

# Journal submission process

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# Starting point

- Your study is done - time to get it published!

## Choosing the journal

- As a PhD candidate, I would recommend to submit **only** to journals in the Norwegian register for scientific journals, series and publishers <https://dbh.nsd.uib.no/publiseringskanaler/Forside>
- If you are considering working outside of Norway **only** publish in SSCI/SCI(E)-indexed journals
- The most important issue is to think of the fit of the paper to the journal
- Consider also your own appraisal of the quality of the journal
- Journal metrics can also be considered, but remember that different fields have generally different values of such metrics
- **What do you consider to be important issues in choosing a journal?**

# Adapting to the journal

- Most of the time you need to make some specific adjustments depending on the journal
- Journals have specific requirements regarding article length (word count or page count), references (APA etc), mathematical typing (symbols, equations) etc.
- This kind of work is often tedious but is necessary - read through the journal guidelines carefully as it will save you time in the end and make a positive outcome more likely
  - You can not expect your advisor to know the specifics for a certain journal and you should expect to conduct the preparatory work mostly yourself

## Submission: cover letter

- Your submission should typically be accompanied by a **short** cover letter
- Introduce the paper
- Briefly summarize the paper
- Thank the editor for considering the paper for publication
- **What do you think a cover letter should convey?**

## Submission: cover letter

Dear (title and name of editor),

We are submitting (manuscript title) for consideration in (journal).

(Three- or four-sentence summary of the paper that says something more than the abstract, highlighting the importance of the contribution that the paper makes.)

Thank you for considering the paper for publication in (journal).

Best regards,  
The authors

## Submission: co-author approval

- When submitting a paper for the first time or for a revision, you must seek explicit approval from the co-authors of the paper
- This does not only apply to the paper, but also to the cover letter and (for revisions) the responses to the editor and reviewers
- **Never submit a paper without approval from all co-authors**

# Outcomes after submission

- Formatting issues - resubmit with fixes
- Reject before review
- Review



## Submission outcome: Desk-reject

- Your paper could be rejected without review by the editor or associate editor (desk-reject)
- Usually, the editor or associate editor will give comments on why the paper was rejected without review
- They might suggest alternative journals or give brief comments on what to improve in the paper
- It is most of the time better to get rejected without review than to get rejected after review, since you then did not waste time in the unsuccessful review process

# Desk-reject example 1

*"After having read your manuscript, I have decided not to accept it for publication in (Journal A). Please be assured that this decision in no way reflects on the quality of your manuscript. Rather, the content does not seem to be a good fit. You may try to submit your manuscript to (Journal B)."*

## Desk-reject example 2

*"I regret to inform you that my decision is to reject the manuscript without sending it out for further external review. My assessment of the scope, background details, and level of interest to our readers lead me to believe that it would be much better suited in a journal like the (Journal A) or perhaps (Journal B). Thank you for considering (Journal C) as a possible outlet for the publication of your research."*

## Submission outcome: Review

- Great - your paper is not (yet) rejected!
- Your paper is under review and now you wait for 2 weeks (very fast, never happened to me) to six months (quite common)
- The reviewers are asked to evaluate your manuscript and give comments to the authors including specific issues to address and also give confidential comments only seen by the journal editors.
- Four examples of submission and decision time points (first submission)
  - Submitted 10-Mar-2019 Decided 23-Jun-2019
  - Submitted 16-Sep-2020 Decided 21-Feb-2021
  - Submitted 22-Jun-2021 Decided 28-Nov-2021
  - Submitted 14-Mar-2021 Decided 20-Apr-2021
- **What are your expectations for the review process?**

## Decision outcome: Rejection

- Too bad - your paper is rejected.
- Great - you didn't aim too low!
- Usually the editor and reviewer comments are helpful to decide the next step
  - The editor may suggest an alternative journal
  - The editor or reviewers may suggest substantial changes to the manuscript that requires re-analysis or a change of focus
- Depending on the comments, you may need to do major changes or you may need to do only minor changes
- I suggest to always reflect on the comments provided and typically adjust the manuscript accordingly
- **Questions or comments?**

## Rejection Example

Based on reviewer information and my own independent reading and assessment, I am sorry that we are unable to publish this paper in the journal, nor can we offer you the opportunity to revise the work. The reviewers ranged a bit in their reactions, but none were particularly enthusiastic about aspects of the work and/or about the fit with the current manuscript in (Journal). I won't rehash all their comments here, but in aggregate I thought the issues they raised were relatively intractable (i.e., fit with the journal) or substantial (i.e., contribution and framing). I sympathize with any disappointment you may feel about this decision, as we all have been on the receiving end of similar decisions.

