

Author Guidelines: Registered reports

FSI Synergy is happy to offer a registered reports track for submissions. This document provides a brief overview of the registered report format and the author guidelines for registered reports at *FSI Synergy*.

What are registered reports?

Registered reports are a form of journal article in which the study proposal is peer reviewed prior to the research being conducted. Accepted proposals are then registered on a trusted repository (either made public immediately or embargoed for a period of time). The format seeks to remove some of the pressure on authors to find traditionally “publishable” (e.g., statistically significant, surprising, etc) results because the decision to publish is independent of the results. With peer review occurring prior to the research, it also allows peer reviewers to improve the research methodology.

Further information on registered reports can be found in the following articles:

- Christopher D Chambers & Loukia Tzavella (2021) “The past, present and future of Registered Reports” *Nature Human Behaviour* ([link](#))
- Courtney K Soderberg et al (2021) “Initial evidence of research quality of registered reports compared with the standard publishing model” *Nature Human Behaviour* ([link](#))
- Jason M Chin et al (2020) “Forensic science needs registered reports” *Forensic Science International: Synergy* ([link](#))

Instructions for authors

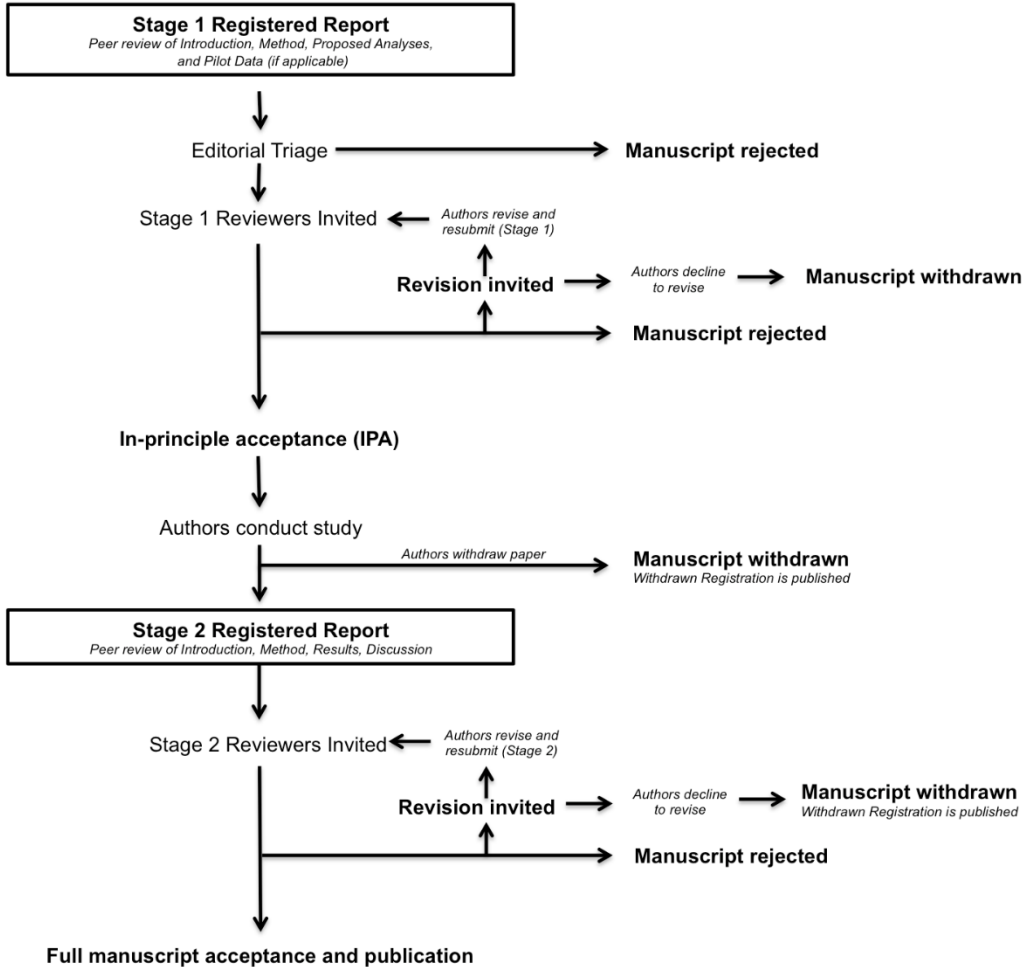
The cornerstone of the Registered Reports format is that a significant part of the manuscript will be assessed prior to data collection. Initial submissions will include a description of the key research question and background literature, hypotheses, experimental procedures, analysis pipeline, and pilot data (where applicable).

