Publishing Journal Articles

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Introduction

Politics and international studies are broad fields defined as much by their theoretical, methodological, and empirical diversity as any specific topic area or approach to research. But do not let the relative pluralism of these fields contribute to a sense that research articles themselves are an open frontier where ‘anything goes’.

From the very start of your publishing career, it is important to remember that academic research articles are a genre of writing. Like any other genre, there are conventions that must be adhered to for your work to be formally recognised as a research article by your peers. Failure to gain this recognition will inevitably result in rejections, whether by editors or peer reviewers who all expect a research article to embody the conventions of the genre. Thus, from the outset, you must remember that a research article is not a thesis chapter. A research article is not a research proposal. A research article is not a term paper. A research article is not an essay. A research article is not a literature review. And a research article is not a blog post.

The core conventions that define the genre of the research article can be reduced to the following core elements:

• It must have original research content as established by the norms of your field or sub-discipline;
• It must be a stand-alone output that is not dependent on someone reading your thesis or other research articles you have written for exposure to core aspects of the argument;
• There must be a clear research problem that is situated within the relevant academic literature;
• A single line of argument should be articulated and defended OR a single set of hypotheses should be presented and tested;
• An account of how the research was undertaken in accordance with the norms of your (sub) field or methodological approach must be provided;
• A clear sense of the original contribution that the article makes to the literature in the sub-field and/or field must be expressed;
• A clear sense of the significance of the findings in relation to the existing literature must be articulated;
• Presentation must be according to the house style of the journal including rigid compliance with word count limitations.

Why is adherence to these conventions important? In many cases, submissions that fall outside the recognised genre of a research article are immediately desk rejected by journal editors. A desk rejection indicates that after initially being read by the editorial team, a decision was made that the submission should not be sent out for review. In other words, in the judgement of the editors, the submission falls short of minimum standards. It is important to understand that editors are not necessarily experts in your particular subject area. In the absence of any other signals of quality, if you cannot clearly express to them the rigour, originality, and significance of your research, they are likely to assume that your work is unimportant, uninteresting, derivative, and therefore not worth burdening colleagues with the time-consuming task of reviewing it. Similarly, the inability

This is an up-dated and expanded version of the chapter that appeared in the first two editions of the guide, so it draws on Charles Lees’s presentation on publishing in journals to the 2006 PSA Graduate Conference in Reading and on discussions with PhD students at the Universities of Edinburgh (June 2006) and Glasgow (January 2007) as well as discussions with members of the BISA Postgraduate Network (2012 and 2013), doctoral students at Newcastle University (2012, 2013, and 2014), and early career researchers at Cardiff University (2014). Thus, the authors are grateful to the current editorial team at Politics (Martin Coward, Michael Barr; Emily Clough, and Valentina Feklyunina) as well as the former editorial team (Jane Duckett and Paul Graham). This chapter previously benefitted from comments provided by Anke Schmidt-Felzmann, Craig Smith, Stephen White and Kerri-Anne Woods at the University of Glasgow. The latest version received helpful feedback from Peter Eckerley, Craig Johnson, Sobia Kaker, Cahir O’Doherty, Sarina Theys, and Andrew Walton at Newcastle University.
to follow formatting instructions at the initial stages of submission does not send a strong signal that you are serious about publishing in the journal.

Beyond the initial round of vetting by the editorial team, submissions that fail to adhere to more than one of these conventions tend to be rejected during the peer review process. Reviewers, even if leading experts in the field, are still sensitive to the genre conventions of how a research article should be structured, what information it needs to convey, and how it should do so. These are baseline expectations that help to establish the minimum standards for publishable material. No matter how brilliant the theoretical framework, research methods, or findings, work that breaks with these conventions is going to have a hard time surviving the peer review process. While your research may produce results that challenge orthodox understandings or conventional wisdom, it should not present the reader with challenges in terms of determining the research problem being addressed, the central argument or hypotheses, how the research was undertaken, or the contribution and significance of the findings.

