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# How to write abstracts

COMP1205 - Professional Development  
Steve White ([S.T.White@soton.ac.uk](mailto:S.T.White@soton.ac.uk))  
Week 3, Thurs 20th Oct, 2016

# Session aim

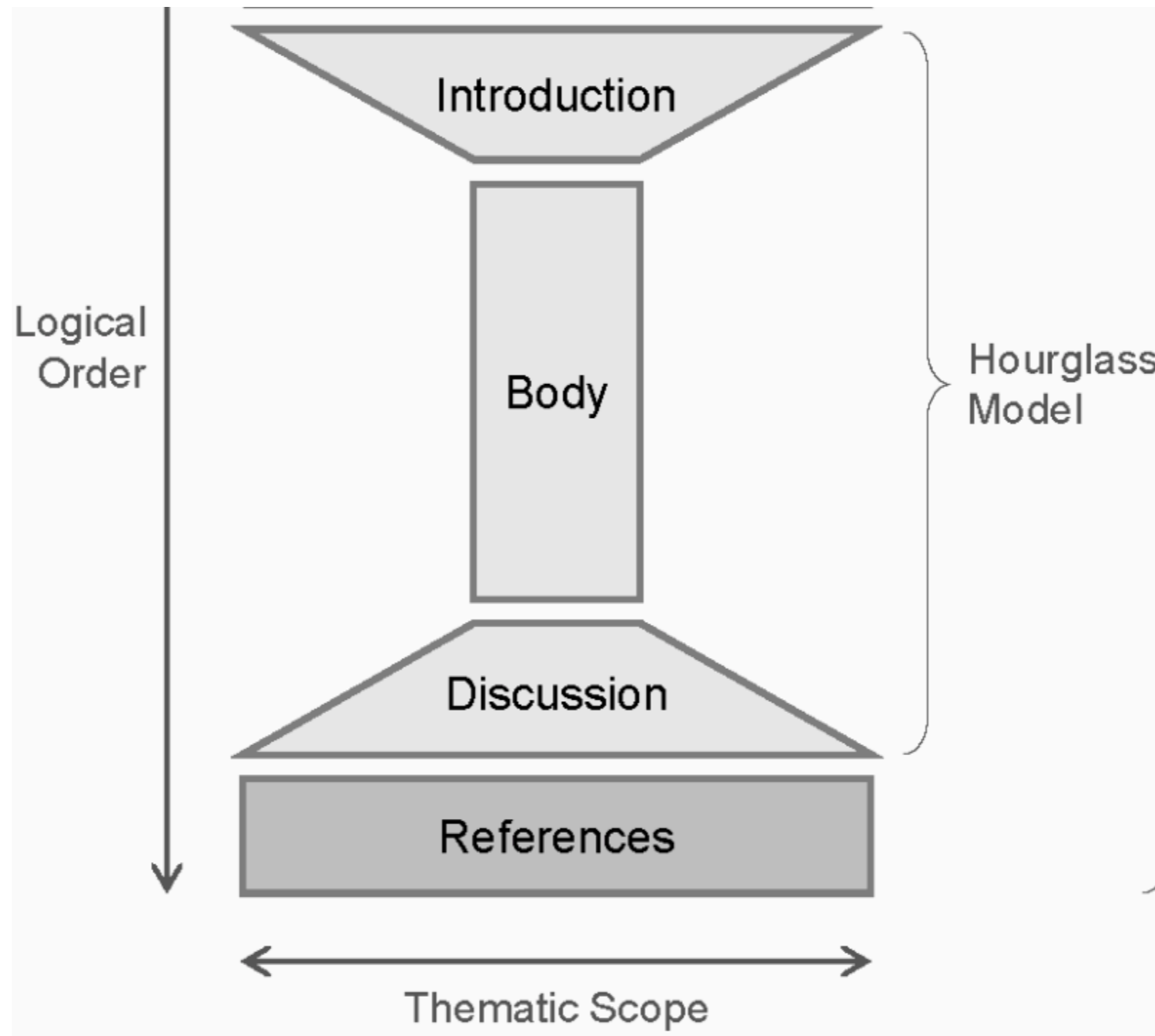
To introduce the writing of abstracts in terms of:

