

Workshop “How to Get Published”

Aim

The aim of this workshop is to guide young researchers through all stages of the publication process, allowing them to plan their writing and publication methods, and ultimately their career, with much greater care. The starting point of this workshop is the following: generally speaking, academic researchers are incredibly devoted, often out of noble and idealistic motives, to one part of the publication process: their own research. While there can be no doubt that quality of research is by far the most important reason why a paper gets published, it is not the only one. There are still some vitally important steps that have to be taken once the research is done. One still needs to pick a journal, write the paper and tailor it to a specific audience, deal with feedback, promote one’s paper online and at conferences, ... Academics, however, still have a tendency to neglect these extra steps, and often feel outside their comfort zone when they do take them. This is a shame, because if they were to tackle these extra steps with the same rigor and devotion they employ in their research, academics could become much more efficient at publishing and communicating their results to their peers.



The urgency of this situation has increased greatly during the past decades. Firstly, academic publications have become a vital part of scientific evaluation. They are no longer merely a means of communication, but are increasingly used as a criterion for quality control. As a result, publishing has become a vital part of scientific research: to be a (good) scientist is to publish. Secondly, academic careers are becoming shorter and more precarious: the majority of PhD students move on to a different kind of employment, which means they have less time to get their results into the open. The result of this twofold situation is the following: publishing has become vitally important, but people have less and less time to learn how to do it. Whereas previous generations still had the time to learn about publishing strategies through a (long) process of trial and error, current generations of young researchers can no longer afford to do so.

This workshop is meant to help them overcome this problem. It offers a guide through all principles of publication, using a broad variety of tools and principles which can be used to take control of one’s publication strategies. This allows PhD students to take off on a flying start: knowledge and skills that would otherwise be the result of a long process of trial and error are now ready-at-hand for them to use at the very beginnings of their academic career.

Format and Content

Duration: 2 days (6 h/day)

Method: combination of traditional teaching and assignments. Students are first presented with the necessary tools, and are then asked to apply their tools to their own subjects, papers, abstracts and rejection letters, which they are asked to bring to the workshop. Throughout the workshop, there is a heavy emphasis on the use of real scientific research papers and abstracts as examples. Students are asked to actively participate, and there is ample room for assignments and discussion.

Program

Day 1:

1) How to pick a journal (3 hours)

In this part, we tackle the subject of how to pick the right journal for your paper. The students are introduced to the different factors that determine journal choice (such as journal rankings, subject matter, acceptance rate, review time, ...). One by one, these factors are analyzed, after which a number of online tools are presented to help the students select a journal. The result is a general method or algorithm which can be used to pick the best journal for their publication. Finally, students are divided into small groups, and asked to apply the same method to their own papers.

2) How to write your paper (3 hours)

This part addresses the actual writing of the paper. It offers a large number of tips on how to write clearly and concisely, and avoid being misunderstood. The approach is top-down, starting from the general explanatory structure of the paper, before moving on to explain how this structure can be translated into concise and consistent writing. All writing tips are illustrated with examples of real research papers, and students again receive assignments to apply these tips to their own papers.

Day 2:

3) How to write an abstract (2 hours 15 min)

In this part, we take a look at the writing of an abstract. We discuss why it is important to have a good abstract. The focus is on the relation between the structure of an abstract, a paper, and the research presented here. Again, this part contains an ex cathedra teaching moment based on real examples drawn from ISI Web of Science, and an assignment in which the students work on their own and each other's abstracts.

4) Paper written, what now? (1 hour 30 min)

This part treats the process and events between the stage of the writing process and the eventual acceptance of a paper by a journal. It offers advice on how to get quality feedback, and how to integrate this feedback in your paper. It also focuses on the review process itself, with particular

emphasis on the 'decoding' of rejection letters, the importance of which is often underestimated. Again, students are asked here to work on their own rejection letters.

5) Paper published, what now? (1 hour)

At this stage of the workshop, we focus on the afterlife of the research paper. The students are introduced to the general academic context, the essential role of citations (including a discussion on the H-Index), why it is important to get cited, and how to track your citations. It also offers a number of different tips and tricks on how to get cited more.

P.S. I) Your PhD: papers, monograph, or both? (30 min)

In this part, we briefly discuss the writing of papers in combination with the writing of a PhD. What are the advantages or disadvantages of writing papers in combination with a traditional PhD monograph, and how should one go about integrating research papers in one's PhD trajectory?

P.S. II) How to publish books (45 min)

In the final part of the workshop, we discuss the differences between book publishing and article publishing. We talk about the rationale behind book publishing, and we focus specifically on the writing of good book proposals.

Sources and Expertise

The content of the workshop is based on a variety of sources. Part of it stems from my own experience (9 years in total) as an academic (as a writer of journal articles and books, editor of theme issues of academic journals, reviewer of articles and project proposals, and organizer of conferences). I also draw heavily from the experiences of colleagues. Another part is the result of my activities in higher education policy. I have served as representative of the untenured staff in the faculty board of my university, as well as in the university-wide meetings of untenured staff representatives. Additionally, I am the founder of an action group ('Actiegroep Hoger Onderwijs'), which develops concrete policy proposals and presents them to policy makers, such as members of parliament, university presidents and vice-presidents, other organizations of academics, ... As such, I have had the occasion to speak with scientists and policy makers from a variety of fields and backgrounds, building up expertise on the general context of academia. Furthermore, as a philosopher of science, I have also developed a specific expertise in scientific argumentation structures, and through my use of narratology as a research method, I have gained insight in the rhetorical aspects of academic writing.