Choosing a Journal Outlet
This is probably one of the most difficult decisions to make with respect to academic publishing. The easy answer is that you should aim for the most prestigious journal you can find in your field. However, there are very different perceptions of prestige and many different indicators used by hiring committees, university managers, and colleagues for ranking journals. Generally, prestige is attributed to perceptions of:

- The acceptance rate;
- The name recognition and reputation of the journal;
- Levels of citation for articles published by the journal.

The acceptance rate is used as a proxy for how selective a journal is, that is the ratio between the number of papers submitted and the number that the journal accepts for final publication. In theory, the lower the rate of acceptance, the higher the overall quality of the papers published. Acceptance rates tend to vary from about 5-30% depending on the outlet, with particularly prestigious journals claiming to have acceptance rates of less than 10%. The name recognition of the journal refers to impressions of how well-known the journal is in the discipline more generally and perceptions about the extent of the journal’s audience. The rationale is that well-known journals have built up their reputations by only publishing the very best research and wish to maintain this status by continuing to publish only the very best research. Levels of citation refer to how often articles published by a journal are cited in other academic publications. The rationale is that citations are a proxy measure for influence – i.e., other experts are identifying work published in the journal as being important enough to warrant mention or sustained engagement – and that influential pieces are necessarily higher-quality by definition.

There are obviously potential problems with all three as indicators of prestige and quality. First, apart from levels of citation – which can be determined through the Thomson-Reuters SSCI index, Scopus, Google Scholar, and freeware like Harzing’s Publish or Perish – data on acceptance rates and reputation can be absent, anecdotal, and even conflicting. Citation measures for journals vary widely from database to database – depending on the collection criteria – year to year, and article to article. The reality is that most journals have a long-tail of uncited work. Errors in calculation are also not uncommon. Second, these proxies may not always indicate what some assume that they indicate. For example, a low acceptance rate could be masking the overall low quality of the submission population and/or any particular piece published by a journal. Name recognition benefits long-established journals and those linked to disciplinary associations, potentially missing world-leading research published in outlets that are more recent in origin and/or focused in specialisation. And an article may be highly cited because it explores a fashionable topic in the field, is deliberately provocative, or has been identified as being fundamentally flawed.
While these indicators may be problematic, you do need to take them into consideration as general principles when deciding the journals to target with your work. To help make your decision, you should also seek advice from your supervisors and mentors on which journals are well-regarded in your field. If possible, speak to senior colleagues who have recently served on hiring committees, had research director positions, or have prepared research assessment documentation for the REF or its predecessor – the Research Assessment Exercise. Look at the publication records of early career colleagues in your sub-field who have recently secured employment. Examine the REF and RAE submissions of institutions that performed well to see where colleagues were publishing. Also, consider the journals you yourself read regularly: you must believe what they publish to be of reasonable quality, so you can be fairly sure that what you are writing is substantively appropriate and is likely to be read by others working in your area.

The decision to submit to a general politics journal or to a more specialist journal should be influenced by the audience with which you wish to engage and the type of argument that you are trying to make. An article in a general politics journal will need to engage with broader debates in the discipline and may need to provide more background information. The contribution of the findings or conclusions will also need to be cast in relation to their significance to the discipline. An article in a more specialist journal will focus on a narrower set of debates and can take more background information for granted. The original contribution of the article and its significance should be pitched towards specialists, focusing primarily on how the findings advance the frontiers of the sub-field. Publishing in more general politics and international studies journals may be beneficial when applying for academic jobs. Members of the hiring committee are more likely to be familiar with the journal – and perhaps even the article. It also helps to demonstrate your ability to relate your work to more general debates as well as signalling the broader significance of your research. At the same time, publishing in more specialist journals helps to establish your reputation as an expert in a particular area who is shaping the sub-field. Therefore, a good strategy is to seek to publish in a variety of journals, perhaps submitting an article based on the central argument of the thesis to a general politics or international studies journal and a more focused empirical chapter or conceptual discussion – as appropriate – to a specialist journal.