- purpose
- content
- structure

# The 'shape' of academic communication

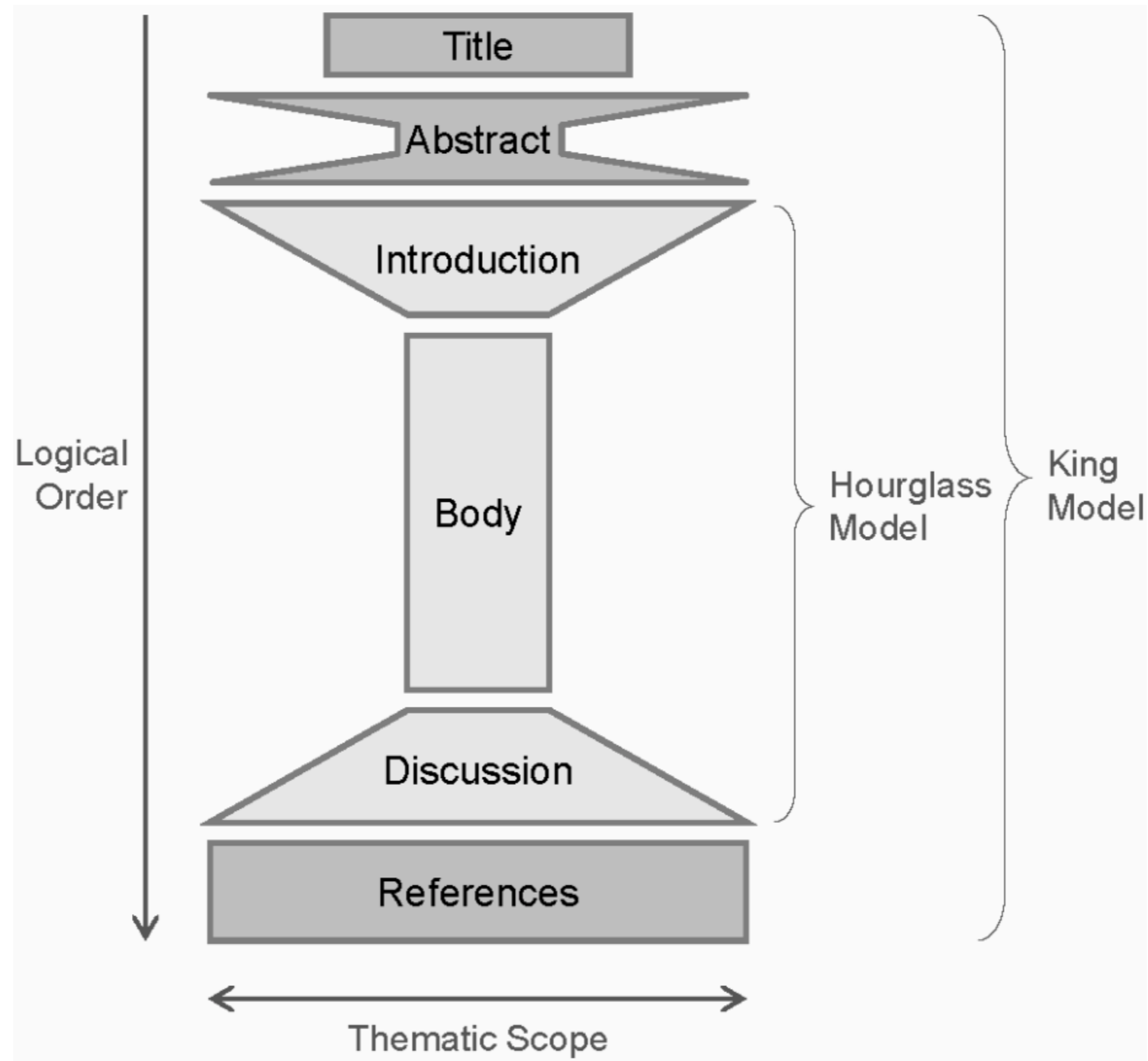


# The 'Hourglass' model



*Source:* Based on Swales (1993)

# The 'King' model



Source: Based on Swales (1993)

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# What is the function of an abstract?

