



Study Protocols

Study Protocols describe detailed plans and proposals for research projects that have not yet generated results. Unlike Research Articles, you may issue an Accept decision for Study Protocols without sending the manuscript for external review.

Editorial Process

Manuscript Invitations

- Look for the article type in manuscript invitations.
- After you accept a Study Protocol invitation, there will also be additional information from staff in the Information for Editor section of the confirmation email and Details page in Editorial Manager.

Initial Assessment

Study Protocol submissions differ from Research Articles.

- · Assess whether the Study Protocol submission describes planned research that, if completed as described, will meet our publication criteria
- Study designs that would be in scope as a Research Article are in scope as a Study Protocol
- Study Protocols are NOT expected to include a Results section, and should not be rejected due to a lack of results
- Evaluate the submission against the publication criteria and submission guidelines for Study Protocols and decide whether to:
 - Reject without review
 - Accept without review*
 - *If you have the relevant expertise to evaluate the subject matter and methodology. This is different from Research Articles.
 - **Invite reviewers** to peer review the protocol**
 - **Only one external review is required for Study Protocols alongside your assessment as Academic Editor.

The Center for Open Science has a pre-registration and pre-analysis plan template for authors that you may find helpful as a guide during your evaluation.

Peer Review

- You can issue an Accept decision for Study Protocols without external review if you have the relevant expertise to evaluate the subject matter and methodology yourself.
 - Ensure you have provided enough information in the decision letter for the authors to understand your decision, clearly articulating your reasoning with reference to our <u>publication criteria</u>.
- Refer to the specific <u>reviewer guidelines and forms</u> for Study Protocols
 - The goal is not to suggest modifications to the study design. Rather, you and/or the reviewers should assess and provide feedback on whether:
 - the study is well-suited to test the hypothesis
 - it includes enough detail for replication
 - the proposed statistical analysis is suitable
 - the quality of the writing is sufficient

Editorial Decisions

- When writing your decision letter, use the <u>publication criteria</u> and <u>submission guidelines for</u>
 <u>Study Protocols</u> to justify your decision:
 - o **Accept** if the Study Protocol is clear and understandable in its current form
 - Minor/Major Revision if changes are required to improve the reporting of the study design and overall understandability of the study design
 - Reject if major changes to the study design are required or if the Study Protocol does not meet the <u>publication criteria</u>

More Resources for Editors

Need help? Contact plosone@plos.org