When considering where to submit, you should pay careful attention to the range of topics the journal publishes. It is important to make sure that your subject matter fits within the remit of the journal – they usually have a description of the remit on their website or on the inside cover of the journal itself. With generalist journals, it is important to ensure that your paper is sufficiently broad to be of interest to colleagues outside of your sub-field. For specialist journals, it is vital that your submission matches the specific aims of the journal. Beyond subject matter, some journals favour a particular approach or methodology, such as formal modelling, feminisms, or quantitative studies. If your piece does not fit the subject matter or approach as outlined in the journal’s remit, submit it somewhere else. If you are unsure, you should check with your thesis supervisor and/or a research mentor. If still unsure, you may wish to send an abstract to the editor(s) for advice. In this communication, politely provide the case as to why you think your paper is a good fit to the specific remit of the journal. If you are struggling to articulate this case, it may be better to consider another outlet.

Inter-disciplinary research continues to be a mot d’ordre amongst university managers and research councils. Thus, it may make sense not to restrict yourself to journals in politics and international studies. A number of important international studies articles, for example, have been published in political geography journals, while many political theory articles appear in philosophy and cultural studies journals. Keeping the job market in mind, particularly the requirement to present yourself as being a researcher within the discipline of a prospective politics department, it may be advantageous to hold off on pursuing publication opportunities outside of your discipline. If you do decide that it is wise to pursue such opportunities, is probably better, at least initially, to submit to only to the best known journals outside of politics and international studies.

Another consideration when deciding where to submit is timing. If you are not in a hurry to have an article accepted, you might try submitting it to a more prestigious, and therefore more
If the article is rejected, you can always submit it somewhere else. If time is of the essence however, you may want to target a journal that you think would be more likely to accept it. Similarly, it is important to do your research on turnaround times. Some journals have well-earned reputations for making decisions relatively quickly – within three months – others are known to take longer, and some journals are unfortunately notorious within the discipline for operating on geological time scales. Data on times to a decision are not always publicly available. Some disciplinary association journals – like those operated by the International Studies Association – provide annual reports online. Other websites such as poliscirumors.com, scirev.sc, andrewcullison.com, and reviewmyreview.eu provide data of varying reliability from both journals and those who have submitted articles. Supervisors, mentors, and peers may have anecdotal information that can be useful. All of this being said, the length of time to a decision should not be made into a fetish; it needs to be weighed in relation to the reputation of the journal for providing constructive feedback.

A further consideration is the length of the period between acceptance and publication. Some journals have quite long ‘queues’ – two years or more between acceptance and print publication. A lengthy queue can be extremely frustrating when you are trying to build your reputation and engage in wider debates. The size of the queue may also be an issue if you are trying to ensure that you have publications in hand for the job market and could be important for ensuring your eligibility for future forms of research assessment or tenure requirements. The introduction of online article publication prior to print with Digital Object Identifier (DOI) numbers has made this less of an issue than in the past. However, there are still lead times between acceptance and online publication, though these are now often measured in weeks rather than months.

Some journals publish the date on which the final version of the article was accepted, which gives you some idea of the length of the queue. If you are very concerned about how promptly your article will get into print, you should contact the journal, probably the editorial assistant if there is one, to ask how long it is currently taking accepted articles to appear in print.

The overall point is that many factors may come into play when choosing a journal outlet. Therefore, you need to be able to provide a coherent narrative and justification to yourself – and potentially to hiring committees, research funders, tenure committees, and university managers – about why you selected a particular outlet, its indicators of quality, and how it contributes to your overall publication strategy.

**Writing the Journal Article**

As noted above in the introduction to this chapter, journal articles are a genre of writing and thus it is vital to abide by the genre’s conventions. In addition, one should keep the following in mind during the writing process:

- Have as many colleagues – particularly supervisors and/or senior mentors – as possible read a draft of the paper prior to submitting it to a journal. They are likely going to spot areas that can be improved. Improving these areas will increase the prospects of a good result with peer review.

- Be organised and meticulous with your referencing and citation practices. Many journals now require authors to sign a declaration of academic integrity. Many of the declarations define plagiarism such that intent to deceive is not a necessary criterion. In other words, sloppy practice or an accidental oversight could be enough to instigate an investigation during the review process based on the Committee for Publication Ethics (COPE) guidelines to which many journals subscribe. It could even lead to a retraction once an article has been published.

