

## Writing for Publication: Engaging Your Audience

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**ABSTRACT:** Over the past two decades, learning analytics has become an established field of research and practice, with a significant increase in the number of academic publications and related results in freely available web search engines. However, professional writing, to either an academic or general audience, can become an overwhelming task, particularly in an interdisciplinary field at the intersection of education, computer science, psychology, and other fields. In this participatory workshop, we invite postgraduate students and early to mid-career researchers to explore the differences among different publication venues in the field, and participate in practical exercises to strengthen their academic writing skills. Through this workshop, we expect to enhance the effectiveness of scientific communications

on learning analytics, thereby expanding impact and increase understanding and use of learning analytics.

**Keywords:** learning analytics, professional writing, science communication

## 1 WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

Rigour is the foundation for high quality work that leads to positive impact (knight, Wise & Ochoa, 2019). However, quality research alone may not guarantee publication. Effective communication is crucial in order to engage the audience, particularly for the sustainable impact of scientific research and practice (Iyengar & Massey, 2019). For example, recent calls emphasise the need for meaningful engagement between scientists and the public to improve decision making around public well-being and policy issues (Rose, Markowitz, & Brossard, 2020). Advances in technology have also opened the door to a variety of new options to communicating science (Bubela, et al., 2009), from the ease of developing Blogs (Colson, 2011; Kouper, 2010) to Twitter chats (Young, Tully, Dalrymple, 2017). However, not all published works gain the same visibility. To those new to academia, the process of writing for publication (for academic or general audiences) can appear obscure. To those experienced in academia, writing for publication can still be frustrating at times. Moreover, writing for an interdisciplinary audience raises its own unique challenges. The Society for Learning Analytics Research (SoLAR) has a strategic goal to expand impact and increase understanding and use of learning analytics (<https://www.solaresearch.org/about/>). In response to this goal, the proposed workshop aims to provide training with regard to writing for publication on learning analytics. Some of the questions that the workshop seeks to address include: How to choose the right venue for publication? How to write for academic and public audiences? How to engage your audience? What will reviewers and editors look for? How to make your work reach the right audience? To answer these questions, the workshop will engage participants in exploring publication opportunities in learning analytics and use SoLAR's flagship publications, including Journal of Learning Analytics (<https://www.solaresearch.org/publications/journal/>), The International Learning Analytics and Knowledge Conference (<https://www.solaresearch.org/publications/conference-proceedings/>), and NEXUS (<https://www.solaresearch.org/publications/nexus/>), to discuss different venues for publication.

## 2 WORKSHOP ORGANISATION

### 2.1 Schedule and Activities

The workshop is structured to cover four main topics:

1. Publication venue
2. Audience
3. Working with reviewers and/or editors
4. Digital footprint

Starting with Topic 1, we will explore the differences between writing for academic and general audiences and what to consider when choosing a place to publish work. In Topic 2, we will explore ways to make writing readable, engaging, and applicable to different audiences. We will also cover practical considerations when working in a group. In Topic 3, we will examine quality criteria of publication, specifically in the context of learning analytics, e.g., rigor of research, innovation, methodology, reporting, and contribution. This topic will also include ways to communicate with reviewers and editors, e.g., writing rebuttals and pitching ideas. Finally, Topic 4 serves to help participants better promote and disseminate their work by considering keywords, choice of title, search engine optimization (SEO), and social media.

For each of these topics, we will include information from both the perspectives of writing for an academic audience and writing for the general public. For example, for publication venue, we will discuss what to consider when selecting a journal or conference publication, and introduce the wide variety of options for writing for a larger audience (e.g., *The Conversation*, which serves both academic and general audiences), writing Blogs (e.g., NEXUS), and writing for local newspapers. In the audience section, we will discuss how to write for your audience, and key differences in what scientists versus general readers look for (e.g., ‘news you can use’ spin on new research). In the third section, we will discuss how to benefit from the peer review process for academic publication, and how to effectively work to pitch an article to an editor of a mainstream publication and build rapport. Finally, in our fourth and final section we will discuss how to build effective digital footprint to promote written works, whether for academic or general publications. This will include discussion of topics such as AltMetrics (Bornmann, 2014), search engine optimisation (SEO), and creating effective titles or headlines.

The workshop will last for half a day and each of the topics will take up 30 to 60 minutes. Sessions will be run by workshop organisers and additional experts will be invited for mini keynotes. We will use Zoom to facilitate the workshop. Participants will be expected to join interactive activities, such as practice writing and discussion in groups.

## 2.2 Participants

The targeted participants are postgraduate students and early to mid-career researchers, though anyone interested in the topic will be welcome. Information and resources related to the workshop will be made available on the SoLAR website as part of the society’s open resources (<https://www.solaresearch.org/core/>). We expect a maximum of 40 participants.

## 2.3 Outcomes

The workshop will equip participants with knowledge and best practices to effectively communicate scientific work in writing. It will help build an understanding of the publication process and strategies to captivate the audience’s attention. These should result in an improved writing practice and better reach of scientific work in the learning analytics community.

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