

## Training Workshop 1 – Publishing: How to select the right journal for your manuscript.

**Date:** 20 February 2023

**Time:** 10am – 11am CET (1 hour)

**Trainer:** Dr. Harry Shirley, Editorial Development Manager, Springer Nature

**Participants:** 12

- Gender split: the group of 12 participants consisted of 6 women (50%) and 6 men (50%)
- Countries of origin: The participants were originally from Afghanistan (4), Syria (3), Lebanon (1), Palestine (1), Ukraine (2), Iran (1).
- Participants were selected through a direct nomination and referral process with partner and associate partner support organisations in which scholars were identified directly on the basis of interest and demonstrated benefit from an interactive training on the topic of academic publishing, and specifically journal selection. Scholar consent was obtained from their respective support organisations prior to an invitation to participate being issued from Inspireurope+, and scholars also completed an Inspireurope+ information and consent form in line with the project's data management plan.

**Format:**

- The interactive training was held online in a small group and focused format led by an experienced trainer. The training numbers were limited in order to assure a format prioritising interactive and direct participation by each attendee and which also allowed for attention to individual queries and contexts. The training was not recorded in order to encourage robust and unfiltered participation by all attendees and to ensure the security of each scholar. This format was arrived at based upon previous experience from referring support organisations with regard to offering productive interactive training and professional development formats for researchers at risk.

**Agenda Overview:**

The session was intended for researchers at risk to provide them with information and tools on selecting the right journal for your manuscript, covering three main areas:

1. Finding the most appropriate journal.

This part covered how to generate a shortlist of journals and how to evaluate shortlisted journals. 5 key areas were discussed, with participants invited to share ideas on why impact factor is relevant.

2. Having an efficient submission strategy.

Discussion surrounded the importance of having an efficient strategy.

3. Writing an impactful cover letter.

## Supporting Researchers at Risk

The focus of the final section was on impressing journal editors and understanding the difference between an abstract and a cover letter.

### Q&A

The final 15 minutes were dedicated to a questions and answers session, welcoming any questions from participants that had not already been answered.

### Summary points:

- Many participants shared that **additional support with covering letters is needed**. This would allow for more clarity around communicating submissions as many participants shared that they struggled with concise and effective writing in covering letters; some were unfamiliar with the role of journal editors and how little time editors were able to spend on reviewing submissions.
- Many participants shared that **additional tools and resources are needed for identifying relevant journals for submission**; some participants had a difficult time with selection strategies.
- Many participants shared that **additional resources are needed on how to identify potentially predatory journals**.

### Short Participant Guide:

Researchers were also provided with a short participant guide on publishing strategies, including links to useful resources on indices, journal selection, metrics, and cover letter. This guide has kindly been made available for use in the Inspireurope+ project by [Nature Research Academies](#).

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# Participant Guide

*Publishing Strategies*

# Workshop Overview

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The Nature Research Academies virtual workshop was designed to offer accessible training for busy, early-career researchers across a broad range of disciplines. Through a combination of interactive group webinars and self-study exercises led by a Nature Research trainer, the workshop will help you to succeed in today's competitive academic landscape.

The goal of publishing a study is to ensure that the field understands the significance and impact of your research. Doing so will not only help advance the field, but also establish your reputation and influence amongst your peers. These webinars provide practical insights and strategies to help you achieve this goal.

## Objectives for this virtual workshop:

- Select the best journal where to publish your research
- Evaluate and compare international journals with one another
- Create an efficient publication strategy to allow you to publish quickly and with impact
- Understand what journal editors are looking for in submitted manuscripts
- Write an impressive cover letter to the editor of your target journal

## Key Points

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### Journal Selection

Journals act as a bridge to connect authors with the appropriate readers. To publish quickly and have impact in your field, you should choose a target journal before writing your manuscript.

- **Journal shortlist:** identify potential journals to publish your research from your readings, discussion with colleagues, databases and journal guide website
- **Journal evaluation:** Once you identify 10–12 potential journals, determine which 2 or 3 journals are most appropriate for you. Consider the following factors in your evaluation:

#### Aims and Scope

How broad or focused is the journal? Is the readership regional or international?

#### Recent Publications

Is the journal currently publishing research and review articles related to your topic? If so, that suggests the editor finds your topic relevant for their journal.

#### Indexing

Is the journal discoverable in citation/abstract indexes (e.g. Medline/Pubmed) or only on the publisher website? How easy is it for your target readership to find your paper?

#### Publication Model

Is the journal only accessible to academics (subscription journal) or also to the general public (Open Access model)?

#### Publication Speed

How long does the peer-review process take on average before a first decision is made?

#### Impact

How much impact will your research have? Top tier journals publish fundamental advances with broad impact. Mid-tier journals publish fundamental advances with narrower impact or incremental advances with broader impact. Lower-tier journals publish incremental research with narrow impact.

- **Create a strategy:** decide which journal to submit first, second, and third and optimize your manuscript writing (word & figure limits, structure) such that it is compatible with the author guidelines of all three journals.

### Publication Strategy

As many authors are not accepted in their first choice of journal, always plan for a back-up journal.

