

# **Guidelines on writing a first quantitative academic article**

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Most post-graduate students cringe at the thought of having to distil a whole year's research work into a single journal article of 20 A4-pages. "It's impossible!", "I will never be able to do it", "7000 words ... you must be mad!" are typically how students react when first confronted with the challenge of writing an academic article.

However, as Summers (2001:410) points out, you do not have to be an award winning novelist or rousing poet to report the results of a well-conceptualised and executed study. You only need to be organised, accurate, clear and concise in your writing. And you have to keep your eye on the details, because, when writing an academic article, "the devil is in the details" (Feldman, 2004:1).

The purpose of this document is to guide you in writing a first academic article in which the results of an empirical research study are reported. We will specifically focus on reporting the results of survey-based research involving the statistical testing of hypotheses.

There is no single correct way to write an academic article. While the framework, principles and examples presented here are based on articles that have appeared in leading academic journals, you may have to adapt it to comply with the requirements of a specific journal, academic department or study leader. It would also be worth your while to read the original articles by Feldman (2004:106), Bem (2003), Perry, Carson and Gilmore (2003:652-667), Summers (2001:405-415), Calfee and Valencia (2001), and Varadarajan (1996:3-6), as these authors provide valuable additional advice that have not been incorporated here.

The rest of this document is structured as follows: The first section provides an overview of the structure of an academic journal article. This is followed by a detailed discussion of each of the major sections in an academic article, namely the title, abstract, keywords, introduction, literature review, methodology, results and the final discussion section. The document concludes with brief remarks on writing the various drafts leading to a final article.

## **2 THE STRUCTURE OF AN ACADEMIC JOURNAL ARTICLE**

The success or failure of an academic article is determined long before the first word is written or the first letters are typed. It all begins with the initial conceptualisation and design of a study. This is confirmed by Summers (2001:405-406) who lists four main reasons why articles are rejected by leading academic journals:

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**Michael Rajnik**



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