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14 Most higher education institutions and research funders consider an online article with a DOI number to be formally published.
• Do not treat the abstract as an after-thought. The abstract is crucial in terms of signalling to editors, reviewers, and – when published – other researchers why your work is important and why it should be read. Thus, your abstract highlights how your paper satisfies the conventions of the genre by identifying the research problem, your central argument, how the research was undertaken, the contribution of the paper, and its significance.

Like all forms of academic writing, the preparation of papers for journals requires a great deal of time, energy, and motivation. This holds whether expanding a conference paper into a journal submission, converting a thesis chapter into a journal article, or beginning a journal article from scratch. Simply cutting out text to go under a word limit, and/or adding a couple of paragraphs of explanation, and/or engaging in stream of consciousness writing because the idea underpinning the paper is ‘ground-breaking’, are not sufficient. Well-crafted, precisely argued, and rigorous pieces of scholarship are not created in an afternoon or over a weekend. Thus, it is important to be realistic about the amount of time – and number of drafts – it will take to do this well.

**Submitting the Article**

You should pay attention to the journal’s submission guidelines that are available online – often under Author’s Guidelines – and also usually on the inside front or back cover of print copies of a journal. The submission guidelines for the Political Studies Association publications – *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations; Political Insight; Political Studies; Political Studies Review and Politics* – are reproduced at the back of this guide. These guidelines will tell you how and to whom to submit your article. Most journals now use online submission systems like Manuscript Central. Full instructions and support on how to use these systems are usually available on the site. Others journals still require that you send electronic – or in some cases hard-copies – to the editors. Make sure to follow the instructions carefully.

In order to facilitate the refereeing process (see below), you should provide an anonymised version of your article. This means not inserting your name into the text, removing phrases like ‘as I have argued elsewhere’ with a reference and may also, depending on the journal, involve removing all citations of your own work. You may also be asked for a title page, an abstract, or a list of 3-4 major contributions made by the article. Not submitting in the correct form or with key materials missing will just slow down consideration of your article. The guidelines will also inform you of word limits (if any) and the journal’s house style – i.e., use of headings and sub-headings, referencing style, and whether they use American or British spelling conventions. Word limits should be respected and are rarely negotiable. They reflect financial decisions made by publishers and/or disciplinary associations about how many pages to allocate each year for the journal and a sense of how to best maximise the number of articles published within this allocation. Strategically, it may even be wise to ensure your submission is below word count so that you have spare space to address reviewers’ comments as required. Submissions are less likely to be rejected outright for not conforming to the house-style, but an incorrectly formatted paper can be viewed by editorial teams as evidence that the paper was rejected by another outlet and/or that the author is not particularly serious about being published in the journal. The point is, while it may be a pain, you will have to conform to house style before the piece is finally accepted for publication.

**The Review Process**

There are three main stages in the review process: desk-review; refereeing; and decision-making. Desk-reviewing is conducted in-house by the editorial team and involves assessing whether the article’s substance, approach and length are appropriate for the journal. It is also likely to involve a preliminary evaluation of the article’s quality, or what is sometimes referred to as the ‘smell test’. As mentioned above, articles that do not conform to the genre conventions, are poorly presented, or, in the judgement of the editors, fall well-short of scholarly standards are rejected without
being sent out to referees. Known as desk-rejections, these papers are removed from the peer-review process so as not to over-burden and/or try the patience of referees with hopeless cases or work that would never be published by the journal because it does not fall within its remit. With the increased pressures to publish across career stages, many journals now find desk rejections comprise a significant percentage of the overall number of papers that are rejected.

A desk rejection should be taken as a clear signal that your work requires extensive refinement before being submitted to another journal and/or that you made an initial error in the selection of an outlet. While a desk rejection can be a disappointing outcome, it does provide valuable feedback, even if the comments received are less comprehensive than if the paper had been sent out for review.

