

Teaching Journalism & Mass Communication

Ethics Code for Reviewers

Peer review of submitted manuscripts are completely anonymous. The authors are not to know who has completed the reviews, and in turn the reviewers are not to know who has written the submitted manuscript. Peer reviewers play an important role in the peer-review process of academic journals. These guidelines are based on the COPE Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers and are standards all peer reviewers should heed.

WHEN APPROACHED TO REVIEW:

- *respond in a reasonable time-frame, especially if they cannot do the review, and without intentional delay*
- *declare if they do not have the subject expertise required to carry out the review*
- *only agree to review a manuscript if they are fairly confident they can return a review within the proposed or mutually agreed time-frame, informing the journal promptly if they require an extension*
- *declare any potentially conflicting or competing interests (which may, for example, be personal, financial, intellectual, professional, political or religious), seeking advice from the journal if they are unsure whether something constitutes a relevant interest*
- *review afresh any manuscript they have previously reviewed for another journal as it may have changed between the two submissions and the journals' criteria for evaluation and acceptance may be different*
- *respect the confidentiality of peer review and not reveal any details of a manuscript or its review, during or after the peer-review process, beyond those that are released by the journal*
- *not use information obtained during the peer-review process for their own or any other person's or organization's advantage, or to disadvantage or discredit others*
- *not allow their reviews to be influenced by the origins of a manuscript, by the nationality, religious or political beliefs, gender or other characteristics of the authors, or by commercial considerations*
- *be objective and constructive in their reviews, refraining from being hostile or inflammatory and from making libellous or derogatory personal comments*
- *provide journals with personal and professional information that is accurate and a true representation of their expertise*
- *recognize that impersonation of another individual during the review process is considered serious misconduct*

WHILE PEER-REVIEWING

- *keep manuscript and review details confidential*
- *contact the journal editor if circumstances arise that prevents submitting a timely review, providing an accurate estimate of the time they will need to do a review if still asked to do so*
- *in the case of double-blind review, if they suspect the identity of the author(s) notify the journal if this knowledge raises any potential conflict of interest*
- *notify the journal immediately if they come across any irregularities, have concerns about ethical aspects of the work, are aware of substantial similarity between the manuscript and a concurrent submission to another journal or a published article, or suspect that misconduct may have occurred during either the research or the writing and submission of the manuscript; reviewers should, however, keep their concerns confidential and not personally investigate further unless the journal asks for further information or advice*
- *notify the journal immediately and seek advice if they discover either a conflicting interest that wasn't apparent when they agreed to the review or anything that might prevent them providing a fair and unbiased review*
- *read the manuscript, ancillary material (e.g. reviewer instructions, required ethics and policy statements, supplemental data files) and journal instructions thoroughly, getting back to the journal if anything is not clear and requesting any missing or incomplete items they need to carry out a full review*
- *notify the journal as soon as possible if they find they do not have the expertise to assess all aspects of the manuscript; they shouldn't wait until submitting their review as this will unduly delay the review process*
- *not involve anyone else in the review of a manuscript, including junior researchers they are mentoring, without first obtaining permission from the journal; the names of any individuals who have helped them with the review should be included with the returned review so that they are associated with the manuscript in the journal's records and can also receive due credit for their efforts*
- *ensure their review is based on the merits of the work and not influenced, either positively or negatively, by any personal, financial, or other conflicting considerations or by intellectual biases*
- *not contact the authors directly without the permission of the journal*

PREPARING THE REVIEWER REPORT

- *remember editor is looking to reviews for subject knowledge, good judgement, and an honest and fair assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the work and the manuscript*
- *be objective and constructive in their reviews and provide feedback that will help the authors to improve their manuscript*
- *not make derogatory personal comments or unfounded accusations*
- *be specific in their criticisms, and provide evidence with appropriate references to substantiate general statements such as, 'this work has been done before', to help editors in their evaluation and decision and in fairness to the authors*
- *remember it is the authors' paper and not attempt to rewrite it to their own preferred style if it is basically sound and clear; suggestions for changes that improve clarity are, however, important*
- *follow journals' instructions on the specific feedback that is required of them and, unless there are good reasons not to, the way this should be organized*
- *be aware of language issues that are due to the author writing in a language that is not their own, and phrase the feedback appropriately and with due respect*
- *make clear which suggested additional investigations are essential to support claims made in the manuscript under consideration and which will just strengthen or extend the work*
- *not prepare their report in a way that reflects badly or unfairly on another person*
- *not suggest that authors include citations to the reviewer's (or their associates') work merely to increase the reviewer's (or their associates') citation count or to enhance the visibility of their or their associates' work; suggestions must be based on valid academic or technological reasons*

AFTER COMPLETING THE PEER-REVIEW

- *continue to keep details of the manuscript and its review confidential*
- *respond promptly if contacted by a journal about matters related to their review of a manuscript and provide the information required*
- *contact the journal if anything relevant comes to light after they have submitted their review that might affect their original feedback and recommendations*
- *try to accommodate requests from journals to review revisions or resubmissions of manuscripts they have reviewed*
- *After the review you may receive an acknowledgement in email form that you can forward to be credited to your PUBLON account, which some universities are considering in promotions. PUBLON will ask for a copy of the review, but this is PROHIBITED for our journal as we respect the privacy of authors and their work.*