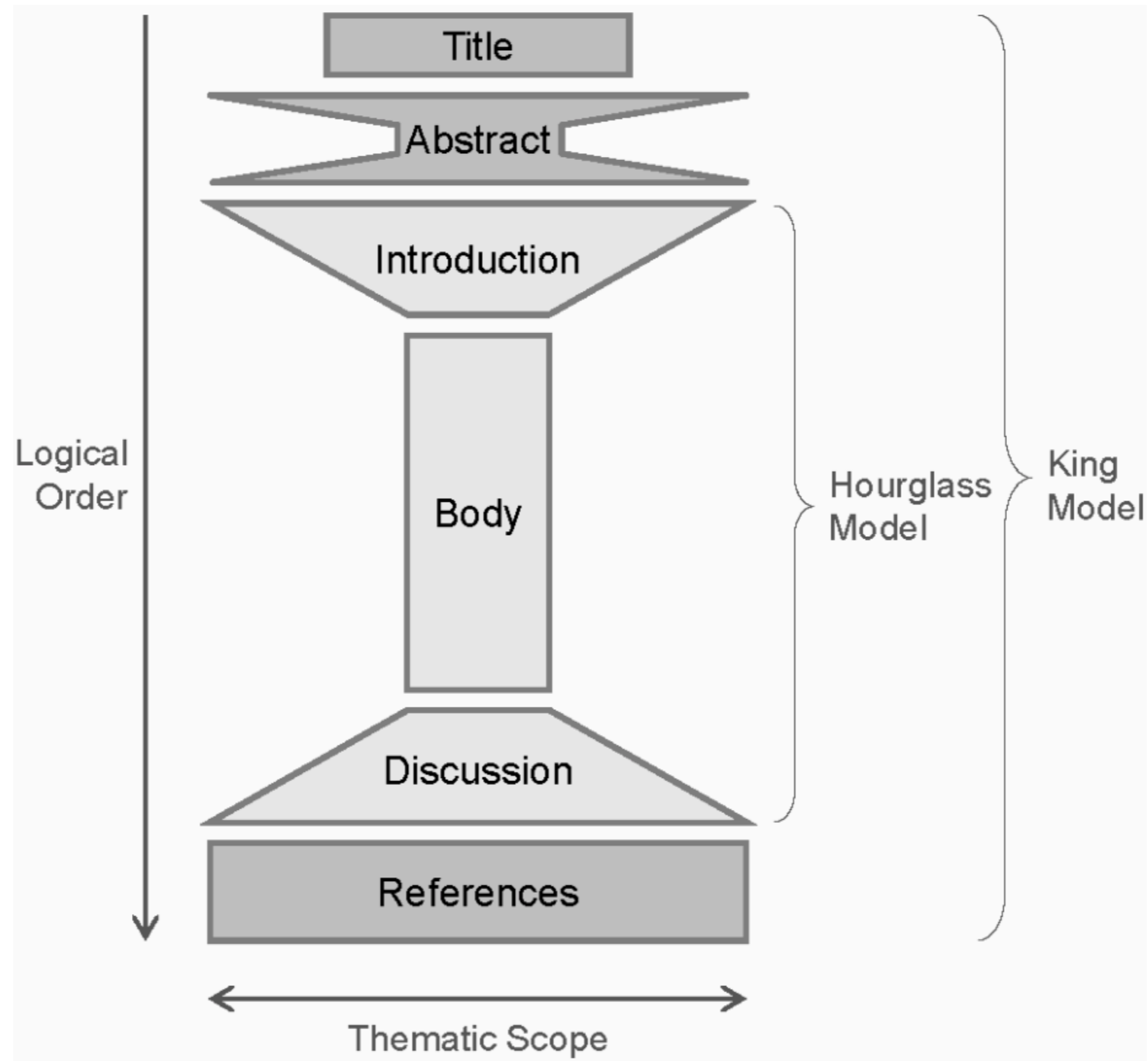
- a. To cite other studies related to your work
- b. To explain the methodology of your work in detail
- c. To concisely inform the world of your sheer genius
- d. To summarise the overall aim or content of your work



# Why are abstracts important?

- a. A reader might only look at your abstract in deciding whether or not to read your work
- b. Research databases use abstracts as the primary means of finding research reports on particular subjects
- c. Abstracts are the main opportunity to grab the attention of the reader, and to show why your work is important or useful
- d. They are an anagram of 'crab stats', and everyone loves crab statistics.

# The 'King' model



Source: Based on Swales (1993)

# Support resources for your academic skills

## ▼ My Courses

Courses where you are: Student

COMP6046-26502-13-14: 13-14-Computational Thinking-26502 (*not currently available*)

COMP6037-25212-13-14: 13-14-Foundations of Web Science-25212 (*not currently available*)

COMP6045-25163-13-14: 13-14-Hypertext and Web Technologies for Masters-25163 (*not currently available*)

**LING6040-34635-15-16: 15-16-E-Learning and English Language Teaching-34635**

**ILTeR-15-16: 15-16-ILTeR Introduction to Learning and Teaching for Researchers**

**ISOR-05-06: EAP Toolkit (for International Students)**

**PGR-RS: Research Skills for Postgraduate Researchers**

**SST-05-06: Study Skills Toolkit**



# Southampton University

## LibGuides:

Academic Skills: <http://library.soton.ac.uk/sash/home>

ECS MyLibrary: <http://library.soton.ac.uk/ecs>

Including your subject librarian Fiona Nichols

An “abstract is a miniature version of the whole.  
It is, if you like, a mini-me.”

Thomson (2016)

# So, what are the functional parts of an abstract?

Broader context

Problem

Solution and approach

Results

Contribution / So what?

