



Dear Author: Improving Author Communications in Peer Review

Erin McMullan

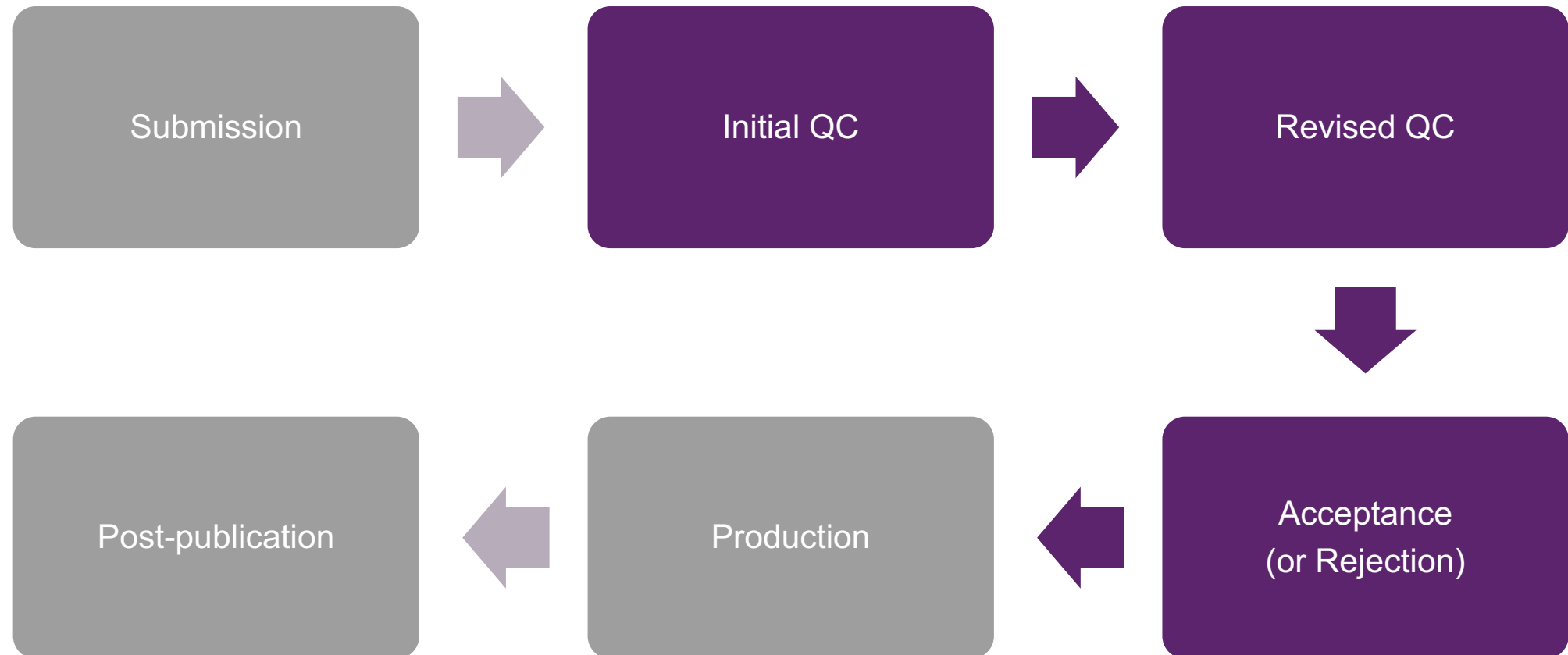
KWF Editorial

erin.mcmullan@kwfco.com

Why your journal?

