise your paper.

And getting your paper sent to review is, in itself, seen as a good thing these days, that it's not desk rejected; because it means the editors had a look, they think there's something in your paper which is worthwhile and reviewers have taken the time to read and comment on your paper. And you’ve got to do something with that feedback, that’s kind of a positive.