Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies

TIPS FOR INTENDING CONTRIBUTORS

(to be read in conjunction with the journal's instructions for authors)

SUBSTANCE

Is *BIES* the Right Journal for Your Paper?

Think carefully about the appropriate kind of journal for your paper, note, or survey article. As its name suggests, the *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* (*BIES*) publishes work on the Indonesian economy (widely interpreted)—usually applied economics, and often focusing on policy-relevant analysis. Nevertheless, we occasionally receive submissions that are not on Indonesia, or not on any aspect of Indonesia's economy. Your paper will be rejected if it does not reflect the usual content of the journal.

Also bear in mind the distinction between *economic analysis* and *econometrics*. We regularly receive papers that do little more than demonstrate the author's ability to use econometric techniques, using Indonesian data. Such papers are not our primary interest. Many articles in *BIES* contain some econometrics, but only as the tool of empirical economic analysis, not as the dominant feature. In other words, we are interested in publishing economic analyses that may or may not use econometric tools to undertake statistical testing of hypotheses.

GETTING ATTENTION: TITLE, ABSTRACT, AND INTRODUCTION

Think carefully about the title of your paper. Like a good headline in a newspaper, it should encapsulate the substance of the article and attract readers. A short and snappy title is often best. Similarly, readers may go no further than your abstract unless it persuades them that the full article is worth reading.

Your paper should have a clear motivation. In your introduction, briefly discuss the topic you are going to address, and explain to readers why you think your topic 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 that each of us could read, so your first job is to persuade readers (in your title, abstract, and introduction) that your paper is worth their time.

STRUCTURE

After you have written your paper, look at the structure of your headings and subheadings. Ensure that there is a sensible and logical structure in place.

LITERATURE

Your paper should in a concise manner demonstrate your knowledge of previous work on the same topic, especially in the same journal. A paper that fails to recognise previously published work is unlikely to impress referees. In principle, each newly published article should be pushing the literature further, building on what has preceded it.

METHODOLOGY

If your paper provides some kind of empirical analysis, be sure to explain your methodology clearly and precisely. Readers will want to know exactly what you did and how you did it. It is also essential to state very clearly 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.

You should also explain the economic significance of estimated coefficients. 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 that you describe. 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, almost all of an article reports the author's analysis and quantitative work, while its discussion of policy implications comprises only a few sentences. If you intend to address policy implications at all, you should provide a thorough discussion of, for example, the market failure or equity concerns that you think justifies policy intervention by the government—or, conversely, the lack of such a market failure and hence of a rationale for policy intervention.

UNDERSTANDING THE REFEREEING PROCESS

If the editor thinks that a paper has a reasonably good chance of being published, he or she will send it to be refereed, or evaluated, by a number of experts in the field (often two, but occasionally three or only one). If not, the paper is rejected at the submission stage. The peer-review process is usually confidential and double-blinded, so the referee can speak freely.

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 the editor or the referees requesting any substantive changes. Even if the referees clearly favour publication, they are very likely to have suggestions for minor improvements. More often, quite extensive revisions will be requested. This may be somewhat disheartening to the author, but the aim of such requests is to produce a paper that is considerably better than the initial version—one of the main benefits of peer review.

If an author feels 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 a case against the requested changes. This is perfectly reasonable. However, if a referee has misunderstood the paper then perhaps the argument needs to be clarified. Referees read what has been written (in the way it has been written) on the page. They probably do not share the author's implicit knowledge and assumptions, and it can be difficult to follow or be convinced by an argument that jumps suddenly, lacks elements, or relies on unsubstantiated assertions. The author must write for the reader, smoothly and rigorously drawing out the argument and carefully explaining the significance of the paper's findings.

Of course, if an author feels that the editor or the referees are insisting on changes that would fundamentally alter the paper's argument, they may prefer to withdraw their paper and perhaps submit it to a different journal.

INCREASING YOUR CHANCES OF ACCEPTANCE

BIES has a set of instructions for authors. Find these on the inside back cover of every issue, and on Taylor and Francis Online, and follow them carefully. By failing to adhere to these instructions, an author sends a signal that he or she is not really serious about publishing their work in the journal.

You can increase your chances of receiving a favourable response from the editor and referees by remembering the following:

- Put a lot of effort into presenting your work, and pay attention to detail.
- Check for spelling mistakes.
- If you are not fluent in English, try to find a native speaker to proofread your paper before you submit it. Editors and referees will provide some latitude if it is apparent that an author is not a native English speaker; but if the language barrier makes your paper very hard to understand, it will reduce its chances of acceptance.
- Provide proper references to work that you cite, complete with page references if appropriate. It is not helpful to refer to (Smith 2011), for example, if this is a whole book and you are quoting from a particular page. Make it clear whether you are merely drawing attention to the work you are citing or whether you are referring to it in order to strengthen your own argument.
- Make sure everything you cite in the text is listed (in Chicago author-date style) in your reference list; likewise, make sure nothing is included in your reference list that is not cited in the text.

- Format your paper carefully and consistently, but keep the formatting fairly simple. Accepted papers are reformatted to conform to the journal's house style during editing. Make sure your heading levels match those of *BIES*.
- When presenting tables of numbers, including regression results, avoid the common mistake of reporting with spurious accuracy: report numbers to no more than about two or three significant digits and percentages to no more than two decimal places. Round figures from millions to billions, or billions to trillions, as appropriate. This will make your tables easy to read, and it will reduce the likelihood of errors.
- Simplify your table formatting. For example, do not put the '%' or '$' sign next to every entry in the table: put it in the subtitle or the column heading.
- If your paper contains figures or charts, ensure they are both simple and effective. All numbers must be easy to read. Avoid 'chartjunk', or unnecessary graphical elements. Also, what may look good in colour will be less clear in black and white on the printed page. Don't put too many series on a single chart—a table is often more effective.
- Avoid the common practice of not running the vertical axis of a chart down to zero. This exaggerates movement in the variable under consideration, whereas the chart's purpose is to give the reader a realistic and easily understood visual impression of the data.
- Try not to have too many charts and tables (10 at most): focus on what is really important.
- Refer to each table and chart in the text, and draw attention to its main points. 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 a table, because to do so defeats the purpose of having it.