



# What to remember and consider when you submit your PhD thesis and papers to scientific journals

When you submit a paper or a PhD thesis, you will typically be confronted with several issues related to the responsible conduct of research, such as open access requirements, data management plans, authorship statements, documentation of ethical and legal permissions, conflicts of interest, etc. It is not always easy to navigate these issues. Below you find a checklist of things to remember and consider when you submit papers to scientific journals, and when you submit your PhD thesis. The list covers the most general RCR aspects of submission, but there might be RCR-issues not covered in the list. We hope you will find it helpful.

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## 1. The right journal

When looking for the right journal consider the following: What is the scientific scope of the journal? How does your work fit into the scientific scope of the journal?

- If it does not fit, find another journal.
- If in doubt, you may try to write and ask the editor.

Is the journal trustworthy? Watch out for predatory journals!

- If you are in doubt, ask yourself some of the following questions: Does the journal publish research that you would read yourself? Which organization publishes the journal? Are prices transparent? Do you know/have you heard of any of the editorial board members? If still in doubt, see more at:

[thinkchecksubmit.org](http://thinkchecksubmit.org)

## 2. Issues of plagiarism and self-plagiarism

Plagiarism, if grossly negligent or done deliberately, is *research misconduct* and self-plagiarism is *questionable research practice*. It is advisable to stay clear of both. Consider the following:

### General considerations

- If you copy text from others, be sure to quote the originals! Copied text should always appear in quotation marks.
- If you paraphrase, be sure to make clear references to the originals!
- Plagiarism does not only concern text, but also e.g. images, figures and tables. If you use an image/figure/table that is not of your own creation, be sure to write explicitly that you have copied from (...) with a clear reference to the original!
- If you re-cycle text from your other papers, or your PhD/master thesis, be sure to quote and refer to your own work. Re-cycling, in general, is not advised. However, in concise parts of the thesis where precision is pertinent, such as methods & materials descriptions and data intensive results sections it is acceptable to duplicate text, as long as there are clear and explicit references to the originals.

- If you paraphrase yourself, be sure to make clear references to yourself.
- If you re-use an image/figure/table that you have published elsewhere be sure to write explicitly that you have copied from (...) with a clear reference to the original!
- See more in [the Danish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#).

*Note. These are tips as for how to stay clear of plagiarism and self-plagiarism. But staying clear of plagiarism and self-plagiarism is not sufficient for scientific quality. In PhD theses based on articles, it is necessary that the PhD student writes the synopsis of the thesis in the PhD students own words. This is particularly important in parts of the synopsis that are rich on text such as the abstract, introduction/background, discussion and conclusion/perspective. It is not possible for the assessment committee to specifically evaluate the PhD student's independent contribution to co-authored articles, so if long text paragraphs in the synopsis have been copied/paraphrased from co-authored articles, the assessment committee is not able to evaluate the PhD student's skills and competences.*

### Considerations specific to journal submission

Papers are often desk-rejected by the editors because of formalities. Be sure to follow the 'instructions to authors' of the journal in regards to:

- Manuscript formatting
- Citation and referencing style
- Format and details about figures, tables and statistics

### Considerations specific to submission of your PhD thesis

- Make sure that quotes are easily seen as quotes, and that you quote in a consistent manner throughout your thesis.
- Pick a referencing style that is common for your scientific field and apply it consistently throughout your thesis.



## 3. Open Access Issues

Does your funding source require the use of Open Access? Fully or partially publicly funded research (and research funded by some private funds, e.g. the Carlsberg Foundation), must be made freely available to everybody via Open Access insofar the journal allows it. Open Access is often in your own interest too. It makes it easier for others to access your work.

See [Denmark's National Strategy for Open Access](#)

However, open access may sometimes violate copyrights. Therefore, consider the following:

### General considerations

- If you reuse an image (a figure for instance) from a published paper it will very often violate copyrights even if it stems from your own published papers. Often, however, journals allow such reuse if you ask for permission.

### Considerations specific to journal submission

What is the journal's policy on pre-print and post-print? And does it impose an embargo?

- *Pre-print* usually means a version of your paper prior to peer review. But there may be differences from journal to journal, so check your journal for the right definition.
- *Post-print* usually means a version of your paper after peer reviewed, but

not the publisher's version. There may be differences from journal to journal, so check your journal for the right definition.