#### Back-up journals

If your manuscript is rejected to all your three preferred journals, consider those journals as back-up:

- **Mega-journals** that accept research with robust methodology, regardless of statistical significance of the results (e.g. *PLoS One* or *Scientific Reports*)
- **New journals** in your field that have a higher acceptance rate, but will not be widely indexed online

### Public repository

If you fail to publish your research in mega or new journals, it is important that you made your results available to others to avoid research waste. These last options unlike the previous ones do not have a peer-review process:

- **Data repositories** such as Figshare
- **Preprint servers** such as bioRxiv or medRxiv

Be aware that although public repositories accept all submissions, you cannot remove your work from it. This might be a problem when you want to publish the same research later in a journal as editors usually want the exclusivity of your work.

Editors who find your manuscript interesting but reject it for publication in their journal have the option to transfer it to other journals from the same publisher, using the transfer desk.

## What editors are looking for

Most editors are professors and do not work full-time for the journal. Therefore, they have a limited time to assess the quality of a manuscript, receive many submissions every month to choose from and compete with similar journals for the best manuscripts. They are looking for manuscripts that are:

### Suitable

Suitable for the journal scope and of interest to its readership.

- Fundamental advance: for journals with higher impact
- Incremental advance: for journals with lower impact

### High quality

Papers that will have impact in the field will be highly cited. For research to be of high quality, it needs to:

- address an important problem
- not yet have been published
- has a robust study design
- have significant findings that strongly support the conclusion

### Comply with editorial policies

Journals have strict international standards for publishing regarding:

- ethical committee approval for the study
- written informed consent for all participants
- funding acknowledgement and potential conflicts of interest
- data fabrication or manipulation
- plagiarism

## Cover Letters

The cover letter is your chance to make the best first impression to the editor. This is where you should highlight the suitability of your manuscript for the journal and its readership. Remember to include the following information as well as your contact information:

1. **Manuscript introduction:** Mention your manuscript title and precise your article type (e.g. research article, review, etc.). Do not simply copy and paste your abstract!

2. **Study importance:** Give some background information about the current state of the field and introduce the problem and your study objectives.
3. **Findings:** Briefly describe your methodology and summarize your key findings. Tip: avoid bullet points.
4. **Relevance and suitability:** Explain why your manuscript is interesting to the journal's readership. *Tip:* use keywords and readers from the journal's aims and scope.
5. **Additional information:** Include a statement on publication ethics, potential conflict of interests, funding sources and provide the contact information of reviewers to include and/or exclude.

Peer reviewers to recommend

Recommend international experts as referees to enhance the quality of peer review, increase the publication speed and your chance of acceptance. You can find them from your readings. Aim for mid-level scientists (Associate professors), not affiliated with your university and with whom you have not collaborated in the past five years.

Peer reviewers to exclude

Ask the editor to exclude (maximum 3) researchers as referees if they have a conflict of interest with your work (e.g., competitors) or do not have the technical expertise to evaluate your study.

## Useful Resources

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### Indices

Medline (free) – The US National Library of Medicine (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/>)

Web of Science (paid) (<https://webofknowledge.com/>)

Scopus (paid) (<https://www.scopus.com/>)

Directory of Open Access Journals (<https://doaj.org/>)

### Journal selection

Journal guide (<https://www.journalguide.com/>)

Checklist for avoiding predatory journals (<https://thinkchecksubmit.org/>)

Transfer desk - Springer

(<https://www.springer.com/gp/authors-editors/journal-author/the-springer-transfer-desk>)

Transfer desk – Biomed Central

(<https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/submission-guidelines/manuscript-transfers>)

Public Library of Science (<http://journals.plos.org/>)

*Scientific Reports* (<https://www.nature.com/srep/>)

bioRxiv and medRxiv ([biorxiv.org](http://biorxiv.org) and [medrxiv.org](http://medrxiv.org))

Figshare (<https://figshare.com/>)

### Metrics

Journal Metrics – A Quick Guide

([https://www.nature.com/npg\\_company\\_info/journal\\_metrics\\_-\\_quick\\_guide.pdf](https://www.nature.com/npg_company_info/journal_metrics_-_quick_guide.pdf))

Overview of journal metrics

(<https://www.springer.com/gp/authors-editors/journal-author/impact-factors>)

(<https://authorservices.wiley.com/help/journal-metrics-overview.html>)

Scopus metrics database - CiteScore, SNIP & SJR (<https://journalmetrics.scopus.com/>)

Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) statement (<https://sfedora.org/>)

What's Wrong with the Impact Factor in 5 Graphs

(<https://www.natureindex.com/news-blog/whats-wrong-with-the-jif-in-five-graphs>)

Article-level metric - Altmetric (<https://www.altmetric.com/>)

### Cover letter

Guidelines and submission checklist - Springer

(<https://www.springer.com/gp/authors-editors/authorandreviewertutorials/submitting-to-a-journal-and-peer-review/cover-letters/10285574>)

Do's and don'ts of writing a cover letter – Nature blog

(<http://blogs.nature.com/methagora/2013/09/how-to-write-a-cover-letter.html>)

Free cover letter template – life sciences (<https://www.aje.com/en/arc/writing-cover-letter/>)