



Australian  
National  
University

# ACUR workshop: Abstract writing

ANU Academic Skills

# Coverage

- Getting started
- Abstract purpose
- Analysis of abstract structures
- What information to include and what level of detail?
- Targeting your audience (tone, language, generate interest)
- Writing and editing your abstract

# Getting started

- If for a conference – is there a theme?
- Any format requirements?
- Word limit?
- Look at past abstracts (conference proceedings or related journals)

# ACUR abstract guidelines

- A clear statement of the research question, problem, or issue being investigated
- Relevant background information needed to understand the importance of the research question or aim
- A clear statement of research methodology
- A summary of your key findings and an indication of the findings' significance
- Please ensure that your abstract is written clearly and concisely, and in a way that would be understandable to a cross-disciplinary audience.

Orthography development for Darma  
(The case that wasn't)

Christina M. Willis Oko

As the discipline of language documentation and description evolves, so do the expectations placed on researchers. Current trends emphasize collaborative efforts that prioritize tangible contributions to the community, such as a pedagogical grammar, dictionary, or collection of texts. Some argue that for unwritten languages orthography development is imperative so that materials prepared by the researcher (perhaps in collaboration with the community) are accessible to speakers. In light of the current discussions of methodology and ethical issues related to endeavors to document and describe the world's languages, this paper explores the challenges faced by a single researcher (the author) working on a single language (Darma) within a multilingual setting (in India). This project emphasizes ethnographic and discourse-centered research methodologies which reveal language ideologies that are discussed here to demonstrate that while orthography development is a reasonable objective in many cases, one must be sensitive to a variety of interconnecting issues including history, social relationships, language ideology, and local politics associated with writing and education. While orthography development has not been a viable option in the *Darma Documentation and Description Project*, it is nevertheless a matter that needs to be addressed for the benefit of the community as well as ongoing discussions of methodology and best practices in linguistic and anthropological research.

What do the  
ACUR abstract  
guidelines tell  
you about  
purpose of the  
abstract?

Abstracts are a concise **summary**/outline of your study and explain **why** your findings/arguments are meaningful...

⇒ Helps readers to ascertain the paper's **purpose** and **significance**



# Tip: have a clear message

- Find a clear narrative for your paper
- Explain it to a non-expert
- Would it be worth an editor's or conference organiser's time?
- What is the one thing the reader should take from your paper?

# Analysis of abstract structures

- Read the sample abstracts:
  - What kinds of information do they provide?
  - What level of detail?
  - What gets your attention as a reader?
  - What sorts of structures did they use?



## Published sample (Hae Yeon Choo 2013)

Theories of citizenship have largely focused on the provision of rights by law and policy measures, as if rights are universally beneficial and cost-free and the invitations of rights will be accepted once offered. I challenge this assumption and highlight the need to empirically address how people negotiate with the benefit and cost of claiming rights. Based on ethnographic research in South Korea, this article delves into the everyday lives of migrant women in two feminized sectors of migration – cross-border marriage and sexual commerce – to situate the act of claiming rights in relation to the gendered pursuit of moral respect. I show that feminist groups in South Korea relied on the discourse of victimization and trafficking in pressuring the South Korean state to account for the human rights of migrant wives and migrant hostesses, while reinforcing the moral hierarchy that renders problematic migrant women's work and intimate relationships. I argue that the distinctive material and moral costs that accompanied human-rights-based provisions compelled migrant wives and hostesses to pursue divergent paths in seeking alternate bases to citizenship that would support their inclusion as moral equals.