Initial submissions will be triaged by an editorial team for suitability. Those that pass triage will then be sent for in-depth peer review (Stage 1).

Stage 1 submissions are assessed primarily on the strength of the methodology. Other considerations are:

1. The importance of the research question (e.g., its potential effects on legal outcomes, its usefulness to practitioners).
2. The logic, rationale, and plausibility of the proposed hypotheses.
3. Whether the clarity and degree of methodological detail is sufficient to exactly replicate the proposed experimental procedures and analysis pipeline.
4. Whether the authors have pre-specified sufficient outcome-neutral tests for ensuring that the results obtained can test the stated hypotheses, including positive controls and quality checks.

Following review, the article will then be either rejected or accepted in principle for publication. Following in principle acceptance (IPA), the authors will then proceed to conduct the study, adhering exactly to the peer-reviewed procedures. When the study is complete the authors will submit their finalised manuscript for re-review (Stage 2) and will upload any relevant raw data, digital study materials, and laboratory log to a publicly accessible file-sharing service. Pending quality checks and a sensible interpretation of the findings, the manuscript will be published regardless of the results. This process is detailed in below flow chart:



Stage 1: Initial manuscript submission and review

Cover letter

Stage 1 submissions should include the manuscript (details below) and a brief cover letter. Please note that the editorial board will not agree to send manuscripts for in-depth review until a complete Stage 1 submission has been considered.

The Stage 1 cover letter should include:

- A brief scientific case for consideration. Replication studies are welcome in addition to novel studies.
- A statement confirming that all necessary support (e.g. funding, facilities) and approvals (e.g. ethics) are in place for the proposed research. Note that manuscripts will be generally considered only for studies that are able to commence immediately; however, authors with alternative plans are encouraged to contact the journal office for advice.
- An anticipated timeline for completing the study if the initial submission is accepted.
- A statement confirming that the authors agree to share their raw data, any digital study materials, and analysis code as appropriate (i.e., taking into account ethical and legal reasons it may not be possible to share these outputs).

A statement confirming that, following Stage 1 *in principle acceptance*, the authors agree to register their approved protocol on the Open Science Framework (<https://osf.io/>) or other recognised repository, either publicly or under private embargo until submission of the Stage 2 manuscript. Accepted protocols can be quickly and easily registered using a tailored mechanism for Registered Reports on the Open Science Framework: <https://osf.io/rr/>.

Manuscript preparation guidelines – Stage 1

Initial Stage 1 submissions should include the following sections:

- Introduction
 - A review of the relevant literature that motivates the research question and a full description of the experimental aims and hypotheses. Please note that following IPA, the Introduction section cannot be altered apart from correction of factual errors, typographic errors and altering of tense from future to past (see below).
- Methods
 - Full description of proposed sample characteristics, including criteria for data inclusion and exclusion (e.g. outlier extraction). Procedures for objectively defining exclusion criteria due to technical errors or for any other reasons must be specified, including details of how and under what conditions data would be replaced.
 - A description of experimental procedures in sufficient detail to allow another researcher to repeat the methodology exactly, without requiring further information. These procedures should be adhered to exactly in the subsequent experiments or any Stage 2 manuscript can be rejected.
 - Proposed analysis pipeline, including all preprocessing steps, and a precise description of all planned analyses, including appropriate correction for multiple comparisons. Any covariates or regressors must be stated. Where analysis decisions are contingent on the outcome of prior analyses, these contingencies must be specified and adhered to. Only pre-planned analyses can be reported in the main Results section of Stage 2 submissions. However, unplanned exploratory analyses will be allowable in a separate section of the Results (see below).