- *Embargo* is usually the time from publication until the journal allows you to share publicly a post-print version of your paper.
- You can check most journals policies on pre-print, post-print, and embargo on [sherpa.ac.uk](http://sherpa.ac.uk).
- What are the journal's policies for reusing single diagrams or pictures, for future scholarly purposes?

#### Considerations specific to submission of your PhD thesis

- If parts of your thesis have been published, or is under peer review, are there potential conflicts between the policy of the journal and the requirement of your PhD thesis being publicly available? If in doubt, ask your supervisor.

## 4. Authorship Issues

According to [the Vancouver Recommendations](#) everyone contributing substantially to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work should be given the opportunity to fulfill further three conditions listed and thereby be honored with authorship.

#### General considerations

- Have you added ALL authors, and ONLY persons who qualify as authors, to the byline of your paper? Can you describe the contribution of each author and why it qualifies to authorship? You might find help at [CRedit](#).
- Do you acknowledge scholars who have contributed to your paper/thesis, but who do not qualify as authors? If so, did you ask for their permission to be acknowledged in the paper?

#### Considerations specific to submission of your PhD thesis

- If you plan papers to be part of your PhD thesis, consider the following:
- If you have co-authors, have you collected your co-authors' signatures on a co-authors statement? Find the statement [here](#).
- Are there PhD students other than yourself among your co-authors who will include the paper in their PhD thesis? If so, you should synchronize your estimations of the size of each authors' contribution!

## 5. Conflicts of interest

Often journals require you to declare your conflicts of interest, and according to the [Danish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#) you should disclose any conflict of interest. If you have financial conflicts of interest it is mandatory and in accordance with the Code to disclose it.

#### General considerations

- Is any of your work funded by companies, institutions, or organizations that could be thought to have a financial interest in the results? If so, declare it!
- Do you, your close family or friends, hold assets, the value of which may be affected by the result of your study? If so, declare it!

- Are you affiliated with or do you hold a partnership with companies, institutions, or organizations that could be thought to have a financial interest in the results of your study being in one way rather than another? If so, declare it!

If still in doubt, see the specific guidance of the journal, or write and ask the editor of the journal.

## 6. Materials, Data and Code Management

### Materials Management

Journals may ask for a materials availability statement, which provides transparent disclosure about availability of newly created materials (biological or physical materials, notes, interviews, texts and literature, recordings, etc.) including details on how materials can be accessed and describing any restriction on access. Such materials (data, materials, software, protocols) need to have a unique and unambiguous identification which typically means that you need to provide a unique persistent identifier or URL.

- Have you deposited newly created resource materials in community-recognized public or restricted repositories?
- Does your manuscript include a dedicated “materials availability statement” providing transparent disclosure about availability of newly created materials including details on how materials can be accessed and describing any restriction on access?

If you work with lab animals or model organisms, you should adhere to the ARRIVE guidelines (<https://arrive-guidelines.org>) or GMOD project guidelines (Generic Model Organism Database, [http://gmod.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://gmod.org/wiki/Main_Page)). For permissions, see the Permissions section.

- Have you included accessibility requirements as above for all living materials? Include species, strain, sex, age, genetic modification status. Give accession number in repository or supplier name, catalogue number, clone number, or RRID if available.

If you work with human research participants, you should follow the guidelines at [KU research portal](#). Recommendations about case reports are provided by CARE (Case Report Guidelines, <https://www.care-statement.org/>). Where relevant, other information such as inclusion criteria and other information about the participants should be included, alongside specification of whether characteristics are self-declared or assigned.

- If collected, remember to provide description of relevant demographic variables of the population studied, such as age, sex, gender and ethnicity. Describe the methods used to assign these variables and ensure correct use of the appropriate population classifiers, avoiding the use of terminology that might stigmatize participants. See Permissions section for requirements related to identifying information and ethics approval.

### Data Management

Journals apply their own policy about the level of data sharing required as a condition to publication. For the biosciences, it is recommended to adopt the FAIR Data Principles (<https://fairsharing.org/>). As a minimum, you should have a dedicated "data availability statement", including persistent identifiers and other modes of access to the datasets when

possible, and licensing information where available.