For your guidance, I append the reviewers' comments below and hope they will be useful to you as you prepare this work for another outlet.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to consider your submission.

## Decision outcome: Revise and resubmit/major revision

- Great - your paper is not (yet) rejected!
- You will usually get detailed comments from each reviewer, indicating the issues they think you should address
- The editor and associate editor will also give brief comments indicating which issues they consider to be the major issues to address
- The revision may require a substantial amount of effort to address all the issues and respond to all the comments
- **Listen to the editor and associate editor first and foremost**

## Major revision example 1

**Editor:** *After some thought I have decided to ask you to revise the paper to take all the comments fully into account. I hope this will result in an acceptable version, but in view of the scale of the necessary changes I can give no guarantee of ultimate acceptance.*

**Associate editor:** *The paper has improved since its first submission and it is clear that the previous round of reviews helped in this direction. Nevertheless, there are still some important issues with the material. [long list of things to address]*

**Reviewer 1:** *This revision to the paper demonstrates that [previous paper results] holds only in certain special cases, and I am now satisfied that the result presented in this paper is correct.*

**Reviewer 2:** *The authors have not replied to any of my comments, and all the inconsistencies raised in my previous report are still present in the manuscript. For these reasons, I strongly recommend the rejection of the paper.*



## Major revision example 2

**Editor:** *"Manuscript (ID) entitled (Title) which you submitted to (Journal), has been reviewed. The comments of the reviewers are included at the bottom of this letter. The reviewers have recommended publication, but also suggest some revisions to your manuscript. Therefore, I invite you to respond to the reviewer comments and revise your manuscript accordingly. [...] Once again, thank you for submitting your manuscript to (Journal) and I look forward to receiving your revision."*

# Responding to reviewer comments

- The reviewer comments are not always nicely written and are sometimes incorrect
- Even if you think the comments are not relevant you need to address all the comments in the responses
- Be polite - but do not over-embellish - in the response
- **Thoughts or questions?**

## Decision outcome: Minor revision

- Great - your paper is not rejected and (probably) won't be!
- It is still possible for the paper to be rejected but it is unlikely to happen (has never happened to me, but I have been a reviewer for papers that have been rejected in subsequent review process after an initial minor revision decision)
- The paper is essentially publishable but there are some remaining issues that need to be addressed
- With this decision, you should aim to resubmit the paper quickly
- The paper could be sent out for another round of reviews after re-submission, or it could be directly accepted after re-submission

## Minor revision example

**Editor:** *The revised version of Manuscript (ID) entitled (Title) which you submitted to (Journal), has now been reviewed. The reviewers have recommended publication without any further changes. In order for us to proceed with publication, please provide an electronic copy of the final manuscript in either Word or Latex format (we are not able to process pdf files for publication).*

## Minor revision/conditional acceptance example

**Editor:** *The reviewers were positive of this brief report. Both have minor points, none of which should be too difficult to address. With your response, please include a detailed point by point response with your revision, indicating how the points were addressed.*

# Decision outcome: Acceptance

- Great - your paper is accepted!
- Too bad - you might have aimed too low.
- You may still need to change formatting issues but otherwise the paper can no longer be edited
- Time to celebrate! (and start working on the next paper..)
- After acceptance, you should also consider the outreach activities that are relevant for the paper. Examples are to link your paper via your social media outlets, post on research platforms (e.g. researchgate) and consider writing an article on the paper or give an interview for a media outlet. I suggest to discuss with your advisor prior to engaging with the media.