NTU Library

Journal metrics indicators
- supporting your decision of where to publish

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### Contents

Introduction .................................................................................................................. 2

Journal metric indicators in more detail....................................................................... 2

- SNIP (Source Normalised Impact per Paper) for citation potential.................. 2
- SNIP – identifying titles in top journal percentiles ........................................... 3
- SNIP – identifying subject/disciplinary rankings ............................................... 4
- SJR (Scimago Journal and Country Rank) for citation potential ..................... 6
- SJR - identifying subject/disciplinary rankings and quartiles ....................... 7
- Journal Citation Reports (JCR): Journal Impact Factor (IF) ......................... 8
- Where to find Journal Impact Factors? ......................................................... 9
- JCR - identifying subject rankings and journal quartiles ............................ 10
- JCR – Immediacy Index............................................................................. 11
- JCR – other key metric indicators ........................................................... 11
Introduction

Historically journal citation metrics acted as an indicator of the overall influence of a journal and how it performed against other titles in the wider publishing world. Although functioning as a loose proxy for journal quality, these metrics do not account for variant citation behaviour in different disciplines. The most well-known of these traditional journal metrics is the Impact Factor (a proprietary metric owned by Thomson-Reuters) which is based on the yearly average number of citations to articles published in a journal.

A newer generation of journal metrics utilise ‘normalisation’ techniques which adjust for disciplinary variance in publication and citation behaviour. Like the Impact Factor these metrics are based on the citation counts of previous years but they are able to provide a measure of the potential for citation in a selected publication.

The key journal metric used at NTU is Source Normalised Impact per Paper (SNIP) which is presented both within the Scopus database and also independently. Alongside SNIP is another useful metric available via Scopus is ScImago Journal Rank (SJR). Both of these metrics also help to identify journals within the top journal percentiles and where they rank within subject areas.

These ‘normalised’ metrics can support decision making when deciding where to publish by identifying publications which offer the greatest potential for citation. This is important as it supports NTU’s citation improvement agenda.

Please note that not all journals have accompanying metric data; this could be due to age of a particular journal, its lack of measurable impact, its omission from key research databases or, in some cases, where it is not a genuine journal title. More information about your target journals can be found by using the Ulrich’s Periodicals Directory or by contacting your Research Support Librarian.

Journal metric indicators in more detail

SNIP (Source Normalised Impact per Paper) for citation potential
SNIP measures a source or publication’s contextual citation impact: it considers characteristics of the source's subject field, particularly the frequency at which authors cite other papers and the speed at which citation impact matures. e.g. Life Sciences tend to have much higher publication and citation rates than Arts and Humanities, therefore a citation in a discipline with low citation behaviour has higher impact than that in a high citation discipline.

The scoring scale brings everything down to 1 for easy comparison. So a journal with a SNIP value >1 has above average citation potential and journal with a SNIP value <1

1 More detail on how these metrics are calculated can be found here: https://www.journalmetrics.com.
N.B. SNIP values are only available for journals indexed in Scopus.

SNIP values can easily be obtained (and compared for decision-making) using the 'Compare Journals' tool available via www.scopus.com (SNIP values are only available for journals indexed in Scopus).

Enter the title of your publication, select the SNIP radio button and search:

Select your title from the list and it will be automatically added to graph, you can then opt to add up to ten titles to help you make a comparison (this can be viewed as a graph or table).

SNIP – identifying titles in top journal percentiles
These metrics are updated annually, and the latest SNIP values pertaining to journal position in the top journal percentiles are available here.
SNIP – identifying subject/disciplinary rankings
Subject rankings by SNIP are not available in Scopus, you will need to access them by going directly to the CWTS Journal Indicators website: http://www.journalindicators.com/

- Select the indicators tab

![CWTS Journal Indicators](image)

- Select your Main Subject Area (and Subarea where applicable)
- This will produce a list of sources ordered by SNIP rank

![Journal indicators](image)

- So in the example above *The Lancet Oncology* is ranked 2/277 in the subject area of Oncology.
Identifying Subject areas from a journal title

- Search for your publication by title

**Journal indicators**

- Select the title from the list to display the subject areas.

