

GUIDE TO:

PUBLISHING

YOUR AMIS

ACADEMIC

WORK

Please note that this is a living document, which we are happy to update based on your feedback and insights. Send any comments to Zachary (whyte@hum.ku.dk). Last updated: 30.5.2024.

This guide aims to give some concrete guidance to AMIS students and alumni interested in trying to publish some of the academic work they did as part of the degree. Building on the presentations from Tim Flohr Sørensen (Associate Professor at the Saxo Institute) and Elena Horton (AMIS alumna) at the publication seminar AMIS held in April 2024¹, it offers some pointers on:

- The value of publishing an academic article
- Reworking your thesis into an article
- Considerations when choosing a journal
- Considerations when collaborating on an article
- Addendum: Steps in the academic publishing process

The Value of Publishing an Academic Article

It is a significant amount of work to publish an academic article, and it is always unpaid. Therefore, it is a good idea to consider the value of both the process and the product to you, when you consider trying to get your work published.

Dissemination of Knowledge

AMIS students often produce unique material as part of their studies. Publishing your research contributes to the broader academic community, allowing others to learn from, build upon, or challenge your findings. It also makes sure that people beyond your examiners get a chance to read about your work.

Professional Development

Successfully publishing an academic article enhances your writing skills, boosts your academic profile, and can be a significant merit on your CV, especially if you are pursuing a career in academia (e.g. a PhD) or research-intensive fields. You learn a lot from writing an article and you may also find that it develops your thinking about your own research.

Bridging Theory and Practice

Especially in fields like migration studies, your research can inform policy and practice, bridging the gap between theoretical research and real-world applications. Similarly, you can refer to your published academic article as part of other kinds of dissemination or engagement, for example in challenging specific policies or framing relevant interventions.

¹ This guide is a product of the AMIS Publication Seminar, which was held on April 3rd, 2024 at the University of Copenhagen. The seminar was conceived by AMIS student Alex Cuzzolino with the support of AMIS Associate Professor Zachary Whyte. It involved presentations from Associate Professor Tim Flohr Sørensen and AMIS alumna Elena Horton, who spoke about her work together with AMIS alumna Stella Grace Conard. Please note that the presenters are not responsible for the wording and advice given here. The guide was written by Zachary Whyte and Alex Cuzzolino.

Reworking Your Thesis into an Article

While there are several sources of academic work at AMIS that might lead to publication (e.g. the *Migration and Societies* project or research internships), this section focuses on the work involved in reworking your MA thesis into an academic article.

Focus on Core Arguments

An academic article requires a strong, coherent argument. Review your thesis and identify a central argument or the most compelling piece of research. This will form the backbone of your article. It is crucial to not just shorten your thesis but to recast it into a single focused narrative. You will be able to draw on key insights, reading, and research you have already done for your thesis, but you will probably have to do a lot of paraphrasing.

Simplify and Clarify

Academic articles require clarity and conciseness. Work on streamlining complex ideas and ensuring your argument is easy to follow. Avoid overwhelming the reader with excessive data; only include what is necessary to support your argument. But it's a balance: Too little data is also a problem. Bear in mind that data serves both to make your argument and to bolster your own authority.

Make a Research Contribution

Ensure your article brings something new to the field. This could be a new perspective, a novel application of theory, or unique empirical insights. Bear in mind that your contribution will probably not be revolutionary, but rather showing a niche or gap in the literature, which you address. Originality is key to both acceptance by journals and contribution to your field. Make sure to make your contribution clear to both yourself and the journal.

Revisit Your Writing Style

The aesthetics of your writing matter. The narrative should flow logically and engagingly. Consider the language, concepts, images and metaphors you use carefully. Aesthetics matter – not just for style, but to draw the reader in and to enhance the impact of your argument. More prosaically: Make sure you keep your terminology consistent across the text. Care for your text like a craftsman.

External Feedback

Try to read your manuscript as an outsider, or better yet, get an external party to review it. This can help spot areas that are unclear or overly complicated. Tim told us that he prints out his draft and even reads it aloud to himself.

