

# AEJMC Refereed Research Guidelines for Determining Paper Acceptances

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To AEJMC Division & Interest Group Research Chairs:

As you know, the quantitative portion of the reviewing sheet contains the following categories:

- Clarity of purpose
- Literature review
- Clarity of research method
- Appropriateness of research method
- Evidence relates to purpose of paper
- Evidence is presented clearly
- Evidence supports conclusions
- Writing and organization
- Relevance of focus of division
- Significant contribution to field

Each paper should receive a numerical score, ranging from 1-5 in each of the above categories. Based on the three reviews for each paper, you'll have three separate scores for each of the 10 categories. From there, you'll calculate a mean score for each of the 10 categories and then arrive at a numerical code that represents the "score" for that paper. But, it's very possible that several papers may wind up with the same numerical score at the end, so there needs to be a way for you, as the research chair, to figure out what to do with it all. The other big issue is that despite efforts to line up paper judges who are qualified in the topic area of each paper, the reality of the situation is that it just doesn't always happen. So, again, the z-scores are used as another way to compare scores on any given measure, to convert scores to percentile rankings, and determine the percentage of scores under the normal curve.

Since you will not necessarily assign the same three judges to the same papers, it is important to account for the variability in responses. The z-score gives you a standardized score for each paper, which will then allow you to establish a percentile rank for each paper, relative to all of the papers submitted to your division or interest group. In quantitative terms, the z-score will tell you how many standard deviations a given paper is away from the mean score of the entire group. Basically, the z-score will tell you how far away a paper is from the average score of the entire group. So, the z-score will tell you what percentage of papers falls below a given score (this may aid in determining your cut-out point for acceptances), and it will tell you the relative standing of a score within a distribution of scores.

To calculate a z-score, you'll need three values:

1. the mean score for all papers submitted to your division or group;
2. the mean score for each individual paper (the sum out of a possible 100)
3. the standard deviation for #1

A paper can have a positive or a negative z-score. A positive score means the individual paper's score is higher than the mean; a negative score means the individual paper is below the mean.

Each of your groups has already determined the approximate number of slots you will have to use for research papers. Before you start notifying authors of acceptances or rejections, it is very important for you to know exactly how many papers you can accept so that you can then look at your z-score tally to determine how many papers will make the cut. Divisions and interest groups are encouraged to pay attention to their acceptance rates—you do not want it to be significantly higher or lower than the guideline; however, slight fluctuations in meeting this acceptance rate are quite normal. This is why it is important to look at the distribution of scores so you can determine what the most appropriate cut-off point is. You may have several papers that are all relatively close in their standardized score. Then, you may see a huge drop-off. This is where you can make an obvious cut in what gets accepted and what doesn't.

#### **N-score or the Normalized score**

The normalized score takes the Z-score and applies it to the raw score and plots it on a bell curve. It applies a pre-generated number from 0 to 100 that “normalizes” the curve as well as the score. The N-score is still reviewer-specific, meaning, it only applies a score and a curve with the scores of that one reviewer.

#### **T-score or the Transformed Raw Score**

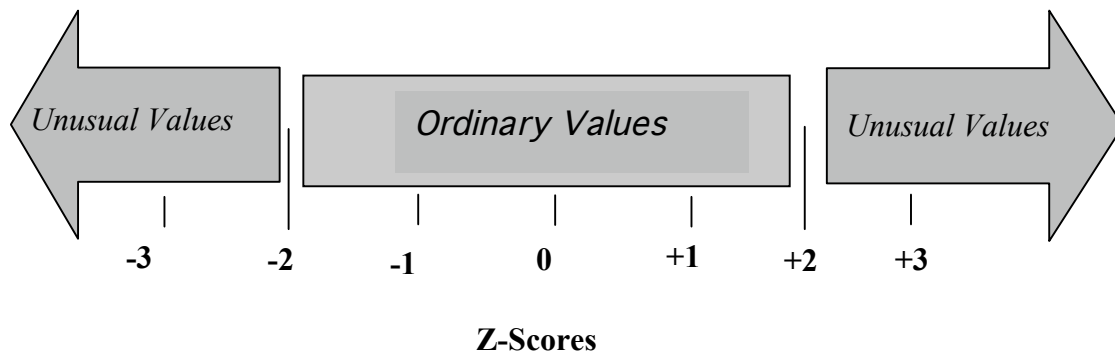
The transformation score takes the Z-score and applies it to the raw score and plots it on a bell curve with all of the scores from all submissions and reviewers. This is likely the most beneficial score for reviewers to use but it is most accurate if there are multiple reviews from each reviewer for each submission.

#### **What information will be computed for you via the All-Academic site?**

All-Academic will calculate and tabulate all of the numbers. Once all of the reviews have been submitted, you'll be able to view each paper's total average score, and then you'll see its standardized score (the z-score). If you go to the status menu for your division/interest group, you can see all of the options under the “completed reviews report” in the management area (top of each status menu). Each of you should be able to control how you would like the report loaded.

#### **What will you need to do?**

Once all of the reviews have been entered, you'll need to look at your summary list of all scores for all papers submitted. You will then need to determine where an appropriate cut-off point is in terms of the number of papers you accept. Remember, the guidelines for paper acceptance rates are merely that—guidelines. So, if you fall a little above or below that acceptance rate, it's ok. The important factor is ensuring you feel you've accepted the best papers. For some of the larger divisions, it is quite common to see papers with very high scores getting rejected simply because of a lack of space. However, on the flip side, we've seen other divisions or interest groups say they felt they accepted papers that weren't very good because they were trying to keep their acceptance rate at 50%. This is how the z-scores can help you because it will tell you how many standard deviations any given paper is away from the average for the group. You may not be accepting any papers with a negative z-score because you'll want to accept all of the papers receiving higher z-scores.



### **What does this mean?**

Your score of 0 represents the mean—the average of the scores given to all papers submitted to your division or interest group. The plus scores would represent papers that were better than average, and the minus scores represent papers that were lower than average.

The ordinary range of values is between -2.00 and +2.00, whereas values greater than -2.00 and +2.00 are considered unusual. If you have papers in the +2.50 range or greater, it just means the paper received very high marks, and that's a good thing. You should only concern yourself about papers falling in the unusual range on the negative side.

Using z-scores should facilitate the process for you. It should remove subjectivity from the process entirely and allow you to gauge where your papers for this year fall in terms of the range of scores. You'll have to decide what your cut-off point is, but beyond that, the tabulations done for you on All-Academic should make your lives much easier when it comes down to making decisions about acceptances or rejections.