

## Discussion Meetings

Authors are invited to consider submitting papers to be read at a Discussion Meeting of the Royal Statistical Society. Colloquially known as "read papers", many of the major advances in statistics were first presented in this way. Discussion papers can be aimed at any of the three Series of the Journal, A, B or C. The review process for papers that are suitable for Series B is now different from that for the other series. Papers that are suitable for Series A or Series C will be considered individually upon submission, whereas for Series B we are trialling a system of regular submission deadlines: please see **The Process** for further information.

If you wish your manuscript to be considered at a Discussion Meeting, please select the Discussion Paper option at the beginning of the submission process in ScholarOne Manuscripts (<https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/jrss>)

Please indicate in a covering letter which series you consider to be most suitable for your paper. Please indicate also whether, in the event that the submission is not accepted for reading, you would like it to be considered for publication as a regular paper in the series you have selected.

### **What is a Discussion Meeting and what type of paper is suitable?**

One of the great traditions of the Society has been its Ordinary Meetings, which are now termed Discussion Meetings. At a Discussion Meeting a paper is presented in person by the authors in front of an open audience, who are invited to comment on the paper or topic. The paper and discussion are subsequently published in the Society's journal.

Papers for discussion may contain a significant advance in statistical methodology or may focus on a particular statistical debate or have some other wide relevance to the profession. In all cases the criteria for acceptance are the quality of the paper and the potential to attract discussion. Discussion papers should be written to draw in a large and varied audience and to stimulate people to attend the meeting and to contribute to the discussion in person or at least in writing. In general, papers for discussion might include the following:

1. Innovative new methodology;
2. Studies of applied statistical problems of sufficient general interest to warrant discussion and publication;
3. Major advances in applied probability;
4. Interesting and new applications of existing methodology;
5. Work concerned with the interface between statistics and other fields;
6. Work concerned with statistical education;

7. Expository papers, state of the art reviews and critical summaries of statistical material;
8. Critical studies of areas of economic, scientific or social interest in which statistical methods have an important role;
9. Issues of general interest to statisticians, especially if a wide variety of views is to be found.

This list is not exhaustive and is not intended to rule out other works.

Papers describing new methodology are usually subsequently published in Series B of the Journal, whereas those with a more applied, policy or societal focus are likely appear in Series A or C.

### **The process**

The review process is overseen by the Editor for Discussion Meeting Papers.

Paper submitted through the Discussion Meeting route will be quickly screened by the Discussion Meetings Committee (DMC) to assess whether the content is appropriate for discussion. Papers which are written for narrow specialist groups will not be accepted for reading, although they may be perfectly acceptable for publication as a regular article. The intention is that the screening process is completed quickly, normally within 3 weeks,

The review process for papers that pass the initial screen then depends upon the content of the paper and the series of the Journal that is most appropriate.

Papers which present significant new methodology and are aimed at, or seem suitable for, Series B, are passed to Research Section Committee for full review. Other discussable papers are passed to the most appropriate of the other sections of the Society, or can be handled by the DMC itself if a paper does not fall unambiguously within the remit of any one section. In all cases the appropriate section will consider the paper, will arrange referees for papers of interest, and will recommend acceptance, revision or rejection.

From Spring 2018, the Research Section Committee is trialling a new approach to the review process, with the aim of speeding up response times and bringing a more structured approach to the assessment of competing submissions. The intention is to provide a first answer to authors within four months of regular prescribed submission deadlines. In 2018 the submission deadlines are

- 1st June
- 1st September
- 25th November.

From 2019 the deadlines will be 1st January, 1st April, 1st July and 1st October.

There are no submission deadlines for papers that are aimed at Series A or C. These papers will be reviewed individually upon passing the initial screen.

### **The Discussion Meeting**

The programme for Discussion Meetings allows for one a month between September and June. Preprints are available either from the Society's web site or in paper or electronic form from the Editorial Office (usually two weeks or more before each meeting), or they can be picked up at the meeting.

The usual format of the meetings is that the authors summarise informally the main features of their paper in about 40 minutes, so that people attending the meeting who have not studied the paper in advance can follow its substance. Following the authors, the discussion is opened by two invited speakers who each have up to 10 minutes (or about 800 words in writing) to comment on the paper (which is called *proposing and seconding the vote of thanks*). Their role is not only to praise the authors for good work but also to ask them some searching questions about it.

Further shorter comments (up to five minutes or 400 words in writing) are then invited from the audience. If the two hours in total permit before the authors are given the opportunity to respond very briefly verbally (and at greater length in writing in the journal), the secretary for the meeting will read out any contributions that have been sent in from people who cannot be present. Contributions in writing (again, 400 words maximum) are welcome up to two weeks after the meeting.

Occasionally the format of meetings may be rather different. They may be longer and include several papers, or they may not include substantial papers at all but be focused on discussion of specific themes, introduced by two or three main speakers presenting differing points of view. Such discussion meetings will often be concerned with matters of public interest. The process for these types of meeting is similar to that for the single-paper meetings but the conduct of the meeting and subsequent publication may depend on the individual circumstances. For example, an article in Significance magazine might be an appropriate record rather than a report in the Journal.

Most Discussion Meetings are held in the early evening at the Society's premises. Occasionally, they are organised elsewhere, e.g. at a session of a major statistical conference in or outside the UK or to coincide with a particular statistical occasion. They are filmed and made available through YouTube after the meeting.