- Studies involving Neyman-Pearson inference must include a statistical power analysis. Estimated effect sizes should be justified with reference to the existing literature or theory.
- For studies involving analyses with Bayes factors, the predictions of the theory must be specified so that a Bayes factor can be calculated. Authors should indicate what distribution will be used to represent the predictions of the theory and how its parameters will be specified.
- Full descriptions must be provided of any outcome-neutral criteria that must be met for successful testing of the stated hypotheses. Such quality checks might include the absence of floor or ceiling effects in data distributions, positive controls, or other quality checks that are orthogonal to the experimental hypotheses.
- Timeline for completion of the study and proposed resubmission date if Stage 1 review is successful. Extensions to this deadline can be negotiated with the Registered Reports editor.
- Any description of prospective methods or analysis plans should be written in future tense.
- Pilot Data
 - Optional. Can be included to establish proof of concept, effect size estimations, or feasibility of proposed methods. Any pilot experiments will be published with the final version of the manuscript and will be clearly distinguished from data obtained for the pre-registered experiment(s).
- Secondary data analysis
 - The journal welcomes submissions proposing secondary analyses of existing data sets, provided authors can supply sufficient evidence (e.g. self-certification; letter from independent gatekeeper) to confirm that they have had no prior access to the data in question. For advice on the eligibility of specific scenarios, authors are welcome to contact the editorial office [jason.chin@sydney.edu.au]

Stage 1 outcomes

Following Stage 1 peer review, manuscripts will be rejected outright, offered the opportunity to revise, or accepted. Proposals that exceed the highest standards of importance and scientific rigour will be issued an *in principle acceptance* (IPA), indicating that the article will be published pending completion of the approved methods and analytic procedures, passing of all pre-specified quality checks, and a defensible interpretation of the results. Stage 1 protocols are not published by the journal following IPA. Instead, they are registered by the authors in a recognised repository (either publicly or under embargo until Stage 2) and then integrated into a single completed article following approval of the final Stage 2 manuscript.

Authors are reminded that any deviation from the stated experimental procedures, regardless of how minor it may seem to the authors, could lead to rejection of the manuscript at Stage 2. In cases where the pre-registered protocol is altered after IPA due to unforeseen circumstances (e.g. change of equipment or unanticipated technical error), **the authors must consult the editorial**

board immediately for advice, and prior to the completion of data collection. Minor changes to the protocol may be permitted per editorial discretion. In such cases, IPA would be preserved and the deviation reported in the Stage 2 submission. If the authors wish to alter the experimental procedures more substantially following IPA but still wish to publish their article as a Registered Report then the manuscript must be withdrawn and resubmitted as a new Stage 1 submission. Note that registered analyses must be undertaken, but additional unregistered analyses can also be included in a final manuscript (see below).

Stage 2: Full manuscript review

Once the study is complete, authors prepare and resubmit their manuscript for full review, with the following additions:

Cover letter

The Stage 2 cover letter must confirm:

- That the manuscript includes a link to the public archive containing anonymized study data, digital materials/code and the laboratory log. The cover letter should state the page number in the manuscript that lists the URL (as established in the Stage 1 protocol and cover letter).
- That the manuscript contains a link to the approved Stage 1 protocol on the Open Science Framework or other recognised repository. The cover letter should state the page number in the manuscript that lists the URL.
- That, for primary Registered Reports, no data for any pre-registered study (other than pilot data included at Stage 1) was collected prior to the date of IPA. For secondary Registered Reports, authors should confirm that no data (other than pilot data included at Stage 1) was subjected to the pre-registered analyses prior to IPA.

Submission of anonymised raw data, digital study materials, and laboratory log

Anonymised raw data and digital study materials must be made freely available in a public repository/archive with a link provided within the Stage 2 manuscript (as established in the Stage 1 protocol and cover letter). Authors are free to use any repository that renders data and materials freely and publicly accessible and provides a digital object identifier (DOI) to ensure that the data remain persistent, unique and citable. Potential repositories include (but are not limited to), [Figshare](#), [Harvard Dataverse](#), and [Dryad](#). For a comprehensive list of available data repositories, see <http://www.re3data.org/>.

Data files should be appropriately time stamped to show that data was collected *after* IPA and not before. Other than pre-registered and approved pilot data, no data acquired *prior* to the date of IPA is admissible in the Stage 2 submission. Raw data must be accompanied by guidance notes, where required, to assist other scientists in replicating the analysis pipeline. Authors are required to upload any relevant analysis scripts and other digital experimental materials that would assist in replication.

Any supplementary figures, tables, or other text (such as supplementary methods) can either be included as standard supplementary information that accompanies the paper, or they can be archived together with the data. Please note that the raw data itself should be archived (see above) rather than submitted to the journal as supplementary material.

