FAQ Revision/Sustainability • Spring, 2016

For this final step in the Conference Paper writing process, you will revise your Conference Paper. This revision involves two interrelated tasks: 1) integrating significant new material—a discussion on sustainability, and 2) strengthening the overall clarity and impact of your Conference Paper.

Q. What, exactly, are the expectations for “revision?” What will readers and evaluators expect from our revision? What is our revision task?

A. Strong revision of any writing requires that a paper’s authors seriously return to the work-at-hand and rewrite for improved clarity, authority, and impact. Revision allows writers to fix “sentence-level issues”—awkward wording or phrasing, problematic sentence structure, proofreading errors, grammar and punctuation errors—and to “fix” problems with references and format, but revision involves far more than “fixing” such “error.” Revision requires strengthening all aspects of your paper

• by continuing to refine and clarify central claims, questions, issues, problems
• by adding details, data, explanation, and analyses
• by including additional examples or replacing weak examples with stronger ones
• by reinforcing cohesion and coherence via more specifically articulated connections
• by rearranging material for improved coherence and impact
• by incorporating entirely new material, as required--for instance, as required by the sustainability “change order”

To bring every section of your paper and your paper-as-a-whole up to 100% clarity and impact, you must introduce and contextualize any significant new material, while reviewing and rewriting existing material

Q. So, to meet the “add sustainability” change order, all we need to do is add one 600-word section on sustainability?

A. NO! “ADDING” a 600-word sustainability section is NOT (NOT! NOT! NOT!) “ALL YOU NEED TO DO!”

While your discussion of sustainability might be primarily located in a “new” section of your paper, if “all you do” is “add a section,” you will not be providing the overall cohesion and coherence required for any strong paper. Your Conference Paper topic now involves particular definitions and aspects of sustainability. Your abstract must make note of this. Your introduction and conclusion must make note of this. Your paper-as-a-whole will be affected by your discussion of sustainability; throughout your paper, you must “preview” and connect to your discussion of sustainability.

Q. Should our revised Conference Paper be longer than the original version?

A. Definitely yes—you will be adding a section on sustainability (See “Add Sustainability” for further details).

You are required to add at least 600 words on sustainability. You will also be adding (briefly) to your abstract, introduction, and conclusion to reflect this new content. You are NOT just affixing a section on sustainability to the end of your paper. If you choose to locate most of your discussion of sustainability in one section, this section must be integral—connected—to the paper-as-a-whole. So, in addition to other changes you might be making to improve your paper’s clarity and impact, you will also be noting, throughout your paper, that sustainability is an integral, significant aspect of your paper.

Note that you might also be adding other material—details, data, examples, explanations, etc.—to maximize clarity and impact
of all your information areas/sections. This will also increase the word count of your paper. For example:

• Your “original Conference Paper was approximately 5000 words. You incorporated approximately 600 words of regarding sustainability. Your Conference Paper Revision will be approximately 5600 words—that is fine.
• Your Original” Conference Paper was approximately 5040 words. As you revised, however, you “trimmed out” about 250 words of overly general or redundant information. You have also incorporated approximately 600 words regarding sustainability. Your Conference paper Revision is now approximately 5390 words—that is fine
• Your original Conference Paper was approximately 5000 words. When revising, you added approximately 300 words of additional, needed clarification/exemplification. You have also incorporated approximately 600 words of discussion regarding sustainability, Your Conference paper Revision is now 5900 words—that is fine

The important aspect of “word count” is to include all the specificity, support, and connections needed for maximum clarity and authority. There is no exact “word count” that will accomplish this clarity and cohesion for each and every paper for this
Conference. However, very large differences between word count guidelines and your actual word count indicate a problem with scope and/or specificity. If you think you are finished with your Conf. Paper Revision and you have only 4000 words or you think you have everything in good shape but you paper is running at 7800 words, you most likely have some writing issues to address and resolve.

Q. In our paper, we already wrote about “ethics” and/or “social impact.” Should we incorporate sustainability into these aspects of our paper?

A. In many cases this will be an effective strategy for seriously addressing sustainability. You can now, if appropriate, orient your discussions of ethics and/or social impact towards definitions and considerations of “sustainability.” Do not, though, just throw the term “sustainability” into a previously written discussion on ethics and social impact; be sure you are showing readers what you mean by sustainability, why that meaning is important, and how concepts and actions related to sustainability are crucial to the engineering you are describing/advocating.

Q. We received a lower grade on our Conference Paper draft than we would have liked. What happened?

A. For many papers, the lower grade is due to a lack of specificity. For a substantial, complete Conference Paper, all claims must be well supported throughout, via data, details, and examples. Clarity will reach 100% only if extended explanations, applications of data, and technical detail are consistently provided. Also, if you had any problems with writing style, with error/proofreading, with correct references, and/or correct formatting, these issues affected your grade.

Q. Is it possible to get a lower grade on our Conference Paper Revision than we got on the first version of our Conference Paper?

A. YES, so BE CAREFUL. Now that you are writing a revision (with the benefit of your Writing Instructor’s, your Session Chair’s and Co-Chair’s, and your peer’s reviews), the “bar is raised” for quality of communication and presentation. If your revised paper does not show necessary attention to

- specificity,
- supporting data
- “concrete” examples and applications
- professional writing style
- source material/references
- format and presentation

your grade can go down, or may not improve as much as you had hoped.

Q. Will our “discussion on sustainability” affect our grade?

A. YES! The quality of your information/analyses regarding sustainability, and the care with which you integrate this additional information will affect your grade. Your revision should be the best paper you can write on your topic, with that topic now including sustainability.