Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies

TIPS FOR INTENDING CONTRIBUTORS

(to be read in conjunction with the Instructions for Authors at
http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/authors/cbieauth.asp)

SUBSTANCE

Is BIES the right journal for this paper?

Think carefully about the appropriate kind of journal for your paper. The *BIES* only publishes articles on the Indonesian economy, widely interpreted. Yet submissions are occasionally received that are not on Indonesia, or not on economics! Your article will be rejected if its content does not reflect the usual content of the journal.

Bear in mind the *distinction between economics and econometrics*. Many papers submitted to the *BIES* do little more than demonstrate the writer's ability to use econometric techniques, but these are not our primary interest. If you want to make a contribution to the science of econometrics, you should publish your article in an econometrics journal, not the *BIES*. As its name suggests, the *BIES* publishes articles on economics—usually applied economics, and often focusing on analysis of policy issues. Many of the articles in it contain some econometrics, but only as the tool of empirical economic analysis, not as the dominant feature. In other words, we are only interested in publishing *economic* analyses, which may or may not use econometric tools to undertake statistical testing of economic hypotheses.

Getting attention: title, abstract and introduction.

Think carefully about the *title*: like a headline in a newspaper, its aim is to encapsulate the substance of the article in a few words, and to attract the reader.

Similarly, readers may go no further than the *abstract* unless it persuades them the full article is worth reading.

Your paper should have a clear *motivation*. So in the *introduction*, briefly discuss the topic you are going to address, and explain to readers why you think it is important enough that they should devote some of their time to reading your paper.

Remember that there is virtually an infinite supply of material each of us could read, so your first job is to persuade the reader (in the title, the abstract and the introduction) that it is worthwhile reading your article.

Structure

When the paper is written, stand back and look at the *structure of the headings and subheadings* to see that there is a sensible logical structure for the paper as a whole.

Literature

It is important that your paper should demonstrate that you have a knowledge of what people have written on the same topic previously, especially in the same journal. A paper that fails to recognise work previously published on the same topic is unlikely to impress the referees. In principle, each newly published article should be pushing the literature further, building on what has come before.

Methodology

If your paper is providing some kind of empirical analysis, include a clear and precise explanation of your *methodology*. Readers will want to know exactly what you did and how you did it. It is also essential to state very clearly what are your sources of data and other information.

All variables must be carefully defined, and each definition should specify the units in which the variable is measured. Once you have defined the variables, use consistent notation. For example, it is unacceptable to define the variable 'INC' as income and then use the undefined symbol '*y*' as income elsewhere.

The economic significance of the coefficients should be carefully explained. It is not enough merely to point out that a coefficient is statistically significant and has the expected sign—you need to discuss the importance of the variable in question to the economic relationship being described. For example, if a 1% change in the explanatory variable causes the dependent variable to change by only 0.01%, then the relationship may not be particularly *important*, even though it is *statistically significant*.

Policy implications of your research

Very often it is the case that almost all of an article is about the analysis and the quantitative work, while the discussion of the *policy implications* takes only a few sentences at best. If you intend to address policy implications at all, you should provide a thorough discussion of the market failure or equity concern that you think justifies policy intervention by the government—or, on the other hand, the lack of such a market failure and hence of a rationale for policy intervention.

UNDERSTANDING THE REFEREEING PROCESS

If an article is thought to have a reasonably good chance of being published, it is sent to a number of referees to be evaluated. If not, it is rejected at the submission stage. Usually peer review is done on a confidential basis, so the referee can speak freely.

Two referees are usually used, although occasionally the editor might select three, or perhaps even one.

Referees submit their reports to the editor, who decides on further action based on their reports. There is a surprising degree of difference in referees' reports on almost all papers. Sometimes one referee will recommend publication while the other will recommend rejection. In such a case, the editor might request a report from a third referee, but more often will act as the judge, taking the two referees' and his or her own assessment of the paper into account.

Articles are almost never published without any changes being requested. Even if the referees clearly favour publication, they are very likely to have suggestions for minor improvement. More often, quite significant revisions will be requested. This may be somewhat disheartening to the writer, but this process always results in a paper considerably better than the initial version. This is one of the main benefits of the refereeing process.

If writers feel that the referees or the editor are making unreasonable requests, or requests based on a misunderstanding of the content, they may well prefer to argue the case for not making the requested changes. This is perfectly reasonable. However, if a referee has misunderstood the paper, perhaps there is a need to improve the way the argument is explained, even if it is not changed. Referees read what has been written (in the way it has been written) on the page. They probably do not share the author's mindset of implicit knowledge and assumptions, and have difficulty following the argument if it has sudden jumps and missing elements. Unsubstantiated assertions are especially disliked. It is essential that the author write for the reader, smoothly and rigorously drawing out the argument, and carefully explaining the significance of the findings.

Of course, if writers feel that changes are being insisted upon that would fundamentally alter what is being argued in the paper, they may prefer to withdraw the paper, and perhaps submit it to a different journal.

MAXIMISING THE CHANCES OF ACCEPTANCE

There is a set of instructions or guidelines for intending contributors. Find these (on the inside back cover of every issue of the journal, and at http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/00074918.asp), and follow them carefully. Failure to find and follow these instructions sends a signal that authors are not really serious about getting their work published.

To *maximise the chances of a favourable response* from the editor and referees, there are various things to remember:

- Put a lot of effort into presenting your work with care and attention to detail.
- Check for spelling mistakes!
- If you do not have native speaker fluency in English, try to find a native speaker to proofread your paper before submission. Editors and referees will provide some latitude if it is apparent that you are not a native English speaker, but if the language barrier makes your article very hard to understand, this will reduce the chance of acceptance.
- Provide proper references to work that you cite, complete with page references if appropriate. It is not helpful to refer to (Smith 2001) if this is a whole book and you are quoting from a particular

page. Make clear whether you are merely drawing attention to the work you are citing, or referring to it in order to strengthen your own argument.

- Make sure everything you cite in the text is listed in the references; make sure nothing is included in the reference list that is not cited in the text.
- *Format* your paper carefully and consistently so that it looks like a good quality product. But keep the formatting fairly simple, since the paper will be reformatted during the editing process to conform to the journal's house style. Make sure that the hierarchy of headings matches the house style.
- When presenting *tables* of numbers, including regression results, avoid the common problem of reporting with *spurious accuracy*: report numbers to no more than about two or three significant digits. Round figures from millions to billions, or billions to trillions, as appropriate. This makes tables easier to read, and reduces the likelihood of errors.
- Simplify the *formatting of tables* as much as possible. For example, do not put the % or $ sign next to every entry in the table: put it in a subtitle or column heading.
- If you use *charts*, format them as simply as possible. What might look good in colour in a PowerPoint presentation will be less clear in black and white on the printed page. Don't put too many series on a single chart. Format the numbers to be easily readable.
- Avoid the common practice of not running the *vertical axis* of a chart down to zero. The effect of this is to exaggerate movement in the variable under consideration, whereas the chart's purpose is to give the reader a realistic and easily understood visual impression of what is actually happening.
- Try not to have too many charts and tables: focus on what is really important.
- Refer to each table and chart in the text, and draw attention to the key points it demonstrates. It should not be up to readers to find the messages for themselves in a table or chart: that is the job of the author. But don't refer to every number in the table, because to do so defeats the purpose of having it.