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What is known and identifies problem

Study contribution and argument

How/methodology – what was done

Findings/arguments

# Recent progress towards achieving an international plastics convention

NICHOLAS BLOOD

## Abstract

This paper identifies that plastic is not only a severe environmental problem, but also a global existential risk that needs greater prioritising in global policy. While issues of macro-scale pollution are increasingly well-known, the role of plastic in other areas such as micro-scale contamination, and the strain plastic production places on global resource limits, enjoys less attention. Focusing on recent data and new or emerging developments, I examine the extent to which a binding international convention on plastics can be considered critical in addressing the many problems caused by plastic and plastic packaging. I argue for the need to understand the problems of plastic holistically and solve them in the same way; by recognising that treaties and conventions are just one critical step among others. Business-led innovations towards circular economies and other emergent, self-organising movements are of equal importance. These other developments represent both near-term solutions, achievable before a convention will be realised, and the precursory steps necessary for creating a binding, international plastics convention.

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Statement of argument and significance

What is known and gap

How

Research focus/question

Argument

Why research matters for real world policy outcomes

# Crafting your abstract: two models

- The following models are not abstracts 'formulas' – you might use the same info in a different order – but form the basis of the info you need to convey.
- Select the one that best suits the nature of your research project

# Brown's 8 Questions

1. Who are the intended readers? (list 3 by name)
2. What did you do?
3. Why did you do it?
4. What happened?
5. What do the results mean in theory?
6. What do the results mean in practice?
7. What is the key benefit for readers?
8. What remains unresolved?

Writing an Abstract – Brown's 8 Questions, from Murray, Rowena. *Writing for Academic Journals* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed), 126-132. Berkshire: Open University Press (McGraw Hill): 2009.

# Narrative model

- What is the problem/issue under investigation?
- Why is it important?
- What did you do to investigate it?
- What did you find?
- What are the implications of this?

Every part of the abstract should contribute to the purpose...(STEM)

Why you tested the hypothesis



What you did to test it



What you found



Why it is meaningful



Ask yourself: 'How can I convey to...readers what is innovative, different, important or exciting about the research presented in my paper?' (Craswell and Poore 2012)

# Common issues

- Too much summary
- Too much detail
- Unclear contribution / argument / message
- No flow – disconnected

# Good Abstracts:

- Introduce the topic briefly
- Indicate what is being analysed and how
- Outline the key finding / message or argument of the paper
- Are targeted to the specific audience (tone, language, generate interest)

# Conference/talk abstracts

- What might be different about writing an abstract for a student research conference?
  - Need to appeal to a broad audience – use plain language
  - Try not to use jargon
  - No abbreviations
  - Tell your audience what you will talk about, and why it is interesting for them
  - Have an interesting title!
  - Check if there is a 'theme' for the conference you need to address in your abstract, you might want to weave this in
  - Also check word limit
  - Usually no references, or weave them into the text.

# 2019 ANU SRC Abstracts

Pick two abstracts from the 2019 Conference program to compare and contrast.

Does each student make clear:

- What the problem/issue under investigation is?
- Why is it important?
- What the student did to investigate it? (research methodology)
- What was found?
- What the implications of their findings are?

Are the abstracts written:

- Clearly? Are the ideas explained in a clear way using language that is understandable to a general university audience?
- In a structured way? Are the ideas logically organised? Do the sentences flow and are they connected?
- Concisely and meet the word limit?

Emily (Oral Presentation)

Bachelor of Philosophy (Honours) ANU College of Health and Medicine

## STAC3 : HOW DOES IT STAC UP IN MUSCLE RESEARCH?

Muscle contraction in response to input from the brain is mediated by several interacting proteins. One protein within the outer membrane of a muscle cell (Cav1.1) responds to a signal generated by the brain, and transmits it to a second protein (RyR1), in the membrane of an internal compartment. RyR1 then mediates the flow of calcium ions into the cell's interior, triggering muscle contraction. However, it is unclear how Cav1.1 communicates with RyR1. One potential protein thought to bridge Cav1.1 and RyR1 - STAC3 - has been repeatedly implicated in muscle contraction in response to nerve input and is mutated in several debilitating muscular disorders. Previous results have demonstrated an interaction with Cav1.1, and a corresponding interaction with RyR1 was recently characterised by measuring the activity of RyR1 in the presence and absence of STAC3. Using the same method of measuring RyR1 activity, I demonstrated this association was attenuated when a mutation associated with muscle disorders was introduced into STAC3. In addition to the application of these traditional neuroscience techniques (recording RyR1 activity), exploiting protein biochemistry enabled the refinement of our understanding of the STAC3-Cav1.1 interaction by demonstrating the specific region of Cav1.1 to which STAC3 localises. These results situate STAC3 as a potential 'missing link' between skeletal muscles and the nervous system, and inform our understanding of the molecular mechanism of muscle contraction in response to neural input.