The heart of the review process is refereeing. Referees advise the editor(s) about whether a submission should be published and are encouraged to provide feedback to the author(s). Most journals require reviews from two or three referees. The norm is for refereeing to be ‘double-blind’ – that is the referee does not know who the author is (hence the need to anonymise the text) and the author does not know who the referees are. This is intended to enhance the impartiality of the refereeing process.

Refereeing is by far the most time consuming stage of the process. It takes a long time because referees offer their services out of a sense of professional responsibility; refereeing work is undertaken on top of teaching, research, administration, and personal commitments. It can, therefore, take the editorial team a significant amount of time to find appropriate scholars who are willing and available to referee a submitted article. Having found suitable referees, it is standard for a journal to provide them with one or two months in which to write a report. Sometimes there are unavoidable reasons why referees miss deadlines or have to pull out of the process altogether and these are communicated to editorial teams who can make alternative arrangements. The most significant delays though come from referees suddenly going incommunicado and failing to provide a review after agreeing to do so. Such events may force the editors to start the process again with a new referee. It is therefore not unusual for the screening to take six months, even a year, although many journals now aim for under four months and Politics aims for under 10 weeks. Because of the potential for delays in the refereeing process, some journals send articles out to four referees, but will make a decision based on only two referees’ reports (never fewer) if all referees do not deliver in a reasonable period of time.

Referees, due to the requirements of their task, tend to be critical. This can come as a rude awakening to ECRs who have spent most of their time in academia regularly receiving positive affirmation in the form of first-class marks, awards, funding, and the support of supervisors. Unfortunately, a few referees, encouraged by their anonymity, can be brutal with their comments. Occasionally referees seek to impose their own views of important questions or appropriate methods, objecting that the article does not answer the question that interests them or use the methodology they favour. Some referees, thankfully relatively few, invest so little time and energy in the reviewing process that their comments are of little help to the editors and even less to the author. Most though, are extremely conscientious and constructive. Their comments will help you to strengthen and improve your argument, and thus the article. But even good referees are individuals and it is not uncommon to receive very different comments, and even different recommendations for acceptance or rejection, from them. It is therefore necessary as an author to develop a thick skin.

The three principal recommendation options that referees may select are:

1) accept the article with no or only minor corrections to be reviewed by the editors;

2) request major revisions that require the paper be resubmitted and undergo a second round of peer review, sometimes also called a revise and resubmit (R&R); and

3) reject the paper so that it will no longer be considered for publication in the journal.
There used to be a tendency for referees to choose the middle option, so as to avoid rejecting an article. But there seems to have been a move away from this norm, with some editors giving explicit instructions to referees to reject articles unless they really think they are realistically publishable to the standard held by the journal. In addition, there are other incentives for referees to be decisive: if a referee recommends revise and resubmit, s/he is both expected to provide extensive comments about how this should be done and will probably be asked to referee the resubmitted piece.

Informed by the referees' reports, the editorial team will decide what to do with the article. As noted above, referees frequently disagree, both in their specific comments and in their final recommendations. For the most prestigious and therefore competitive journals, one luke-warm – let alone negative – referee's report may be all it takes for the editorial team to reject the article. Editors of less prestigious journals with lower submission rates may be more likely to exercise discretion in favour of the author(s). Even editors of prestigious journals may discount a referee's recommendation if they doubt the quality of the review or believe that a paper is particularly innovative. Thus, the editors will evaluate both the quality and substance of the referees' reports – including confidential comments made directly to the editorial team that are not shared with the author(s) – and weigh them against the other reports. The more disparate the opinions and the sketchier the reports, the harder it is for the editorial team to make a decision. There is no universal formula used and the process is more art than science. At the end of the day, decisions are based on the academic judgement of the editorial team. While journals strive towards consistency and fairness, there is variation across journals and sometimes even within them.

Given the disincentives for reviewers to recommend revise and resubmit, such a decision by the editorial team should be viewed as an excellent initial result and a clear indication that peers believe your paper has considerable potential to make an original contribution to the discipline. The editorial team should provide specific guidance on the revisions to be done, especially if the referees diverged substantially in their comments. As a consequence of the tightening up on the 'revise and resubmit' option, more articles are rejected, but articles that are given a 'revise and resubmit' have a stronger chance of being accepted by the journal, assuming that the referees' comments are addressed seriously.