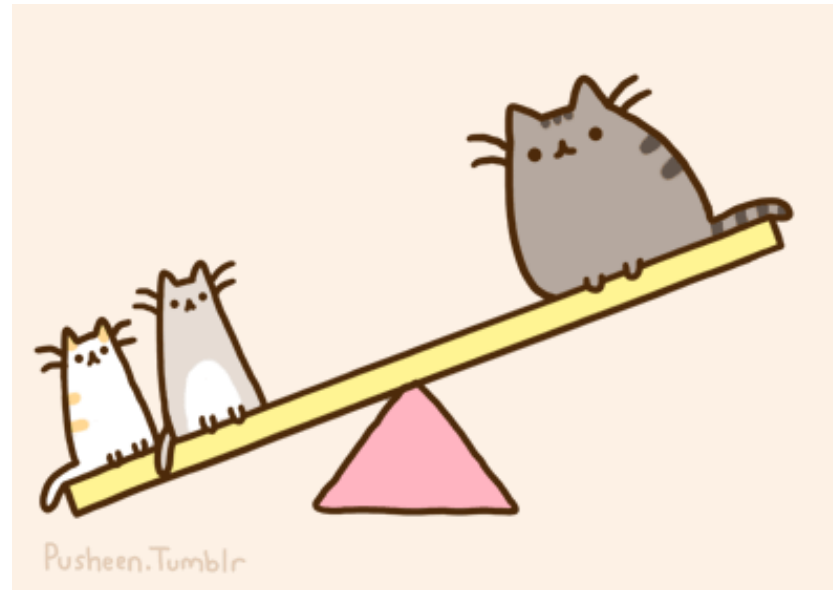


Author communication touchpoints



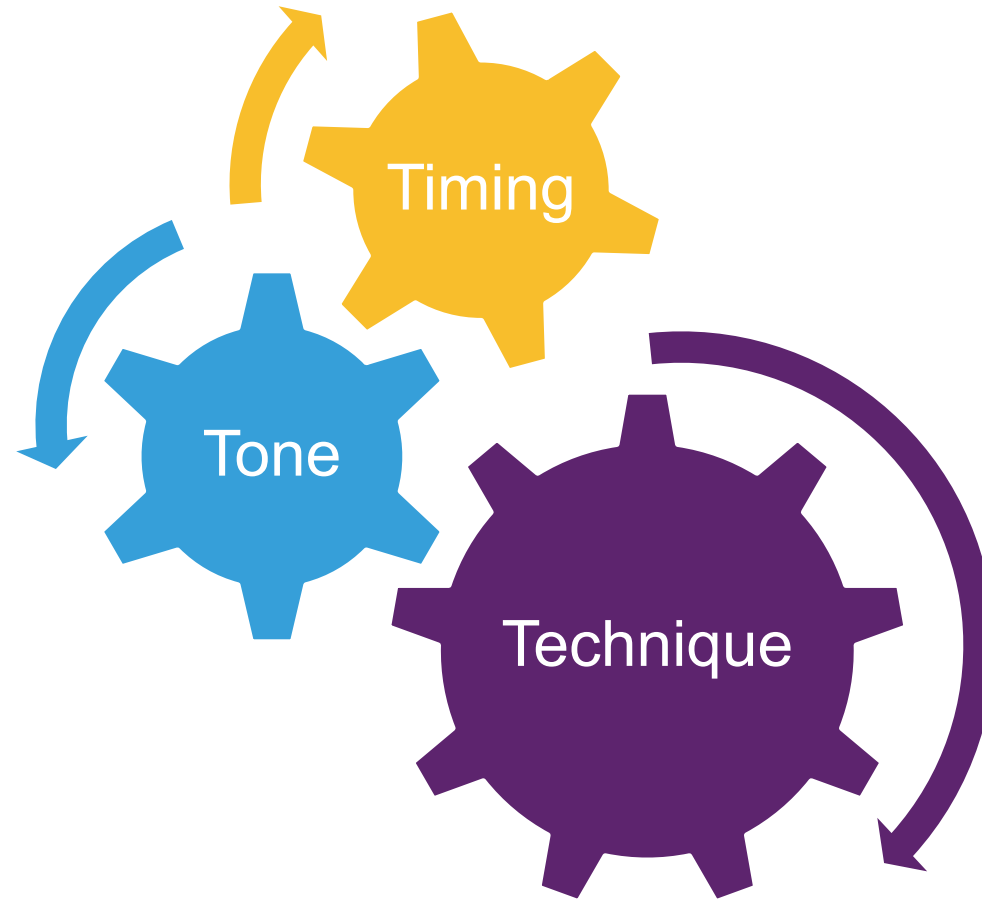
Balancing author needs and journal needs

- Ease of submission
- Clear instructions and comments
- Good customer service
- Timely publication



- Manuscripts fit for peer review
- Compliance with editorial policy
- Complete and timely responses

Three “T” author communications



IT'S NOT WHAT YOU SAID,
IT'S HOW YOU SAID IT



Tone is important

- Authors are your valued customers and that should be conveyed in the tone of all correspondence
 - “Your submission to XYZ journal is appreciated”
 - “Congratulations on your accepted manuscript”
 - “I know this is a busy time of year, but I hope that you can respond to provide the following outstanding items for your manuscript...”
 - “Please address the point outlines below. If you have any questions, don’t hesitate to contact me at...”
 - “We regret that we cannot accept this manuscript for publication, but hope that you will consider XYZ journal again for future submissions”

