WARWICK BUSINESS SCHOOL

Writing for publication ….

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Some key questions

- Key focus is on journal publication rather than books but many of same principles apply. For journals read publishers!

- Key questions are:
  - Why publish? What am I trying to achieve? Thinking strategically.
  - What to publish? - Issues of quality and timing?
  - Where to publish? Journal choice and targeting
  - How will you deal with rejection?

Why publish?

- Publishing is generally hard work – writing, re-writing and revision – so need to know why we are doing it?

- Different reasons might suggest very different approaches
  - vanity or pride
  - contractual reasons
  - departmental rules
  - career reasons
  - to be influential (on whom?)

- Is there a general rule?

Thinking strategically …

- Strategy depends on objectives, it may also depend on personal and external (e.g. REF timelines)
- What is your target level? 4*? 3*? And, how many papers by when?
- Who are you going to work and publish with? Or, are you going alone?
- How are you going to take advantage of conferences, colloquia, colleagues and friends to help improve your papers
- Think about pipeline

What to publish (or at least try!)…

- Not such a simple question as it seems. Which bits of your thesis are first for papers? The best bits? The earliest bits?
- Choices depend on strategy but also timeline of journals – some are much quicker than others
- May also depend on co-authors willingness/availability to work on papers
- May need to consider how your work relates to existing debates in journals before deciding what to develop – 'hot topics'

Where to publish

- Key resource here is Association of Business Schools (ABS) list (and standard for recruiters too!)
- Citation counts also interesting. Who do you want to communicate with? Where are your key references published?
- Speed may also be an issue. Some journals are very slow, others quite quick. Quality v speed trade-off very often.
- Start at the top? Or work your way up to it? What is best?
- A rule of thumb: Target the best journal you feel you can.

Methodology and style

- Choose a target journal and then read it! Pick up the clues on style, preferred methodologies and paper structure. Style is crucial.

- Can you find a 'model' paper on which to base yours? You can copy structure and its often a good way to start

- Journals have mission statements – how does your paper fit these? Perhaps the most common reason for desk rejection is poor fit.

- Key points to watch:
  - How wide-ranging are papers' introductions
  - How detailed/long is the conceptual section?
  - Hypotheses or propositions?
  - What type of data/analysis – cases, econometric?
  - How much by way of robustness checking?
  - How much user/practicioner discussion?

From paper to publication - process

- After submission review by an editor (or member of editorial board) and potential desk reject (c. 2-6 weeks). Typical grounds for desk rejection:
  - Poor quality
  - Poor fit – content or style
  - Fundamental flaws
- Assigned reviewers by editor and reviewed and comments sent back (c. 2-6 months). Possible outcomes:
  - Reject
  - Reject and revise/Revise and resubmit
  - Accept (very uncommon!)
- You revise and resubmit (c. 3 months perhaps) and then sent out for review again sometimes! (c. 2-6 months)
- You revise again (c. 3 months) submit again. Editor would usually review.
- Acceptance! Delay to on-line publication (c. 2-6 months) and hardcopy (c. 4-18 months).

Dealing with rejection …

- Be brave! It has happened to everyone! Dust it down, make any changes which seem sensible and try somewhere else
- Reviews are probably not as bad as they seem on first reading; revisions also may not be so serious!
- Reviewers' comments are only their opinions not carved in tablets of stone. They too may be right or wrong. So argue if you think you want to.
- But … take the editor's comments to heart. S/he is going to make the final judgement on the paper.

Key tips…

- Ensure the material ‘fits’ the journal
- Ensure the draft is good English and without typos
- Key into on-going debates wherever possible
- Cite other papers in the journal
- Ensure the style and structure fit the target
- Keep tables and figures to a minimum and watch the word count
- Quality, quality, quality
- And think what is the ‘value added’ – method or addition to knowledge – make this very clear