Fast Track Submission in Management Science
(Revised January 2019)

Last year, the editorial board of Management Science introduced Fast Track, a submission process designed to attract short papers with high quality, original and high-impact research that is of broad interest, analogous to what might appear in Science, Nature, or PNAS. We are looking for empirical, modeling, or theoretical papers with significant contributions and concise presentations.

My objective in this document is to clarify what Fast Track papers are, provide details on the length and the review process as well as offer guidelines to authors and reviewers about the new submission process.

The primary motivation for the new submission process is to serve as a platform for the most innovative and impactful papers and to disseminate them in a timely manner that reaches beyond our community. Indeed, some of the most influential papers in our community have been quite short. For instance, Nash's seminal paper on the existence of equilibrium in non-cooperative games published in 1950 in *Annals of Mathematics* is a short nine-page paper. Similarly, a five-page article published in 1961 in *Operations Research* by John D. Little and entitled "A Proof for the Queuing Formula $L = \lambda W$" has been one of the most-cited papers in our field.

Importantly, a review of papers published in Management Science in the last forty years suggests that a few decades ago papers published in the journal were significantly shorter, with a ten-page limit. So, if there are ample examples that illustrate that short, concise papers can make a big impact, why in the last few decades have we seen a steady increase in the length of papers published by our community? My intuition, motivated by discussions with senior and junior academics in the community, is that authors are engaged in **defensive writing**. That is, authors are concerned that the review team will raise a variety of issues— for example, the paper does not contain enough results or the validation process does not include any possible benchmark--and they try to address every possible issue that might be raised by the review team before the review process begins. Thus, my objective in Fast Track is to change the emphasis and the writing style of the Management Science community in a way that allows us to go back to our roots and, at the same time, reach a broader audience.

Publication Criteria: When deciding whether a paper is worthy of publication as a Fast Track, editors should focus on its main contribution and start by answering the following question:

- Are the contributions of the paper, without robustness checks, extensions, full generalizations, etc., consistent with those of a regular length publication?

The objective of this question is to find out whether a regular length version of the paper is likely to meet the publication standards of the journal. Thus, Fast Track or no Fast Track, papers must have the management Science quality.

To be a Fast Track, a paper must also satisfy **at least one** of the following three criteria that will characterize the distinctive features of Fast Track papers:

1. *The paper will have a substantial impact on academic research, that is, will open up new research directions or will have many follow up work;*
2. *The* paper will have immediate applicability to some managerial or societal problems;
3. The paper will be appealing to a broad audience, e.g., The Economist, WSJ, FT, etc.

It is useful to illustrate the three criteria using examples of past Management Science papers that, if shortened, fit the editorial board vision for Fast Track papers. Examples of recent papers that satisfy at least
- **Criteria 1,** the work on "Intertemporal Price Discrimination" (by Omar Besbes and Ilan Lobel, 2015) and "Prospect Theory Explains Newsvendor Behavior" (Xiaoyang Long, Javad Nasiry, 2015);
- **Criteria 2**, the paper on "Remanufacturing" (Vishal V. Agrawal, Atalay Atasu, and Koert van Ittersum, 2015) or "Safety Tipping Points in Hospitals" (Ludwig Kuntz, Roman Mennicken, Stefan Scholtes, 2015);
- **Criteria 3**, the paper on "Strategic Consumers" (Jun Li, Nelson Granados, Serguei Netessine, 2014) and "Offline Showrooms in Omnichannel Retail" (David R. Bell, Santiago Gallino, Antonio Moreno, 2018).

Fast Track is not just about speed; speed is a reward that comes with papers that present an idea that can solve practical and interesting problems in the science of management, without the unnecessary bells and whistles that come with most Management Science articles these days.

Fast Track papers are not Research Notes. Specifically, a Fast Track paper is a *full academic paper* that succinctly makes an important contribution. By contrast, a

research note is a short communication that, for example, clarifies previous research or describes work in progress but does not stand on its own as a full paper.

Length and Review Process: Fast Track papers should be no more than 6,000 words (including references and anything else not provided in a separate supplementary appendix), which is about 15 double-spaced pages. These papers will undergo faster review, with initial decisions being returned to the authors within no more than five weeks. Papers will either be accepted with potentially modest revisions, or rejected. Authors invited to revise their work should do so within a matter of weeks; the final decision will follow within two weeks. Papers accepted through this track will be made available in "articles in advance" within weeks after acceptance and will have the same look and feel as regular papers.

For Authors: If you have a project that may be a good fit, please do not hesitate to contact any of the Management Science Department Editors to seek feedback on whether it may be an appropriate Fast Track submission. If you decide to submit a paper to Fast Track, please keep in mind that the price authors pay for the short review cycle time is limited feedback on submitted papers. Authors will receive mostly an up-or-down decision with a potential request for a minor revision if the paper is on a path for acceptance. A rejected Fast Track paper cannot be re-submitted as a regular paper unless the Department Editor specifically invites such a resubmission. In this case, it is the responsibility of the authors to reveal this in their cover letter.

For the Review Team: Department and Associate Editors should be focusing on whether or not the contribution claimed in the paper is worthy of a Fast Track publication. Reviewers should mostly focus on whether the analysis justifies the findings and not whether the findings are worthy of publication. The review team should be able to evaluate the main contribution of the paper without the need to review the supplementary appendix.

Finally, this is a new format for *Management Science* introduced at the beginning of 2018 where we received more than two hundred Fast Track submissions, some of which were accepted. During the year, we have learnt about the process and publication criteria and this motivated the editorial board to revise both to make sure we improve the journal and its impact on the community and beyond. Going forward, I would like to encourage the entire community to share their thoughts, observations, concerns and questions with the EIC as you gain more experience with Fast Track. I hope that this collective experience will help us further evolve and improve the Fast Track review process.

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