Clarity is important

- Make sure that requirements are clear and easy to read; a bulleted list is recommended
- Avoid including too much text in the letter; provide links to relevant sections in the IFA if more detail is needed
- Read reviewer comments and edit comments that are inflammatory (or flag to editor)
- Be clear on the timeline and provide a contact
 - “Please upload your revised manuscript within 30 days. If you will not be able to meet this deadlines, please contact XYZ”

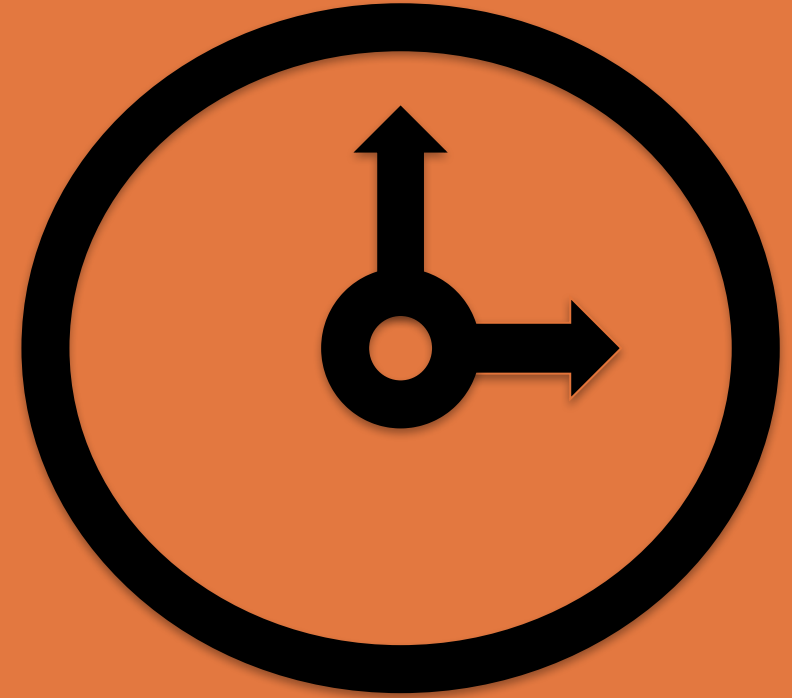
At acceptance

- Provide useful information to your authors
 - Production and publication—what happens next
 - Article reuse and reprints
 - Press release information or other special marketing plans
- Let author know how they can track article-level metrics

If rejected

- If possible, provide a reason for the rejection
- Explain the rebuttal process or specify that the journal does not reconsider manuscripts once a decision has been made
- Thank them for the submission and welcome future submissions

TIMING IS EVERYTHING



Value author and reviewer time

When developing QC checklists, assess the level of scrutiny or actions appropriate at different stages

- Initial QC
 - How likely is a desk rejection?
 - Are images clear enough to review the manuscript?
 - Is English language a significant problem for this manuscript?
- Revised QC
 - Is acceptance or transfer likely?
 - How large are the author groups?
 - What is the process/policy of the publisher with regards to forms?
- Acceptance or “Provisional Accept with Checklist” letter
 - Authors may feel motivated to respond quickly if their acceptance awaits wrapping up remaining requirements

Deadlines

- Work with your EIC to determine the correct time allowance for revision at each stage; these vary by discipline
- A longer window does not necessarily improve compliance with deadlines
- Consider the deadline when reading through reviewer comments; a two week deadline may not be appropriate if a reviewer asks for new experiments
- Clearly convey the deadline to the author in the decision letter
- Provide a timeframe after which a manuscript will be withdrawn from the system if there is no response and note whether it can be resubmitted after that time

Thoughtful chasing

- Set up auto-reminders for:
 - 1-2 weeks before due date
 - At due date
 - At intervals after deadline
- Be diligent about updating the system if an extension is given
- Send an email and/or phone the author if there is no response to auto-reminders
- Elevate to a manager or editor when appropriate (particularly for an invited manuscript)
- Withdraw manuscripts where authors are MIA for a significant period; alert the author and editor prior to withdrawal