**The Lancet Oncology**

- Return to the main search page and then search by category/subcategory without entering your journal title, then you can see its position in the list.
SJR (Scimago Journal and Country Rank) for citation potential

Although a normalised metric similar to SNIP, SJR is based on a more complicated algorithm\(^2\) which incorporates an element of prestige in its scoring (higher weighting is ascribed to citations received from better ‘quality’ titles). As with SNIP:

**The scoring scale brings everything down to 1 for easy comparison.**

**So a journal with a SJR value >1 has above average citation potential and journal with a SJR value <1.**

**N.B. SJR values are only available for journals indexed in Scopus.**

SJR values, like SNIP values, can easily be found (and compared for decision-making) using the ‘Compare Journals’ tool available via [www.scopus.com](http://www.scopus.com).

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2 More information can be found here: [www.journalindicators.com](http://www.journalindicators.com)
SJR - identifying subject/disciplinary rankings and quartiles

Subject rankings by SJR are not available in Scopus, you will need to access them by going directly to the SJR website.

Select ‘journal rankings’ from the top of the page:

Then use the drop down menus to select ‘subject area’ and/or ‘subject category’ and ‘journals’ as appropriate. You will be provided with a list in SJR order, scroll through the list to discover where the publication ranks, this will also provide you with information about which the journal’s position within a subject area.

So in the example below the English Language Teaching ranks 217/659 in the subject of Language and Linguistics and is in the Q2 = Top 50%

If the subject category contains many titles it is probably easier to download the information into a spreadsheet to easily find the rank.
Identifying subject areas from a journal title
When you have the title but are unsure of the subject category, you can use the journal title search on the SJR homepage

This display also gives you lots of visual information including journal quartiles for different categories which can be found by hovering your mouse over the coloured boxes:

Journal Citation Reports (JCR): Journal Impact Factor (IF)
This is probably the most well-known and long established metric used as a proxy for journal quality. It has been criticised from several quarters\(^3\) many due to the following:

- The way it is calculated is less than transparent\(^4\) (primarily this due to the fact that it is a proprietary metric owned by Thomson-Reuters, a commercial company)
- It makes no distinction for varying citation/publication behaviour between disciplines i.e. Life Sciences tends to have greater publication and citation activity and therefore impact factors will always be much higher in this area.

\(^3\) [http://www.ascb.org/dora/](http://www.ascb.org/dora/)
N.B. Impact Factors are only available for journals indexed in Web of Science.

Despite criticisms it still provides something of a gauge of influence and prestige and can be a useful metric when combined with expert opinion and other metrics.

Where to find Journal Impact Factors?
This information is available via the Journal Citation Reports (JCR) link in the Thomson Reuter's Web of Science database.

From the JCR home page type the title of the journal in the search box and you will be taken to the a profile page of that publication which includes a range of key information about that journal including its Impact Factor.
JCR - identifying subject rankings and journal quartiles
Subject category and ranking information can also be found on the journal profile page in JCR.

Please note that the title may fall into more than one category.

If you scroll down the page, you will notice the option of ‘Rank’ – this will provide you with the ranking of the journal within all categories in which it is listed as well as the quartile which is a journal’s position within a subject area i.e. Q1 = Top 25%.
JCR – Immediacy Index
The Immediacy Index is the average number of times an article is cited in the year it is published and indicates how quickly articles in a journal are cited.

This metric can provide a useful perspective to inform your choice of publication when you need to accumulate citations quickly, e.g. when publishing close to the deadline for REF submission.

The higher the number, the better your potential to accrue citations more quickly.

JCR – other key metric indicators
JCR provides a range of different metrics, many of which are based on complicated algorithms and are beyond the scope of this guide, more information on the calculation and potential use of these metrics can be found here.

Further help and support is available from the Library Research Team.