A basic laboratory log must also be provided outlining the range of dates during which data collection took place. This log should be uploaded to the same public archive as the data and materials (as established in the Stage 1 protocol and cover letter).

The Stage 2 manuscript must also contain a link to the registered protocol (deposited following IPA) on the Open Science Framework or other recognised repository.

Background, Rationale and Methods

Apart from minor stylistic revisions, **the Introduction cannot be altered from the approved Stage 1 submission, and the stated hypotheses cannot be amended or appended.** At Stage 2, any description of the rationale or proposed methodology that was written in future tense within the Stage 1 manuscript should be changed to past tense. Any textual changes to the Introduction or Methods (e.g. correction of typographic errors) must be clearly marked in the Stage 2 submission. Any relevant literature that appeared following the date of IPA should be covered in the Discussion.

Results & Discussion

The outcome of all registered analyses must be reported in the manuscript, except in rare instances where a registered and approved analysis is subsequently shown to be logically flawed or unfounded. In such cases, the authors, reviewers, and editor must agree that a collective error of judgment was made and that the analysis is inappropriate. In such cases the analysis would still be mentioned in the Methods but omitted with justification from the Results.

It is reasonable that authors may wish to include additional analyses that were not included in the registered submission. For instance, a new analytic approach might become available between IPA and Stage 2 review, or a particularly interesting and unexpected finding may emerge. Such analyses are admissible but must be clearly justified in the text, appropriately caveated, and reported in a separate section of the Results titled “*Exploratory analyses*”. Authors should be careful not to base their conclusions entirely on the outcome of statistically significant *post hoc* analyses.

Authors reporting null hypothesis significance tests are required to report exact *p* values and effect sizes for all inferential analyses.

The resubmission will most likely be considered by the same reviewers as in Stage 1, but could also be assessed by new reviewers. In considering papers at Stage 2, reviewers will be asked to decide:

- Whether the data are able to test the authors’ proposed hypotheses by satisfying the approved outcome-neutral conditions (such as quality checks, positive controls)

- Whether the introduction, rationale and stated hypotheses are the same as the approved Stage 1 submission (required)
- Whether the authors adhered precisely to the registered experimental procedures
- Whether any unregistered *post hoc* analyses added by the authors are justified, methodologically sound, and informative
- Whether the authors' conclusions are justified given the data

However, Reviewers are informed that editorial decisions will not be based on the perceived importance, novelty or conclusiveness of the results. Thus, while reviewers are free to enter such comments on the record, they will not influence editorial decisions. Reviewers at Stage 2 may suggest that authors report additional *post hoc* tests on their data; however, authors are not obliged to do so unless such tests are necessary to satisfy one or more of the Stage 2 review criteria.

Incremental Registrations

Authors may add experiments to approved submissions. In such cases the approved Stage 2 manuscript will be accepted for publication, and authors can propose additional experiments for Stage 1 consideration. Where these experiments extend the approved submission (as opposed to being part of new submissions), the editorial team will seek to fast-track the review process. This option may be particularly appropriate where an initial experiment reveals a major serendipitous finding that warrants follow-up within the same paper. In cases where an incremented submission is rejected (at either Stage 1 or 2), authors will retain the option of publishing the most recently approved version of the manuscript. For further advice on specific scenarios for incremental registration, authors are invited to contact the editorial office [jason.chin@sydney.edu.au].

Manuscript withdrawal and Withdrawn Registrations

It is possible that authors with IPA may wish to withdraw their manuscript following or during data collection. Possible reasons could include major technical error, an inability to complete the study due to other unforeseen circumstances, or the desire to submit the results to a different journal. In all such cases, manuscripts can of course be withdrawn at the authors' discretion. However, the journal will publicly record each case in a section called *Withdrawn Registrations*. This section will include the authors, proposed title, the abstract from the approved Stage 1 submission, and brief reason(s) for the failure to complete the study. Partial withdrawals are not possible; i.e. authors cannot publish part of a registered study by selectively withdrawing one of the planned experiments. Such cases must lead to withdrawal of the entire paper. Studies that are not completed by the agreed Stage 2 submission deadline (which can be extended in negotiation with the editorial office) will be considered withdrawn and will be subject to a *Withdrawn Registration*.