**What to do after Submitting**

You (and all authors) need to bear in mind that yours is only one of many submissions under consideration and it is much more important to you than to anybody else. That does not mean, however, that you should be passive. If you do not receive an acknowledgement of your submission within four weeks, you should contact the journal via its email address. If you have not heard anything for three months after receiving acknowledgement of your submission, contact the journal again to ask what is happening with your article. It will almost certainly be with the referees, but this contact will probably spur the editors to chase them. You can continue to follow up every couple of months if necessary.

It is usually better to address procedural questions to the editorial assistant, if there is one, who is more likely to know where an article is in the review or production process. In all of your interactions with the editorial team be polite. You want them on your side and exercising any available discretion to your advantage. In particular, be courteous to editorial assistants and follow the guidance that they give you at each stage of the process. Editorial assistants play a vital role in the sound functioning of any journal. As such, journal editors are very protective of them and will not take kindly to reports of disrespect towards the editorial assistant from prospective authors.

**After the Decision**

If your article has been accepted, congratulations! You can up-date your CV and look forward seeing your work published. In the meantime, there will be licensing agreements, proofs, and
other administrative matters to be navigated. Be particularly vigilant when it comes to your proofs – which are the type-set but pre-publication drafts of articles prepared by publishers. This is your final opportunity to ensure that everything is in order with your article. While most journals have all accepted articles professionally copy-edited, errors do get missed – and made. Moreover, the typesetting process can be murder on tables, charts, and graphs. Thus, given all the hard-work that has gone into your now nearly published article, you owe it to yourself to ensure that it is error free in its final form.

A revise and resubmit decision is also something to be celebrated. While the journal has not yet committed to publishing your paper, in their judgement, it has the potential to be accepted with some further refinement. One way to improve one’s chances of acceptance after a revise and resubmit decision is to provide a detailed cover letter upon resubmission. This should outline all of the revisions that have been made based on the referees’ comments – including where they appear in the text – and provide a rationale for any comments that were not addressed. Revisions can even be indicated in the document itself by highlighting the changes that have been undertaken. It is important to remember that a revise and resubmit decision is made with the expectation that the text and/or research underpinning it will be significantly transformed. Any requested revisions not made need to be directly indicated and robustly – but politely – defended on intellectual grounds. Paradoxically, the revisions process can be even more difficult – and stressful – than writing the original submission. Adding a few references or footnotes will not be sufficient. Remember that is highly likely that the same referees will be evaluating the resubmission.

If your article has been rejected, commiserations. While you are entitled to an explanation, whether your paper has been rejected at the initial stages by the editorial team or after the peer-review process, it is worth noting that no matter how outraged the decision may make you feel, no matter how unfair you believe it to be, do not contact the editors with a vitriolic email. All rejection decisions are a matter of academic judgement and are deliberated by an editorial team. And they are final. Most editors are well-aware that they are potentially acting as gate-keepers and therefore put procedures in place to ensure that the review process is as fair and consistent as possible, particularly across ‘like’ cases. The review process is not a democracy where editors, referees, and authors share decision-making power. Editorial teams are sovereign though they may be subject to the oversight of an editorial board, publisher, or disciplinary association. Editors are given editorships in most cases because a publisher or disciplinary association believes that they will exercise good judgement and act in the best interests of the journal as well as the scholarly community by maintaining standards. Editors will not change their mind just because you disagree and are likely, at best, to be bemused by such conduct. And unfortunately, the reality is that as an ECR, you have more to lose if serious offence is taken.

While the initial sting is very unpleasant, even a rejected article is only rejected from one journal. There are many others out there to which you can submit. So console yourself with the fact that you might have been unlucky in having had tough referees this time round, engage with the more useful referee comments, seek advice from your supervisor(s)/mentor(s), and try again. Also remember that many well-regarded articles were initially rejected by other outlets before eventually being published. Finally, editors consider and make a decision on each article, not its author, so just because you have been turned down on this occasion does not mean you should not submit articles to the same journal in the future.

