

Publishing Strategy

Top-tier vs. field-specific journals & publishing across traditions

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Today's roadmap

- Making Sense of Journal Metrics
- Geographical Differences in Publishing
- Key Journals
- The Quant/Qual Divide
- Career Stage Guide
- Beyond Journal Articles
- The Article Submission Process
- The Book Submission Process
- Discussion

Making Sense of Journal Metrics

Scimago & quartile rankings

Scimago Journal & Country Rank (SJR) ranks journals by field and subfield.

The quartiles

- **Q1** Top 25% in field
- **Q2** 25–50%
- **Q3** 50–75%
- **Q4** Bottom 25%

How to use it

- scimagojr.com: search any journal
- Impact Factor & SJR
- Rankings *vary by subject category*. A journal can be Q1 in History and Q2 in Political Science

Geographical Differences in Publishing

The US context: disciplinary expectations

- US political science departments are strongly disciplinary
- A record weighted toward top general PS/IR journals signals broad disciplinary contribution
- Interdisciplinary work is respected, but usually needs *an anchor in the discipline*
- **Example:** publishing in *Nature Climate Action* is broadly impressive. Publishing in *Global Environmental Change* (an excellent, well-respected journal) may not land the same way with a US political science hiring committee
- The further from a flagship PS outlet, the more you may need to explain the contribution to a disciplinary audience

Outside the US: more room for breadth

- European and international departments are generally more sympathetic to interdisciplinary work
- Area studies, sociology, geography, and policy outlets carry genuine weight
- Publishing "across traditions" is often actively valued
- Once on the tenure track in the US, interdisciplinary publishing also becomes more acceptable and is welcomed
- Outside the US, it is welcome at all career stages

Key Journals

Key journals: a working reference

Top general PS/IR

- APSR
- AJPS
- Journal of Politics
- IO
- World Politics
- BJPS
- Comparative Political Studies
- ISQ
- Journal of Conflict Resolution

Strong subfield / qual-friendly

- RIPE
- JPR
- EJIR
- GEP
- Comparative Politics
- Politics & Society
- Security Dialogue
- Political Research Quarterly
- Civil Wars

Interdisciplinary / climate

- Nature / Nature Climate Action
- Global Environmental Change
- Climate Policy
- Environmental Politics & Governance
- Scientific Reports
- Environmental Science & Policy

The Quant/Qual Divide

The quant/qual divide

- Top general PS journals structurally favour quantitative work. This is not just a perception
- Strategy for qualitative research:
  - Target excellent subfield journals. *EJIR, Politics & Society, Comparative Politics, Security Dialogue* are highly respected for qual work
  - A strong record in good subfield journals is *legitimate and competitive*
- This is **universal**. It applies regardless of geography
- If you are qualitative and job-market focused outside the US, a book contract (see later) can partially compensate

Career Stage Guide

Masters students

- Publishing **at all** at this stage is impressive *(at any non-predatory journal)*
- Ideal: Q2 or above. Even a Q3 is also fine here
- Focus on learning the submission process and collecting feedback
- Policy reports, conference proceedings, and working papers are also normal/expected/good
- Do not benchmark yourself against PhD students' output

PhD students and the job market

- Aim for Q1 and Q2 only. More specifically: well-known, respected ones within those quartiles
- Subfield-specific work is fine, but aim for at least **one very well-placed publication** (ideally top general PS/IR) or an R&R there *before* you go on the market
- Some committees will accept a high volume of strong subfield publications... but the market is extremely competitive, and a top general publication makes you significantly more competitive
- R&Rs at top journals count. List them clearly on your CV
- Very hyper-specific subfield work is fine as part of a portfolio, but should not be all you have

Post-PhD/Tenure-track

- Now working for both quantity and quality
- Once you have a very well-placed publication, you can pace yourself (but keep returning to top venues periodically)
- "Lower Q1s" are more than fine to target. But **do not go below Q2 just to get something out.** It is not worth it at this stage
- This is also when interdisciplinary publishing becomes more acceptable in the US and is quite welcome outside of it
- Never sacrifice quality for quantity

Teaching-focused positions

- Expectations differ substantially from research-intensive positions
- Book reviews, book chapters, and lower-tier publications are all reasonable outputs
- Know what your specific institution rewards in its review criteria. These vary widely
- Volume and breadth tend to matter more than prestige here

Beyond Journal Articles

Book chapters: when to say yes

- For most people in **earlier career phases**, book chapters add minimal value to a research profile
- If the offer is there from a strong press (OUP, CUP, etc.), accept if you can. But do not rely on chapters to build a record
- If you are actively pushing out articles, **do not agree to a chapter** unless you have very few or no publications. The added value is minimal and the time cost is real
- Oxford Handbook Chapters are almost the only ones that are incredibly worth it

Policy writing and non-academic outputs

- Valuable for **any** scholar heading into academia: a few policy or public-facing outputs signal engagement and impact
- *Foreign Policy*, major think tank reports, and equivalent outlets are respected regardless of career path
- IOs are excellent venues if they align with your substantive focus (IOM, UN bodies, World Bank, SIPRI, etc.)
- **Do not post weak blogs** just for visibility if it displaces time from rigorous research
- Rather, publish the research first, then write blogs to advertise it to policymakers and laypeople
- If going outside academia, policy reports carry real weight. Rigorous research is still respected outside academia too