Plan Your Time

Producing an academic article is time-consuming, and it is worthwhile to block off some time to concentrate on the work. Further, the process of reviews can result in longer or shorter periods of

waiting before you may have to put in revision work to a deadline. This can be frustrating, but do feel free to negotiate with the journal editor if you have trouble making the deadline.

Use Your Community

AMIS and especially Amisan – the Alumni Network for Advanced Migration Studies – can provide a good forum for discussing your work. You can ask for advice and support on the [Amisan LinkedIn page](#), and if we can get a group together AMIS is happy to support meetings and presentations on campus. Also keep an eye out for relevant academic conferences, which can be good places to present your ideas, network, and get feedback.

Finding Relevant Journals

An early stumbling block for new – and old! – authors is identifying an appropriate journal for your work. There are a staggering number of journals out there, and it can be hard to navigate, which one to submit to (and remember, you are not supposed to submit to more than one journal at a time!). Here are some tips:

Look at Your Reference List

A first step in finding a relevant journal is to simply look through the references you yourself have used. This ensures that you are speaking to an academic audience that shares your interests. It also can give you insight in to how articles for that particular journal are structured, e.g. how much space do they use for methods or theory, what sections do they typically include?

Research Journal Aims and Scope

Before submitting your article, make sure it aligns with the journal's aims and scope. This will increase your chances of getting past initial screenings and ensure your work reaches the appropriate audience. You can refer to this in the cover letter to the editors you send in with your submission.

Assess Journal Quality

Consider factors such as the journal's impact factor, reputation in the field, and review times. Use resources like the [PRIO Guide to Migration Journals](#) to find reputable journals in the field of migration studies. An important issue is whether or not the journal is Open Access, which will determine how many people access to your work, as many journals require library subscriptions.

Avoid Predatory Publishers

Be wary of predatory journals, which often charge fees without providing legitimate editorial and publishing services. Check the credibility of the journal, including its editorial board, citation metrics, and whether it is indexed in reputable databases. There is information on this at the [Think. Check. Submit.](#) homepage, which is supported by a lot of publishing organizations. Also, [the University of Toronto Libraries have compiled a useful checklist](#) to help with the process.

Consider Journals Aimed at Students

The Saxo Institute hosts a student journal called [Culture and History](#). This can be a good way to

learn about academic publication, which offers help and mentorship along the way. Another example is the [Oxford Monitor of Forced Migration \(OXMO\)](#).

Considerations When Collaborating on an Article

Collaborating with fellow students or senior faculty can be a great way of producing an article. You can learn a lot by collaborating with others – both about the work itself and collaboration more broadly. And frankly it can just be good to have someone to talk to about your work. But it also comes with its own set of challenges, risks, and potential frustrations. Here are some things to keep in mind:

Establish Clear Roles and Responsibilities

From the outset, clearly define each collaborator's role and responsibilities. This includes deciding on the order of authors (the first author is generally considered the lead author, though you may also simply want to list names alphabetically), who will be the corresponding author (i.e. the person responsible for communicating with the journal), and the division of writing tasks. Be sure that these roles and responsibilities are divided equitably, and that the work expected of you is appropriate for your level of experience and the time you have available. But you can change them along the way: An advantage to collaborating is that you can shift the workload among you to accommodate your current commitments, if you get sudden revision deadlines.

Maintain Open Communication

Regular, open communication is key to a successful collaboration. Set up a system for working on your document together – either a shared document or taking it in turns to work on it. But also try to maintain an honest communication about your current situation and your ability to work on the article. Trust is critical to collaboration. This hopefully also establishes a space, where you can speak up if you feel you are being asked to take on an unfair share of the work.