Rose (Poster)

Bachelor of Philosophy (Science) ANU College of Science

## THE ROLE OF NODULATION GENE REGULATING FLAVONOIDS IN THE NODULATION SUCCESS OF MEDICAGO TRUNCATULA

Leguminous plants form a symbiosis with nitrogen fixing bacteria through the development of specialised root organs known as nodules. The process of nodulation is initiated by the synthesis and exudation of phenylpropanoid compounds called flavonoids into the surrounding soil, wherein they are uptaken by compatible rhizobia. It is presently not known whether the addition of Nod gene regulating flavonoids influences the success of the symbiosis. In using nodule numbers as a proxy of nodulation success, we monitored the numbers and subsequent weights of nodules produced by *Medicago truncatula* plants when treated with six known Nod gene regulating flavonoid-rhizobia solutions. Further, the concentrations of the same six Nod gene regulating flavonoids within root samples of over 100 ecotypes of *M. truncatula* were quantified through mass spectrometry analysis and subsequently compared with the numbers of nodules produced by each ecotype. While the Nod gene inducer isoliquiritigenin appeared to improve nodulation success, we found no consistent relationship between Nod gene regulating flavonoids and nodule numbers. Similarly, mass spectrometry analysis revealed no correlation between the root concentration of Nod gene regulating flavonoids and nodule numbers. Our results suggest that Nod gene regulating flavonoids likely influence the nodule numbers of *Medicago truncatula* in a more complex way than anticipated, indicating the possibility that flavonoids play a multitude of roles in plant physiology. Flavonoid profiles are likely to vary both temporally and spatially throughout the nodulation process, and a deeper understanding of the legume-rhizobia symbiosis may prove vital in helping to meet future agricultural demands.

Zain (Honours Presentation)

Bachelor of Science (Advanced) College of Science

## 'QUANTUM SUPREMACY' : EQUIPPING OUR NEW QUANTUM OVERLORDS

Quantum computing exploits the unique properties of quantum mechanics to process information in ways inaccessible to normal computers. While great strides have been made in constructing small-scale quantum computers, the goal of quantum supremacy - outperforming a normal computer for a specific task - is yet to be achieved. One such task is quantum simulation - the digital simulation of complex quantum systems. In my project, I am studying how such a task can be implemented on a quantum computer built out of trapped ions that uses ultrafast lasers to perform computation. In preliminary research, I have quantified the number of operations required to implement a particular quantum simulation algorithm on a one-dimensional quantum computer and found that theoretically it can be implemented well enough to achieve quantum supremacy with current laser technologies. In the remainder of this project, I will study two-dimensional geometries of trapped ions which promises to significantly reduce the number of operations required to implement the considered simulation algorithm, making it easier to implement and achieve the goal of quantum supremacy.