# *‘Basics of research paper writing and editing’* (Derntl, 2014)

Publishing research results is an integral part of a researcher’s professional life. However, writing is not every researcher’s favourite activity, and getting a paper published can be a very tedious and time-consuming process. Fortunately, many of the obstacles along the writing and publishing path can be avoided by following some simple guidelines and practices. This paper presents a synthesis of guidelines found in literature about structuring and writing scientific papers. The paper outlines the process of publishing research papers in journals and conference proceedings, aiming to provide early-stage researchers with a handy introduction to essential issues. The paper takes an interdisciplinary stance by giving examples from technology-enhanced learning research and borrowing from literature in social, natural and computing sciences.

Broader context

Problem

Solution and approach

Results

Contribution / So what?

[Title of paper: Basics of research paper writing]

Broader context

**The first sentence addresses the broad context. This locates the study in a policy, practice or research field.**

Publishing research results is an integral part of a researcher's professional life.

Advice in bold from *Patter* blog, 3/10/2016



[Title of paper: Basics of research paper writing]



Problem

**The second sentence establishes a problem related to the broad context you have set out. It often starts with **But, Yet or However...****

However, writing is not every researcher's favourite activity, and getting a paper published can be a very challenging and time-consuming process.

[Title of paper: Basics of research paper writing]

## Solution and approach

**The third sentence says what specific research has been done.**

**This sentence often starts with ‘This research...’ or ‘I report...’**

Fortunately, many of the obstacles along the writing and publishing path can be avoided by following some simple guidelines and practices.

This paper presents a synthesis of guidelines found in literature about structuring and writing scientific papers.

[Title of paper: Basics of research paper writing]

## Results

**The fourth sentence reports the results. Don't try to be too tricky here, just start with something like.. 'This study shows...', or 'Analysis of the data suggests that...'**

The paper outlines the process of publishing research papers in journals and conference proceedings, aiming to provide early-stage researchers with a handy introduction to essential issues.

[Title of paper: Basics of research paper writing]

Contribution / So what?

**The fifth and final sentence addresses the ‘So What?’ question, and makes clear the claim to contribution.**

The paper takes an interdisciplinary stance by giving examples from technology-enhanced learning research and borrowing from literature in social, natural and computing sciences.

# 'Basics of research paper writing and editing' (Derntl, 2014)

Publishing research results is an integral part of a researcher's professional life. However, writing is not every researcher's favourite activity, and getting a paper published can be a very tedious and time-consuming process. Fortunately, many of the obstacles along the writing and publishing path can be avoided by following some simple guidelines and practices. This paper presents a synthesis of guidelines found in literature about structuring and writing scientific papers. The paper outlines the process of publishing research papers in journals and conference proceedings, aiming to provide early-stage researchers with a handy introduction to essential issues. The paper takes an interdisciplinary stance by giving examples from technology-enhanced learning research and borrowing from literature in social, natural and computing sciences.

Broader context

Problem

Solution and approach

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# 'Basics of research paper writing and editing' (Derntl, 2014)

Publishing research results is an integral part of a researcher's professional life. However, writing is not every researcher's favourite activity, and getting a paper published can be a very tedious and time-consuming process. Fortunately, many of the obstacles along the writing and publishing path can be avoided by following some simple guidelines and practices. This paper presents a synthesis of guidelines found in literature about structuring and writing scientific papers. The paper outlines the process of publishing research papers in journals and conference proceedings, aiming to provide early-stage researchers with a handy introduction to essential issues. The paper takes an interdisciplinary stance by giving examples from technology-enhanced learning research and borrowing from literature in social, natural and computing sciences.

Broader context

Problem

Solution and approach

Results

Contribution / So what?

# Propose a problem ...

Broader context

Problem

Solution and approach

Results

Contribution / So what?

[Title of paper: ]

Broader context

**The first sentence addresses the broad context. This locates the study in a policy, practice or research field.**



[Title of paper:]

Problem

**The second sentence establishes a problem related to the broad context you have set out. It often starts with **But, Yet or However...****

[Title of paper:]

Solution and approach

**The third sentence says what specific research has been done.**

**This sentence often starts with This research... or I report...**

[Title of paper:]

Results

**The fourth sentence reports the results.**

**Don't try to be too tricky here, just start with something like..**

**'This study shows...', or 'Analysis of the data suggests that...'**

[Title of paper:]

Contribution / So what?

**The fifth and final sentence addresses the ‘So What?’ question, and makes clear the claim to contribution.**

# Review

Reflect on whether you understand the writing of abstracts in terms of:

- purpose
- content
- structure

# Why do we use abstracts in academic and professional communication?

- a. To briefly outline the purpose, content and outcome of your work
- b. To concisely list reports or articles which are similar to your work
- c. To explore in depth the methodology of your work

# References

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