**Ethics**

The one professional ethic that is unique to journal publishing is that although the process can be slow and unpredictable, it is not acceptable to submit the same article to more than one journal at the same time. If you are caught, and through the process of refereeing there is a good chance of this happening, all of the journals in question are likely to reject the article. Moreover, it is highly unethical to publish the same article in more than one place (at least not without permission).
It is acceptable to submit more than one article based on the same research, but each should have a distinctive take on the material and they should not present the same data – journals are usually unwilling to publish research that has previously been published elsewhere, including translations of articles published in a different language. Be careful of publishing too many articles that are too similar as you will get a reputation as a ‘cut and paste artist’ and people may stop reading your work because it is so repetitive. This is bad enough after you have established a reputation for significant scholarship, but is lethal if you are trying to build a professional profile.

It is also important not to abuse the reviewing process. Journal submissions should not be used as a replacement for feedback from supervisors and/or mentors. Editing, peer reviewing, and managing a journal are all significant time commitments which contrary to popular perceptions, do not necessarily come with any direct compensation attached to them. Thus, there is an expectation that when a paper is submitted, the author(s) are putting forward – to the best of their judgement – a fully polished piece of scholarship rather than draft work in search of a steer. Editorial teams and peer reviewers are extending their professional expertise and energy to evaluate these papers in the expectation that those who submit them are committed to seeking publication in the journal outlet. Works in progress that one knows require further refinement are better suited to conference presentations, seminar papers, or writing groups. If one is in the unfortunate situation where a supervisor or supervisory team is not providing feedback on draft work, it is better to address the problem using internal mechanisms within your university than downloading this work onto other colleagues. In the end, submitting simply for feedback slows down the system for those who are actually seeking publication.

Finally, as alluded to above, journal publications and the peer review process are reliant on voluntary labour that is not compensated. Every time one submits a paper, it is likely be read by the editor(s), other members of the editorial team, and 2-4 referees – often multiple times. Currently, within the predominant form of peer review, if colleagues are unwilling to referee, the process would grind to a halt. Thus, if you are submitting work to journals, do think about contributing back. As a rule of thumb, for each submission you make, you should be willing to serve as a referee for a minimum of three papers.

**Conclusion**

Publishing is a professional necessity. Although you may be looking to publish your thesis as a book once you have submitted (see chapter 4), while pursuing your PhD you should be looking to implement a publication strategy and establish your own professional research identity. Journal articles are an excellent way to do this as they are prestigious and provide an in-built audience that should be interested in your work. They are more prestigious than book chapters because the screening process is perceived to be (and usually is) more rigorous. This means that publishing a journal article is more difficult, but also potentially more rewarding, particularly if you get valuable comments from your referees.

Publishing in journals is not easy. Original research is necessary but not sufficient for success. It requires an initial investment of time and energy. It also requires discipline to work within the conventions of the genre, resolve during the peer review process, and determination while undertaking revisions. But publishing provides the opportunity to be recognised as someone in the field who is making a contribution to the collective body of knowledge on a topic area. Moreover, it provides a chance to be recognised by peers an expert and to potentially begin the process of shaping the field for years to come.

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15 Criticism from some quarters has been levelled at predominant business models in scholarly publishing, particularly the reliance on unpaid academic labour by for-profit publishers. For an overview of the debate, see Armin Buverungen et al (2012) ‘The Poverty of Journal Publishing’ Organization, 19(6), 929-938. Perceptions that the status quo in scholarly publishing is unsustainable have been a motivating factor behind the ‘Academic Spring’ and open access movements. It has also raised ongoing debates about the value of current methods of refereeing and whether new models might provide more rigorous and collaborative forms of peer review. See for example, Pandelis Perakakis (2013) ‘New forms of open peer review will allow academics to separate scholarly evaluation from academic journals’ LSE Impact Blog.
Publication Ranking Lists and Bibliometric Tools

