

# Tips to writing publishable paper

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# Agenda

- Goals
- View on journals
- Refereeing process
- Criteria for paper's merit
- Issues after submission

# GOALS

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  - Research Vice-Dean/Coordinator at every UACS unit

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  - Lab for Economic Modeling and Programming (LEMP) has been created

# Your goal

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    - Check the Law on Higher Education as well the newest UACS Bylaw on Research (adopted 15.9.2011)

## VIEW ON JOURNALS



# Hierarchy of Outlets

- 1 Top General Interest Journals
- 2 Top Field Journals
- 3 Other Journals
- 4 High Quality Refereed Books (NBER; IMF-WP; WB-WP)
- 5 Other Books (including Conference Volumes)

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  - .... We are heading towards a Journal of South-East European Economies (JSEEE) .... hopefully to be established by the end-2011

# REFEREEING PROCESS

- Almost all journals referee papers
- A minority will do a pre-screen, with the editors rejecting obviously inappropriate papers
- All refereeing is single-blind
- 90% is double-blind
- With Internet and Working Papers, Is Blind Really Blind?

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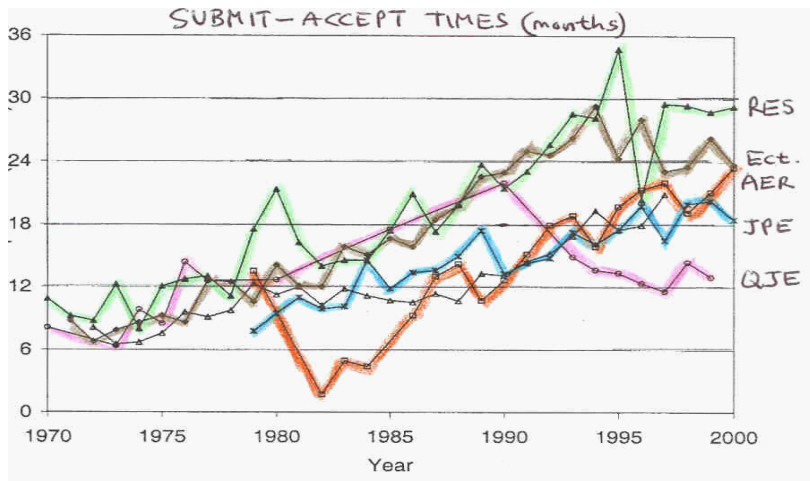
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  - Better journals have higher-quality scholars as referees

# Who Will Referee YOUR Paper?

- Someone you cited
- Someone you DIDN'T cite (but the editor thinks you should have)
- Someone who published in the journal recently

# Lags are Getting Longer



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  - $\sim 15\%$  in good field journals

# Argues for a Submission “Tree”

- Target one (or two) “to begin” journals
- Take advantage of the reviews
- Ask for guidance from senior colleagues
- Remember – ONLY ONE JOURNAL AT A TIME
- Also, VARY your journal choices
- Try to identify “rising journals”

# The Most Important Thing to Keep in Mind

- Editors must find a reason to REJECT most papers. DON'T GIVE THEM AN EXCUSE
- Surveys of editors – most common reasons for rejection
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# What You Need to Do

- Show why your paper is important
- Show how it extends the literature
- Make it clear and easy to understand
- Don't waste space – it is a journal's scarcest resource. Most journals have fixed page limits for each issue.
- Do this IN THE PAPER, not your cover letter

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    - originality / new ideas / contribution / policy implications

## CRITERIA FOR PAPER'S MERIT

# Criteria for paper's merit

- Originality
- Relation to the literature
- Relevance
- Contribution
- Communication

- Unexplored area
- New view at an old area
- New data and new arguments in an old area
- Express this in the title
  - Do not write "dull" title
- Express this in the objectives

# Relation to the literature

- Clearly put your work in context
- Cite only the most important works
- Don't try to read EVERYTHING or you will never write
- Follow the Golden Rule - treat others as you would want to be treated.
- References belong throughout the paper, not just in a separate section. Especially important when discussing results.

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  - Don't be overly negative about past work – the authors are likely to be your referees.

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  - The "Wow!" part

- Importance of Abstract and Introduction – Tell Reader Why He NEEDS to Go Deeper. One guide says 50% of your time! Write these last.
  - Even the title matters
- Most referees decide up or down within 15 minutes
- Be sure there is a clean, consistent “spine” (through line or narrative structure) – an outline may help
- Avoid 1st Person
- Conclude with the paper’s strengths, not its weaknesses

- Sufficient Ratio of English to Symbols - make your notation clean and consistent
- Avoid or Define Jargon – Not everyone is as close to your work as you are
  - See William Thomson, “The Young Person’s Guide to Writing Economic Theory” JEL, March 1999
- Use figures whenever you can – they often make the point much clearer than either text or equations

# Communication - Don't waste space!

- Revise and rewrite to shorten – IS EACH WORD OR POINT NECESSARY? Most papers can be cut by AT LEAST 1/3.
- Don't retype material that is easily available elsewhere.
- Trend is to denser papers – avoid the temptation to divide work too finely. If an extension or variation is interesting, include it, don't save it for another paper.
- Robustness Checks are important components

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  - You have slept on it for at least a week and reread it when cold

## AFTER SUBMISSION

# After submission - Type I - Rejection

- Learn from comments
- Digest them for a few days
- Revise as soon as you can (and really revise – don't just mail the paper off to another journal)
- Never let a paper be unemployed for more than a month unless it is necessary to deal with fundamental problem (i.e. new data)
- Don't make the history of the paper too obvious.

# After submission - Type II - Revision Required

- Chances of acceptance increase to  $> 50\%$
- Move as fast as you can – you do not want editor to change or referees to forget
- Address EVERY COMMENT
- Send response showing how, with points numbered and referenced to pages in your paper.
- If referee is wrong, be polite but point out how and try to acknowledge issues. Be sure your writing is clear.
- Now is the time to be sure the paper conforms to the journal's style sheet.

## After submission - Type III - Acceptance

- Read the Response Immediately
- Avoid the temptation to change anything except actual errors
- Do revise references to reflect updated publication data
- Expect to get papers to referee – treat this seriously, it is an informal contract with the profession

# Just Remember – You Aren't the Only One Who Has Been Rejected

- “The wireless music box has no imaginable commercial value. Who would pay for a message sent to nobody in particular?”
  - Referee rejecting a proposal to invest in radio
- “The concept is interesting but in order to earn better than a ‘C’ the idea must be feasible.”
- “We don't like their sound, and guitar music is on the way out.”
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  - Rejection letter for offer of Xerox technology (rejected by 20 firms before final acceptance)

# Or, Some Examples from Economics

Paper	Rejected By
Akerlof – Market for Lemons	AER, JPE
Black & Scholes – Pricing of Options	JPE, REStat
Sharpe – Capital Asset Pricing	J of Finance
Stoper & Samuelson – Production and Real Wages	AER
Modigliani – Life Cycle Consumption Function	Econometrica
Krugman – Increasing Returns and International Trade	QJE
Ohlin – Factor Proportions in International Trade	EJ

*Keynes' Review "This amounts to nothing and should be refused."*

Thank you for your attention!