

APSA 2016 journal ranking exercise: report on methodology

APSA'S REVISED JOURNAL RANKING

In 2016 the APSA Executive Council decided to re-visit the Association's journal rankings. Following the completion of this process, a proposed revised journal ranking was placed on the APSA website, and then put to a vote at the 2016 AGM. The new ranking is the successor to the one originally drawn up in 2006 for the Research Quality Framework, and that later underwent several revisions as part of the Excellence in Research Australia (ERA) initiative. Though ERA 2012 dropped the journal rankings, many Australian universities still use these rankings for internal purposes, and the rankings for political science (1606) and public administration (1605) are still current for the Association. The aim of the revision was primarily to incorporate new journals not on the last list, but also to reflect changes in journals' standings and correct errors.

The Committee comprised Professors Kath Gelber (University of Queensland), Adrian Kay (ANU), Anika Gauja (University of Sydney) and Jason Sharman (Griffith University). The committee's decision-making took into account the following:

1. Previous rankings in APSA 2011 and 2013 and ERA 2010 lists.
2. The evidence-based cases made to us by group and individual submissions to the review process. These utilised comparative impact factors, proportion of articles published in that journal by political scientists, rejection rates, and citation rates.
3. We specified that in group and individual submissions, people should identify conflicts of interest (e.g. being on the editorial board of a journal they were seeking to have promoted, being an author with the journal, etc) to impose a check on the proportion of self-interested submissions looking to improve individuals' own positions, as opposed to disinterested and objective attempts to improve the accuracy of the ranking.
4. Journals that are not double-blind peer-refereed received lower rankings. Journals that are only partly or tangentially related to FoRs 1605 and 1606 were generally excluded from the ranking. Though this involved many difficult judgment calls, the basic principle was that APSA is only qualified to assess journals that are substantively within the discipline.
5. We maintained the proportions at 5% A*, 15% A, 30% B and 50% C to retain the integrity and credibility of the exercise. This entailed dropping some journals to a lower ranking in order to accommodate those we wished to upgrade. So we explicitly considered downgrading some journals, and did not only consider upgrades