Thomson-Reuters SSCI List (you should be able to access this through your library’s Web of Knowledge Database). This is considered by many institutions to be the gold standard journal ranking list, with the two year impact factor being the most widely quoted measure. Roughly speaking, the two year impact factor is calculated on the basis of the rate at which articles published in a SSCI listed journal from the previous two years are cited by other SSCI listed journals during the index year (i.e., a journal’s 2013 ranking would be based on the number of citations in 2013 from articles published in 2011 and 2012). Given that the list is highly exclusive – there are many concerns about the transparency of the process for inclusion and, as a private firm, the lack of public accountability – very respectable journals are absent. It also misses citations from other sources such as unlisted journals and books.

Google Scholar: This provides an accessible ranking of journals based on the h5 index (i.e., the number of articles in past five years (n) that have been cited at least (n) times). Citation calculations include any materials that can be captured online by Google’s crawler bots. Rankings only include the top 20 journals in a given subject category and concerns have been raised about the system’s capability to compile more complicated bibliographic information. One can create an account on Google Scholar and have their citations tracked privately or publicly.

The Australian Political Studies Association’s Preferred Journal List: An offshoot of the now abandoned ERA ranking list commissioned by the Australian Research Council, this list is intended as an aid for internal monitoring within the Australian higher education sector. The list itself is more comprehensive and less US-centric than the SSCI List.

The TRIPS List: From the Institute for the Theory and Practice of International Relations, at William & Mary, this list is based on a twenty country survey of scholars working in the discipline of IR. It includes ranking lists of journals and book publishers. Currently, you can create bespoke reports. The journal list is not particularly comprehensive (respondents had to choose from a pre-selected list of primarily American IR journals) but it does reveal marked national differences in perceptions of influence and quality for those journals listed.

The SCImago Journal and Country Rank: This is a ranking system developed by a research consortium from the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC), University of Granada, Extremadura, Carlos III (Madrid) and Alcalá de Henares. SCImago draws its information from Scopus in order to capture citations of journals within this database. Although the coverage is extremely comprehensive, subject area listings are somewhat idiosyncratic. Thus, it may be wise to search for individual journals first to see where they are listed before undertaking a subject area search.

Harzing’s Publish or Perish: This is a free software package available for download that uses Google Scholar data to compile raw citation rates by author, journal, or keyword and provides various statistical measures (e.g., h index; g index, mean rate). This is a valuable tool when drafting one's own research dossier. It is also very useful for revealing more general citation patterns in the field.
Research Assessment and Early Career Researchers

Every 5-7 years, UK-based universities go through a national auditing exercise in which departments – or units of assessment – have their research outputs, environments, and impacts evaluated by an independent panel. Requirements, scoring systems, and the weightings given to individual elements have changed from assessment to assessment. However, for the past two assessments, individual outputs have been graded on a five point scale.

Four star  Quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour.

Three Star  Quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence.

Two Star   Quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.

One Star   Quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.

Unclassified  Quality that falls below the standard of nationally recognised work. Or work which does not meet the published definition of research for the purposes of this assessment.

Generally, in order to be eligible for submission into the assessment, researchers are required to have four outputs (i.e., peer-reviewed publications) produced during the assessment cycle to submit for evaluation. There are exceptions to this rule and the requirements for ECRs have always been one of these exceptions. The number of outputs required of an ECR depends on when during the assessment cycle one begins employment – either as a researcher or lecturer. In previous assessments, this has been between 1-2 outputs per ECR. It is also worth noting that currently only outputs evaluated to be at least 3* in quality count towards the institutional allocation of research funding tied to the audit.

While keeping abreast of the minutiae of these assessment exercises is important if you wish to pursue an academic career in the UK, most crucially from the perspective of an ECR is to determine how many outputs (i.e., publications) will be necessary for you to be eligible for submission to the upcoming assessment exercise and to ensure that each journal publication meets the minimum Green Open Access requirements demanded by HEFCE for inclusion (see chapter 8). Therefore, your initial publication strategy should be built around maximising the strength of your potential submission given these requirements.

REF 2014
RAE 2008