Shuyi (Poster)

ANU College of Business and Economics

## CORPORATE GOVERNANCE IN FAMILY-CONTROLLED PUBLIC COMPANIES: A COMPARISON ACROSS ASIAN COUNTRIES

The family-controlled public company is an important form of corporate organisation and is deeply rooted in the culture, legislation and economy of the country where it is located. Although family-controlled public firms are flourishing within Asia, the corporate governance mechanisms and effectiveness of these firms remain unclear. This paper compares the differences of family firms' governance between Asia and the western world, and analyses the internal causes and backgrounds behind them. By considering series of institution factors embedded in Asian countries, this paper argues that family firms in Asia generally lack accountability and transparency compared with firms that adopted the Anglo Saxon model in the west, which is inseparable with the failure of legal systems and market-supporting institutions. However, the Confucian culture (i.e. 'face' saving, reputational concern and respect for the elderly) contributes to strong family ties, thrift and loyalty in Asian family firms, and they tend to cultivate political connections and personal networks (e.g. guanxi) to accumulate capital and reduce external uncertainty. This paper advocates combining managerial advantages inherent in western systems with agency advantages inherent in Asian systems for modern corporations, and calls for more research to understand unique Asian family firms' governance mechanism.

Monty (Oral Presentation)

Bachelor of Laws (Honours)/Bachelor of Politics, Philosophy and Economics ANU  
College of Arts and Social Sciences/ANU College of Law

## ENERGY LAW: REGULATING PERSONAL DATA AS A RESOURCE

By understanding personal data as a resource like oil, we can see that its history closely correlates with that of fossil fuels. Here a resource is discovered, captured, and profited substantially from. In practice the law that governs this capture in both cases is the rule of capture. If you capture it, you may exercise property rights over it. Following this, Governments face a raft of problems, including challenges to their sovereign rights, privacy, and anticompetitive practices by the easily monopolized industries. Just as oil companies undermine the sovereignty of nations by taking their resources and hurt their economic environment by anticompetitive practices, the acquisition of personal data undermines the sovereign privacy of citizens and creates monopolistic industries which control its use. This paper argues that the similarities between the two industries mean that governments should regulate personal data in the same way they do oil; by creating regulatory certainty that maximises the social good of an industry whilst minimizing the harm it can cause. It goes on to suggest that by recognising personal data as a national resource and adapting lessons from energy law, Governments can proactively reduce the harms of and promote the data collection industry. It establishes this conclusion by conducting a substantive literature review of the history of energy law and the current implementation of personal data regulation in developed jurisdictions.

Gam (Oral Presentation)

Master of International and Development Economics College of Asia and the Pacific

## IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND AIR POLLUTION ON THE TOURISM INDUSTRY: EVIDENCE FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA

This paper examines the effects of climate change (greenhouse gas emissions) and air pollution (methane and nitrous oxide emissions) on the tourism industry in Southeast Asian (SEA) countries, using dynamic panel data for the period 1998-2012. Ten SEA countries have been chosen as the main concern of this research. The reason is that the tourism industry is one of the crucial sectors contributing towards long-term development in this region whilst climatic factor adaptation is considered a prerequisite for long-term economic growth. Hence, the impacts of climate change and air pollution on the tourism industry should be further investigated. However, little research has been conducted that includes environmental factors in the international tourism function in Southeast Asia. In this study, a two-stage least squares (2SLS) method is applied by adding an instrumental variable and lagged variables to solve for endogeneity. 2SLS estimation shows that air pollution has a negative effect on total tourist arrivals but there was not enough evidence to reach a conclusion about the impact of climate change. Surprisingly, nitrous oxide emission was the key driver which negatively and significantly affected tourist demand. This emission is largely caused by high levels of fossil fuel consumption and motor vehicle traffic. These findings suggest that governments may need to make critical policy decisions about whether to give up short-term economic growth to pursue long-term environmental improvement, with a view to enhancing the quality of tourist destinations in Southeast Asia in the future.

Eleanor (Oral Presentation)

Bachelor of Philosophy (Honours)/Diploma of Languages

College of Arts and Social Sciences

## GETTING UNDER THE SKIN: HOW HAS THE SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE OF SNAKES THROUGHOUT HISTORY LED TO THEIR CONTEMPORARY PERCEPTION AND TREATMENT?

