

Discussion Meetings and Submission Guidelines

Authors are invited to consider submitting papers to be read at a Discussion Meeting of the Royal Statistical Society. These meetings, a long-standing tradition of the Society dating back to its origins as ‘ordinary meetings’, have played a pivotal role in the field of statistics. Colloquially referred to as ‘read papers’, many of the major advances in statistics were first presented and debated in this forum.

What is a Discussion Meeting?

A Discussion Meeting is an event where authors present their paper in person or online to an open audience. The presentation is followed by a discussion, during which attendees are encouraged to comment on the paper or its topic. Both the paper and the ensuing discussion are subsequently published in the Society’s journal.

What type of paper is suitable?

To be accepted as a discussion paper, a manuscript should be especially strong by the standards of the journals (A, B, C) as judged by its novelty and importance in relation to research, application and thinking. It should also have the potential to generate an interesting discussion.

Discussion papers should be written to engage a large and varied audience, encouraging attendance at the meeting and active participation in the discussion – either in person or in writing.

In general, suitable papers for discussion might include the following:

- Innovative and significant new methodology
- Studies of applied statistical problems of sufficient general interest to warrant discussion and publication
- Major advances in applied probability
- Interesting and new applications of existing methodology
- Work concerned with the interface between statistics and other fields
- Work concerned with statistical education
- Expository papers, state of the art reviews and critical summaries of statistical material
- Critical studies of areas of economic, scientific or social interest in which statistical methods have an important role
- Issues of general interest to statisticians, especially inviting a wide variety of views

In addition, papers which are intended for consideration by the Research Section Committee should fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Descriptions of new methods of analysing data or of designing experiments, with theoretical bases of methods and an indication of the scope of application, preferably with examples;
- Comparisons and critical evaluations of existing methods;

- Discussion of the logical and/or philosophical bases of statistical theory;
- Original contributions to probability theory which have a practical bearing.

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

Discussion papers can be submitted to the Society's journal series: Series A (Statistics in Society), Series B (Statistical Methodology), or Series C (Applied Statistics). Papers introducing new methodologies are typically published in Series B, whereas those with an applied, policy, or societal focus are more likely to appear in Series A or C.

Submitting a discussion paper

The submission process varies depending on the journal series:

Series A and C: Papers are considered individually upon submission.

Series B: Submissions follow a regular submission deadline system.

- 1st January
- 1st April
- 1st July
- 1st October

Manuscripts should be submitted via the ScholarOne Manuscripts online submission and peer review system. If you wish for your paper to be considered for a Discussion Meeting, log into the relevant ScholarOne site for Series A, B or C using one of these links:

- Journal of the Royal Statistical Society Series A (Statistics in Society) [ScholarOne](#)
- Journal of the Royal Statistical Society Series B (Statistical Methodology) [ScholarOne](#)
- Journal of the Royal Statistical Society Series C (Applied Statistics) [ScholarOne](#)

To indicate that your paper is intended for a Discussion Meeting, select '**Discussion Paper**' from the manuscript types offered.

When submitting, please consider including a cover letter explaining why the paper is suitable for your chosen journal series. Additionally, please indicate whether you would like the paper to be considered for regular publication in the event it is not accepted for discussion.

Format of papers

Papers for reading should not exceed 12000 words. With figures, tables and references, this guideline translates to about 24 journal pages or around 30 manuscript pages in 12 pt Times and extra half-line spacing. Detailed guidelines on the preparation and submission of manuscripts are available from the 'Publications' section of the Society's Web site (<http://www.rss.org.uk>) or from the Journals Administrator (journal@rss.org.uk) in the Editorial Office.

Peer review process

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

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 intention is that the screening process is completed quickly, normally within 3 weeks. Papers written for narrow specialist groups will not be accepted for reading, although they may be perfectly acceptable for publication as a regular article and might, at the editor's discretion, be suggested for transfer to be reviewed as a regular paper.

The review process for papers that pass the initial screen then depends on the content of the paper and the appropriate journal series. Papers presenting significant new methodology and deemed suitable for Series B are passed to Research Section Committee for review. Other discussable papers are directed to the most relevant section of the society. If a paper does not clearly fall within the scope of any specific section, it may be reviewed directly by the DMC.

In all cases the appropriate section will consider the paper, arrange referees for papers of interest, and make recommendations to the Discussion Papers Editor concerning acceptance, revision, or rejection.

The intention is to provide a first answer to authors within four months.

The Discussion Meeting

The programme for Discussion Meetings normally allows for up to one a month between September and June. Most meetings are held in the early evening either online or in person at a London-based venue. Occasionally, they are organized elsewhere, such as during a session of a major statistical conference in or outside the UK or to coincide with a particular statistical occasion.

Preprints of the discussion paper are available in advance to download from the Society's website [RSS](#)

Discussion Paper meetings

The typical format of the meetings is as follows:

- Authors present their paper for approximately 40 minutes, summarizing its key points.
- The discussion is opened by 2-3 invited speakers, who provide comments and pose questions.
- The floor is then opened to the audience for shorter contributions.
- If time permits, the secretary for the meeting may read out any contributions that have been sent in from people who cannot be present.
- Authors are given a brief opportunity to respond verbally, with a more detailed written response published in the journal.

- Written contributions (max. 400 words) are accepted up to four weeks after the meeting.

Occasionally, meetings may follow a different format. 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 often address topics of public interest. While the process for these meetings is similar to that of single- paper discussions, 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.

Discussion Meetings are filmed and made available through YouTube after the meeting. A link to YouTube is provided on the [RSS website](#).

Written Contributions

We welcome contributions in writing for publication in the journal along with the paper up to four weeks after the Discussion Meeting. All contributions are published and there is no requirement to be e.g. an RSS member, a statistician or at a particular career stage. Contributions submitted prior to the meeting will be read out for discussion if the contributor is not present and time permits.

Contributions should not exceed 400 words in length (not including any tables, reference details and figures) and must be in editable format (Word doc or tex file). Please also provide a PDF copy for review, a separate file for each figure and add the following information at the beginning of your contribution:

[Discussant name]'s contribution to the Discussion of [Paper name] by [Author surname(s)] Adding below this your name, title, affiliation and email address as the corresponding author. Written contributions should be submitted to the ScholarOne manuscript submission system for the appropriate Series by the published deadline and select 'Discussion paper contribution' as the article type. A condition of publication is that contributors assign copyright to the Society upon receipt of proofs for review. Any queries can be directed to the Journals office via journal@rss.org.uk