Books

- If you are **qualitative and/or outside the US**, a book contract can be important for the job market
- In the US, books are more typically a senior scholar's output.
- Focus on Academic Presses: OUP, CUP, Princeton, Michigan, Chicago, etc.
- For a first book, most presses want a prospectus and full manuscript
  - *Tip: use OUP's prospectus template. It is excellent and works nearly anywhere*
- The OUP First Book Prize awards 10 prizes annually. Worth submitting even just after the dissertation stage
- A book R&R is not guaranteed acceptance. You revise, write a response memo outlining planned changes, and the editor takes it to the full editorial board

The Article Submission Process

Before you submit

- Read the aims & scope carefully. Check recent issues for fit
- Formatting does not have to be perfect, but **must be consistent**
- Anonymize properly
- Identify your *corresponding author*. This does not have to be the first author
- Write cover letter
- Use Overleaf. Highly recommended, especially with co-authors. Most good journals have templates. Excellent for citation management and effortless formatting adjustments

Desk review

- After the technical check, the editor decides: desk reject or send to peer review
- Top journals desk reject within **1–2 weeks**. Smaller journals may take a month or more at this stage
- If desk rejected: editors sometimes give feedback or suggest another journal. Sometimes there is nothing
- **Always** take editor feedback seriously on desk rejections and revise before resubmitting elsewhere
- Desk rejections happen to everyone at all career stages. Rinse and repeat

Peer review

- If it goes out for review: you will get feedback regardless of the outcome. This is valuable
- Timeline varies: science journals $\sim$2 weeks; top PS journals $\sim$5–8 weeks. General rule of thumb: 3 months
- After 3 months it is almost always socially acceptable to follow up with the editor to ask about the status
- 2–4 reviewers provide feedback and a recommendation
  - Their feedback per reviewer and per journal can SIGNIFICANTLY vary
- Outcomes: **rejection** (review and reject), **R&R**, or **conditional acceptance** (rare at top journals; more common at smaller ones)

R&R: revise and resubmit

- An R&R is good news. Major or minor revision, take it seriously
- A second R&R after a major revision is common. The same steps apply
- The editor often signals which reviewer feedback to prioritise. If there is clear disagreement and no guidance (R&R only), it is fine to ask the editor directly
- You can push back against unreasonable reviewer requests. Do not push back on everything, but it is entirely acceptable. Add footnotes or clarifying text to show you have engaged with the concern

Writing the revision memo

Two approaches:

Approach 1: Thematic

- Group feedback across reviewers into categories
- Address each category in one response
- Cleaner to read. Good when reviewers overlap

Approach 2: Line by line

- Respond to every individual comment in order
- More exhaustive and transparent
- Good when reviewers diverge significantly

In both cases: always open with a note to the editor summarising the major revisions and flagging any direct questions you have for them.

Acceptance and production

- After acceptance / conditional acceptance: the paper moves to the journal's production team
- A **copyeditor** handles formatting, references, and house style. They send a "proof"
- Respond to or adjust their requests, then:
  - Pay the processing fee (open access), OR
  - Have your institution waive it if there is a Transformative Agreement (check your library)
- And you are done

The Book Submission Process

Submitting a book: getting started

- For a first book, most presses want a **prospectus and sample chapters**. Some will request the full manuscript
- *Tip: use OUP's prospectus template. It is excellent and accepted nearly everywhere*
- The **OUP First Book Prize** awards 10 prizes annually and is worth submitting even straight from a dissertation. You submit a prospectus and sample chapters. Even if unsuccessful, the process often generates reviewer feedback you can use
- Reviewer feedback from one press can be incorporated into a revised prospectus sent elsewhere. A new press may not request the full manuscript again if the prospectus and revised chapters are strong

Book R&R and the editorial board

- A book R&R works similarly to an article R&R, with one key difference: you do **not** have to make all the changes first
- You write a detailed response memo outlining *planned* changes in response to reviewer feedback
- The editor then takes this memo (along with the chapters and prospectus) to the **full editorial board**, who collectively decide whether to offer a contract
- A book R&R is still not guaranteed acceptance. The board can say no
- Once you have a contract, you write and deliver the full manuscript by the agreed deadline

Discussion

Any questions?

Some things we can discuss:

- The use of AI in writing and submission
- How to deal with difficult or unreasonable reviewers
- Where to send your paper first and why
- *If Kasia is here:*
  - editing a volume
  - policy writing as a company

Thank you.

Co-authorship & Collaboration Spreadsheet · **International Job & Funding Board**

Appendix: journal reference table

Journal	Type	Q (PS/IR)	Notes
APSR	General PS	Q1	Acceptance <5%; US market anchor
AJPS	General PS	Q1	
IO	IR	Q1	Strong for IPE and security
BJPS	General PS/IR	Q1	Well-regarded in Europe and the US
ISQ	IR	Q1	
JPR	Peace/Conflict	Q1	Qual-friendly
RIPE	IPE	Q1	Strong outside the US
EJIR	IR (European)	Q1	Qual-friendly; highly regarded in Europe
Global Env. Politics	Env./IR	Q1	Interdisciplinary
Nature Climate Action	Climate	Q1	Broad reach; respected widely

Verify at scimagojr.com. Rankings vary by subject category and shift annually.