

Pre-Results Review at the *Journal of Development Economics* (JDE)

The *Journal of Development Economics* ([JDE](#)) is piloting a new approach in which authors have the opportunity to submit empirical research designs for review and approval *before* the results of the study are known. While the JDE is the first journal in economics to implement this approach—referred to as “pre-results review”—it joins over 90 [other journals](#) from across the sciences.

What is Pre-Results Review?

Pre-results review splits the peer review process into two stages (see Figure 1 below). In Stage 1, authors submit a plan for a prospective research project, typically including a literature review, research question(s), hypotheses, and a detailed methodological framework. This submission is evaluated based on the significance of the research question(s), the soundness of the theoretical reasoning, and the credibility and feasibility of the research design.

Positively evaluated submissions are **accepted based on pre-results review**. This constitutes a commitment by the journal to publish the full paper, regardless of the nature of the empirical results. Authors will then collect and analyze their data, and submit the final paper for final review and publication (Stage 2). The final Stage 2 review provides quality assurance and ensures alignment with the research design peer reviewed in Stage 1.

Articles in this format will still align with the existing topical and methodological focus of the JDE. Researchers are free to propose any type of study design for prospective projects where they have not yet collected or accessed data.



Figure 1: The publishing process for pre-results review submissions at the JDE



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Why Pre-Results Review?

In development economics, we have long argued for the use of rigorous evidence to inform decisions about public policies. However, incentives in academia and journal publishing often reward studies featuring novel, theoretically tidy, or statistically significant results. Papers that fail to report such findings often go [unpublished](#), even if the studies are of high quality and address important questions. As a result, we are left with an evidence base comprised of papers that tell ‘neat’ and clean stories, but may not accurately represent the world. When such research serves as the foundation for public policies, this publication bias can be costly.

In recent years, pre-results review has emerged as potential alternative model to address publication bias. We hope that this pilot will help us understand the effectiveness of this approach and its sustainability for both the JDE and other social science journals.

What’s in It For You?

1. Publication decision earlier in the peer review process;
2. Constructive feedback from peer reviewers earlier in the publishing process, with the potential for helpful suggestions for research design before beginning data collection;
3. Editorial decisions that are not influenced by the results of a study;
4. Inclusion of JDE “acceptance based on pre-results review” on author’s CVs; and
5. The chance to be part of an exciting pilot effort in economics!

How to Submit

Submissions should be filed as ‘Registered Reports’ on the JDE’s regular [submissions portal](#).

All submissions in this format will follow existing JDE policies, including the [Mandatory Replication Policy](#). For guidelines specific to pre-results review, please see the [JDE Registered Reports Author Guidelines](#).

Need Help?

The Berkeley Initiative for Transparency in the Social Sciences ([BITSS](#)) will support authors with pre-registering their research designs and preparing JDE submissions. Please contact Aleks Bogdanoski at abogdanoski@berkeley.edu with any questions.