THE FIRST THING IS THE WILL, THE REST IS TECHNIQUE

~HALLDOR LAXNESS¹

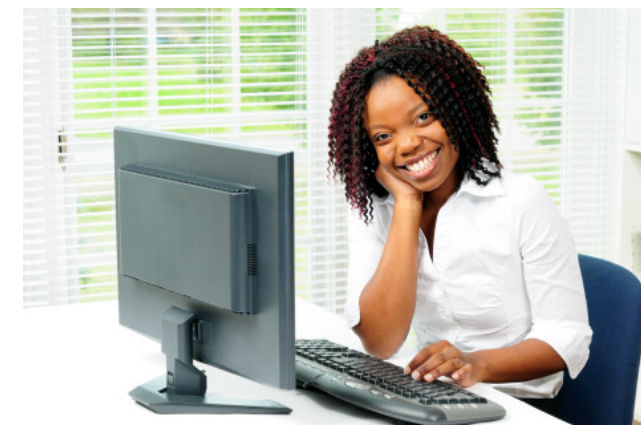
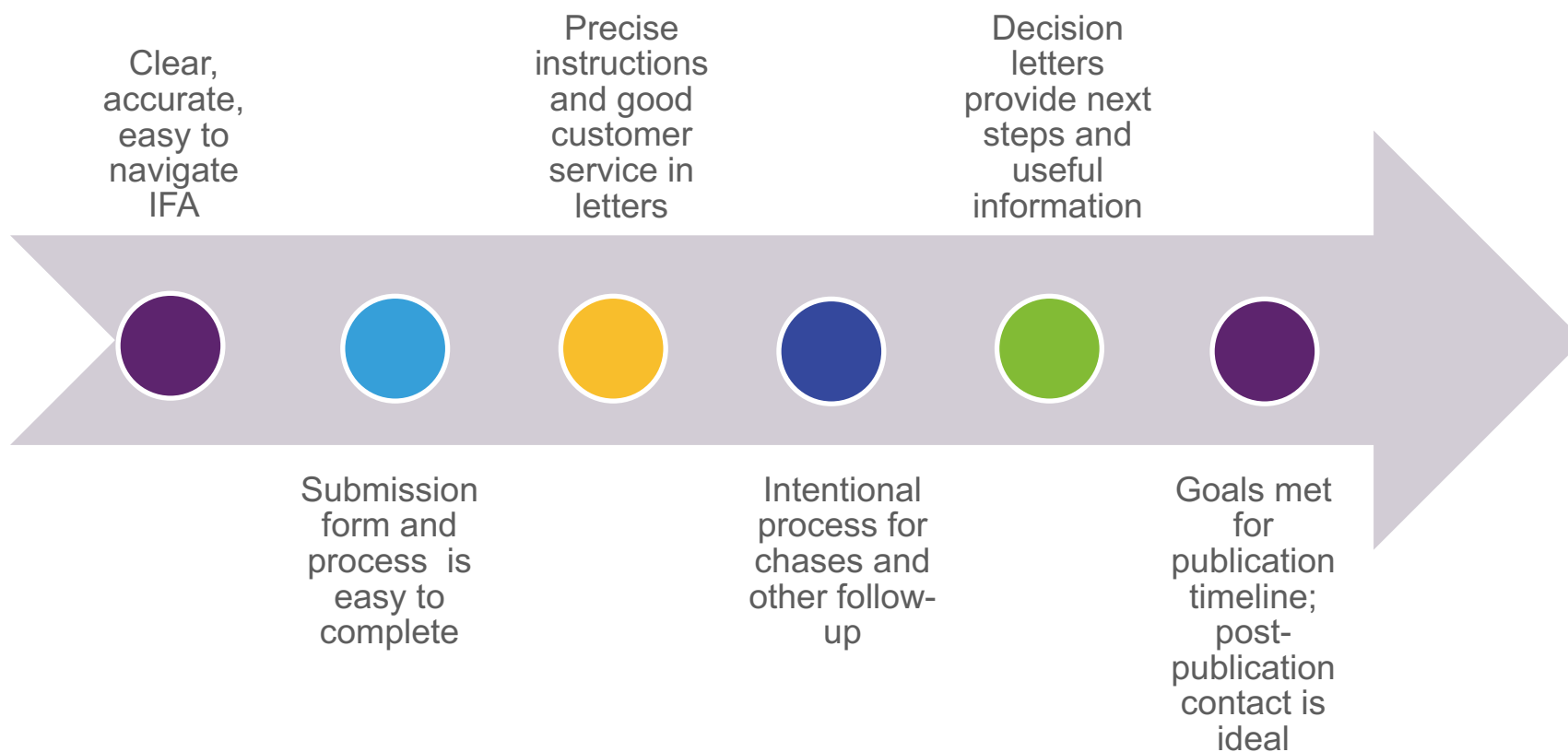


1. Kristnihald undir Jökli (Under the Glacier/Christianity at Glacier, 1968)

Editorial office tips

- Pre-load information into templates, then delete what isn't relevant
- Confirm technical requirements for tables, files, and images at regular intervals
- Keep up with editorial best practices and the research reporting guidelines in your discipline
- Compare letter templates and IFA often; these are living documents that should be kept current and consistent
- Pay attention to author feedback

Communications success



Happy author

Thank you!