The ambiguous nature of the snake bothers contemporary Australians, as it represents an 'other' and transgresses boundaries perceived as natural. Snakes slither unwelcomed into sacred spaces by physically entering homes and metaphorically rearing their ugly heads within cultural folklore. Due to everyday citizens' fear and lack of empathy, snakes are anthropomorphised as enemies within popular culture. Snakes have become conductive agents for humanity's wonderment at 'evil' and sites for enacting masculine domination over this symbolic 'other'. Interestingly, however, snakes have concurrently become objects of fascination demanding respect; commoditised when it suits imperialist, nationalistic aims. Snakes continue to writhe uncomfortably throughout modern social conundrums and lurk beyond colonial reach, creating immense theoretical possibilities. Its potential as a proxy for cultural attitudes towards other phenomena makes it useful for sociological analysis. It is imperative to 'get under the skin' of this villainised subject-being within a broader interdisciplinary human-animal studies framework. This paper undertakes a thematic genealogy of symbolic metanarratives about snakes, being barometric of wider societal forces. It locates causation for why these serpentine objects are significantly yet contradictorily constructed as liminal boundary entities. This recapitulatory project explains how we interact with them in the present. Despite Western efforts to subjugate it, the creature remains ambivalent to these impositions. Its perceived 'un-belonging' has consequences not only for conservation but also for how we see ourselves within Australian 'civilisation'. It is thus important to problematize reductive tropes surrounding the snake object and to instead use it to 'think with' when exploring cultural mores.

# Tips for writing your abstract

# Get your key message crystal clear

- Write down the key message of your work
- Example:
  - *...the rise of uncontested elections points to growing elite entrenchment in local politics (Lay et al. 2017, p. 428).*

# Titles

- Precise and accurate
- Informs the reader about the study
- Summarises the main idea of the study
- Identifies variables or issues (theoretical, methodological) under investigation
- Use key terms
- Keep it short

# Use words and phrases that:

- Summarise main themes and arguments/ or indicate what is known
  - 'Studies have focused on...'
  - 'A number of models exist..'
- Highlight the problem or gaps in knowledge
  - 'Few studies have examined...'
  - 'Despite these recent advances...'
  - 'The project addresses the problem/challenge of...'
- Indicate your research focus/aim/question
  - 'The study aims to...'
  - 'I investigate/critically examine...'



- How you carried out the research
  - 'Drawing on data from/ the case of.. '
  - 'X theories and methods are utilised to...'
- Highlight your key findings/arguments and indicate their significance
  - 'I argue that...'
  - 'My project extends the work of...'
  - 'These findings could be used to inform best practice...'

# Revising your abstract

- Take time to revise your abstract
- Peer review can be very useful
- Can take many drafts to get right
- Keep at it!

# Additional resources

Belcher, WL 2009, *Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success*, SAGE, Los Angeles.

Craswell, G & Poore, M 2012, *Writing for Academic Success*, 2nd edn. SAGE, London.

Murray, R 2013, *Writing for academic journals*, 3rd edn, Open University Press, Milton Keynes.

Phillips, D 2015, 'Editorial: Who gets published', *Comparative Education*, vol. 51, no. 3, pp. 303-304.

Thomson, P & Kamler, B 2013, *Writing for peer reviewed journals: strategies for getting published*, Routledge, London and New York.

# ANU Academic Skills

## Helping you to achieve academic success!



### Peer Writers

- Ask us a quick question
- 10-15 min drop-ins
- Face-to-face or via Zoom
- During semester, Mon-Fri  
11am to 1pm



### Writing Coaches

- Check you're on the right track
- 30 min booked appointments
- Face-to-face or via Zoom
- Written feedback also offered
- During semester, Mon - Fri  
10am to 4pm



### Learning Advisers

- Excel in your research writing
- 45 min booked appointments
- Face-to-face or via Zoom
- Written feedback also offered
- Throughout the year, Mon - Fri  
10am to 5pm