Audience

The primary audience of this workshop consists of PhD students and beginning Postdocs: people who are taking their first steps in academic publishing, and who have not yet had the opportunity to gain experience through trial and error. Apart from this, the workshop can also be of great use to senior researchers who are not very well acquainted with the global, Anglophone publication market, for example because they have been mostly focusing on regional publications in their native language.

Senior researchers with more experience might also find the workshop useful, to a lesser extent. They will definitely learn a lot of new things, but there will also be a lot of moments when they recognize things they already know.

As for the scope of academic disciplines, this workshop is tailored to academics writing journal articles consisting of extended and continuous prose. (such as researchers in the humanities and social sciences, but also in some parts of geography or biology). This is particularly the case for the second part of the workshop: "How to write your paper". Other parts of the workshop are not bound to specific disciplines. This means that researchers from more experimentally or mathematically oriented fields might find some of the information offered in part 2 of the workshop somewhat less applicable to their fields. If the workshop is attended by researchers from these disciplines, I will opt for a more dialogical way of instruction, asking them to articulate the differences and similarities between writing practices in their disciplines and the ones offered in the workshop.

Possible overlap with other courses

To my knowledge, the concept of this workshop is quite unique, since it focuses on the entire process of publication. Existing courses on publishing, usually taught by people from publishing companies, generally start from the assumption that students have already finished writing their paper and chosen the journal they want to submit it to. My course, on the other hand, takes a much broader approach.

Part 2 of the workshop is to a certain extent similar to some courses in academic English writing. Nevertheless, the starting point is very different: while academic writing courses generally are bottom-up (starting from words and sentences, and then moving to larger structures), my course is top-down: it starts from the general argumentative and rhetorical structure of a paper, and then works its way down to the level of paragraphs and sentences. As such, it is very useful to students who have attended courses in academic writing, since it gives them the opportunity to test their academic writing skills in a different context.

Number of Participants

Ideally: 12

Maximum: 15 (one of the assignments will be skipped)

Installments

-7/10/2015: Test run for the department of Philosophy, Ghent University

-15/12/2015: Test run for the department of History, Ghent University

Some Testimonials

Gisele Icker de Almeida (3d year PhD student, department of History, Ghent University)

The workshop "How to get published" presented by Anton Froeyman was a real eye-opener to the strategies needed in order to become an active participant in the big conversation that is academic publishing.

Allan Souza Queiroz (3d year PhD student, department of Sociology, Ghent University)

Anton Froeyman's workshop provides a comprehensive viewpoint on publishing in academic journals. It guides doctoral students through the main stages of publishing, from early decisions on picking a journal to what's next after you get your paper published. Demonstrating clear experience with manuscript submissions and teaching the tricks of the trade, Froeyman can contribute a lot to PhD students. Undoubtedly, the best workshop I have attended on this subject at UGent. A workshop highly recommended to PhD students and that should be included into the Doctoral Training Program."

Eva Willems (3d year PhD student, department of History)

Anton Froeyman's workshop provided me with loads of useful tips and tricks on the process of academic writing and publishing. I think this kind of information is indispensable for all starting PhD students who have to find their way in academia, and it should be an integral part of the Doctoral Schools.

Pieter Present (1st year PhD student, department of Philosophy, Ghent University)

The structure of the course was great: it showed a nice variation between theory and practice. In the course of the workshop, I got lots of new ideas to rework old papers. What I found particularly interesting was the part about peer review and the 'decoding' of rejection letters. What was also very good was that the course went beyond publishing in the strict sense, for example by focusing on presenting papers at conferences. In general, the course was very useful and exhaustive.

Tessa Boeykens (3d year PhD student, department of History, Ghent University)

Anton Froeyman offers a Rough Guide to academic writing and publishing and leaves the student inspired to get started. If only I had this workshop at the beginning of my PhD, I would have gained a lot of time and direction in my trajectory. Indispensable Doctoral Schools material.

Fons Dewulf (2nd year PhD student, department of Philosophy, Ghent University)

This workshop guides the participant through all steps of the publication process. As an introduction to the complex linguistic, social and intellectual practice of academic publishing, this course is unmissable for the beginning PhD student. The first phase, in which the choice of journal was discussed, as well as the decoding of rejection letters were particularly insightful. The course also teaches these insights through practical assignments, which allow the PhD students to take their new-found skills home and apply them to their own publications.

Jan-Jasper Persijn (3d year PhD student, department of Philosophy, Ghent University)

The knowledge of this course is elementary for all early career researchers finding their way in the confusing and inaccessible world of academic publishing. Moreover, the systematic manner in which this workshop elaborates its subject cannot be found anywhere else.