Working With Senior Researchers

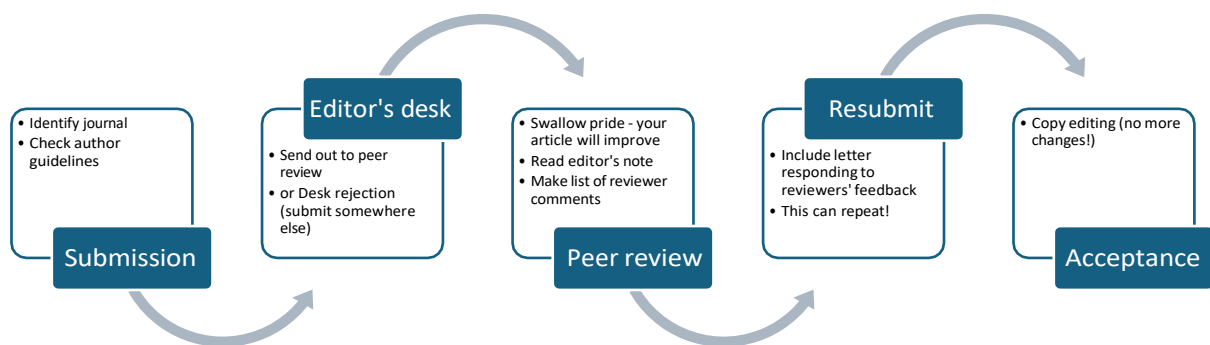
Working with someone more experienced can be very helpful both in the writing and in navigating the publication process. Ideally, it can involve a fruitful dialogue that help your ideas unfold. Never be in doubt that they will also be learning from you! However, there are also potential challenges. Make sure that the person you work with makes a real contribution to the article and is not just putting their name to your work. This is more likely if they have a clear role and relevant expertise. If you are uncomfortable with any aspect of the collaboration, and you have failed or can't take it up directly with the other party, try to bring it up with peers or trusted faculty. In extreme cases, universities usually have confidential counseling available that can help with mediation. At the University of Copenhagen, you can refer to the [“Code of Conduct for Responsible Research”](#), which includes guidelines for authorship and collaboration, and there is a faculty-based [“Named Person”](#) system that provides a point of confidential contact.

Conclusion

Transforming your MA thesis into a published article is a challenging but rewarding endeavor. It requires a clear focus, a strong argument, thorough research of potential publication venues, and an original contribution to the field of migration studies. With determination and careful attention to detail, and drawing on your AMIS and Amisan communities, your work can make a valuable addition to academic discourse and help develop your writing and thinking skills.

Addendum

Here is a rough diagram of the academic publishing process.



A few notes:

Rejections Happen to Everyone

Don't be disheartened if your article is rejected. Every single academic, no matter how well-known, has had articles rejected. This is not an indictment of you or your academic ability. Submit it somewhere else. If you get a "desk rejection", that is if the editor tells you that the article is not a good fit for their journal and won't be sent out for peer review, it is alright to ask them if they have any suggestions as to where they think it might fit better. Similarly, if the peer reviewers don't recommend it for publication. Take their notes on board, rewrite, and find a different journal.

Waiting Times Can Be Long

Because academic publishing largely runs on the unpaid labor of other academics, waiting times can sometimes be very long and can vary a lot from journal to journal. If you feel that too much time has passed, send a politely worded email to ask about the timeline. What exactly constitutes "too much time" will vary, but it can often take months, especially for the peer review. Some journals publish average waiting times for the different stages.

Peer Reviews Are Variable

Peer reviewers can provide very different levels of quality and detail in their comments. This can be frustrating, especially if you feel that they have been unfair or have misunderstood you. You don't have to accept everything they suggest, but you should explain your reasoning in the resubmission. Revising and resubmitting your article will almost always make it a lot better. Note that you may well be asked to do a second resubmission based on further peer review. Also make

sure to pay special attention to what the editor says about the peer review feedback, as they will usually mention some points that they feel you should pay special attention to.

Acceptance and Proofs

Once your article is accepted, you will only be allowed to copy edit the proofs. That means no more tuning sentences, but only ensuring references are in order and typos are caught. So make sure you are happy with your latest submission.