



Editorial

# Navigating the waters of academic publishing: Insights from a graduate writing course

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**Abstract:** Editor-in-Chief Andres G. Marrugo discusses the complexities of academic publishing and the crucial role of broad-based learning in a graduate course on scientific writing. The editorial highlights the need for effective communication and comprehension of publishing models to prepare emerging researchers for the academic world.

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This semester, I taught a graduate course on Scientific Article Writing with a mix of master's and doctoral students. All students were eager to learn, yet the doctoral students showed notable anxiety, a contrast to the relaxed attitude of the master's students, possibly due to the publication requirement for their degree. Writing is something that most of us struggle with, but there are many ways and modern tools to improve and become more proficient.

I have written before about how AI Large Language Models (LLMs), like ChatGPT, are becoming key tools in academic writing [1]. Writing effectively involves thoughtful planning and message clarity. LLMs can then assist in refining your work. In my course, I demonstrated this with a draft of a paper, showing how LLMs can aid in transforming a rough outline into a decent version. However, human editing is still crucial for the final product.

The ethical use of LLMs in academic writing is an evolving discussion within the community [2]. There are propositions for LLMs to undertake roles like peer reviewing for manuscript guideline compliance [3]. However, human expertise remains vital for assessing academic quality. Automating certain peer review aspects could be beneficial, but the future of these technologies in academia remains to be seen.

Returning to the graduate course, a notable observation was the students' limited grasp of academic publishing intricacies. Specifically, many were unclear about why some journals require payment for publication while others do not, and the distinction between subscription-based journals and open-access journals with article processing charges. It appears that navigating these waters of academic publishing is not a well-covered topic by many advisors. This lack of guidance raises the question of whether we are adequately equipping our PhD students to become independent researchers.

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Throughout the course, students were tasked with developing a paper for submission by its conclusion. A critical point I emphasized repeatedly was the importance of broad reading for researchers. I observed that many students concentrated solely on the narrow topics assigned by their supervisors. This limited focus often leads to repeated mistakes common in their specific fields. More concerning is their lack of awareness of good writing practices, which are frequently underrepresented in specialized research areas. This narrow focus can hinder their development as well-rounded researchers and writers.

In closing, I want to highlight two essential resources for planning and writing. Firstly, it's crucial to consider your message and audience before starting to write. For insights on effective communication, Jean-Luc Doumont's *Trees, maps, and theorems*[4] is an excellent guide. This resource offers valuable strategies for conveying your ideas clearly and effectively. Secondly, for practical guidance in scientific writing, I recommend Chris Mack's *How to Write a Good Scientific Paper* [5]. Available online through SPIE, this book is my preferred reference for reliable advice on various aspects of scientific article writing.

I conclude by thanking all contributors to our journal in 2023. With our recent Scopus indexing, submissions have increased, but we remain committed to maintaining TESEA's quality standards. We look forward to sharing exciting updates and special issues for 2024.

Andres G. Marrugo  
Editor, *TESEA*

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