- Have you indicated whether newly created datasets are available, including specific protocols for access or restriction on access?
- If data are publicly available, a persistent identifier (accession number in repository, or DOI) or where relevant, a URL must be provided in the publication.
- When publicly available data are reused, a persistent identifier (accession number in repository, or DOI or citation) should be provided. A formal citation should be included in the reference list when a publicly available dataset is re-used, to provide due credit and attribution to data generators. Citations to previous articles and direct citations to datasets are encouraged.

If you have questions about data management, you may ask them at: [datamanagement@ku.dk](mailto:datamanagement@ku.dk)

## Code Management

Journals also apply their own policy about the level of code sharing. As a minimum, it is recommended to make a dedicated "Code Availability statement" that provides transparent disclosure about the availability of newly generated custom computer code (or the software or mathematical algorithm). For all such newly generated code that is essential for replicating the main findings of the study, you should indicate whether the code, software, or algorithm is available. If code is publicly available, a persistent identifier (accession number in repository, or DOI, or citation) or where relevant, a URL must be provided in the article at publication. For the purpose of reproducibility, best practice recommends that a version of the code verified to be executable be referenced in the article. You are encouraged to manage subsequent code versions and to use a license approved by the open source initiative.

- Have you indicated whether newly created code is available, including a persistent identifier (accession number in repository, or DOI) or where relevant, a URL exists?
- Have you checked that the code referenced is readily executable by reviewers?
- Full details about how the code can be accessed and any restrictions must be described in the Code Availability statement.
- Have you checked further information on KUnet: [Disclosure and sharing of research data - KUnet](#)

For newly developed software, you should check the following<sup>1</sup>:

- Have I assigned an appropriate license to my software? Have I described my software properly, using an appropriate metadata format, and included this metadata file with my software? Have I given my software a clear version number? Have I determined the authors to be credited for this release of my software, and included this in my metadata file? Have I procured a persistent identifier for this release of my software? Have I added my recommended citation to the documentation for my software?

## 7. Design

An increasing number of publications support or require pre-registration, which means that authors state and register how key aspects of study design (including the research question, primary outcome to be measured and the statistical analysis plan) were prepared before data

<sup>1</sup> <https://zenodo.org/record/3482769>

collection began.

- If you have a preregistered study protocol, provide the DOI.
- If you have a step-by-step laboratory protocol, remember to provide DOI or other citation details.
- Remember to provide statistics information relevant to study design in Methods or Figure legends. For in vivo studies, give details of sample size determination; method of randomization; description of any blinding; inclusion or exclusion criteria.

## 8. Permissions

Journals may require you to document the relevant legal and ethical permissions of your study. You may also be required to document relevant legal and ethical permissions in your PhD thesis. You should therefore be aware of the legal and ethical requirements to your study, and you should know how to document and store the granted permissions.

### General considerations

Does your study involve clinical research?

- Journals often require a file number referring to the registration of the [Regional/National Committee on Health Research Ethics](#)' permission of your research.
- It is increasingly required that clinical trials are registered in international databases like [clinicaltrials.gov](#).

Does your study involve animal testing?

- Journals may require documentation of [The Animal Experiments Inspectorate](#)'s permission of your study.

Does your study involve dual-use?

- When material that could be harmful outside a laboratory context is used, the manuscript should describe appropriate biosafety and containment procedures. If your work is subject to consideration as dual-use research, remember to describe authority-granting approval and provide reference number.

Does your study involve personal data?

- If so, it should be approved by [the Faculty Secretariat](#). Journals may have requirements of documentation.

Does your study require permission from the institutional review board?

- Especially, but not exclusively, this is encouraged in regards to research including surveys and interviews. Journals may require that you have obtained permissions from [the Research Ethics Committee of Science and Health, Copenhagen University](#).

## 9. Other issues

Considerations specific to submission of your PhD thesis

- Have you discussed with your supervisor who to nominate as members of your assessment committee for your PhD thesis? See more at your [Graduate School](#) and [here](#).
- Did you consider and have you talked to your supervisor and other partners about your work responsibilities in regards to publication of articles after your PhD project? For example, if you receive an 'accepted with minor revision' feedback from a journal you submitted a paper to while you were still a PhD student. Who shall revise and re-submit the paper?

### **General considerations**

- Make sure your English is correct (linguistically fluent etc.) in your papers and your thesis.
- If you intend to apply for a patent on an invention, do not publish or present your work publicly before you have filed an application! See more at [dkpto.dk](#)
- Do you consider your work to be a piece of responsibly conducted research? If not, do not submit it!