A Behind-the-Scenes Look at Peer Review: Insights From Editors and Reviewers

April 18, 2024
Anthony R. Artino Jr., PhD
Associate Dean for Educational Research
George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences

Heeyoung Han, PhD
Associate Professor, Department of Medical Education
Director of Faculty Affairs and Director of the Medical Education Research Fellowship Program
Southern Illinois University School of Medicine

Laura Weingartner, PhD
Assistant Professor, Undergraduate Medical Education
Research Director, Health Professions Education
University of Louisville School of Medicine

Michael Cameron
Staff Editor, Academic Medicine and MedEdPORTAL
Association of American Medical Colleges
The peer-review process

Anthony R. Artino Jr., PhD
Is #peerreview a blackbox? Peer review themed cartoon to get into that #FridayFeeling #PerRevWk16 #sciart #funfriday @Publons @arhpreston
## Journey of a Submitted Manuscript

### Author Main Menu
- Alternate Contact Information
- Unavailable Dates

### Author Checklist

**New Copyright Form Process For Revisions!**

Disclosure and Copyright forms are now collected electronically. The Additional Information submission step will lead you through the process.

In addition, the electronic Copyright Form will be emailed to all entered co-authors automatically at the revision stage.

**IMPORTANT:** Under 'Author Status,' please do not send the electronic Copyright Form manually at the initial submission stage. At the revision stage, you may track co-author responses via the 'Author Status' action item in your 'Revisions Being Processed' folders. You may edit a co-author's email address if you receive an undeliverable E-mail, view their Form responses, or resend the verification form to your co-authors.

### Production
- Submissions in Production (2)
- Current Task Assignments (0)

### New Submissions
- Submit New Manuscript
- Submissions Sent Back to Author (0)
- Incomplete Submissions (0)
- Submissions Waiting for Author's Approval (0)
- Submissions Being Processed (0)

### Revisions
- Submissions Needing Revision (0)
- Revisions Sent Back to Author (0)
- Incomplete Submissions Being Revised (0)
- Revisions Waiting for Author's Approval (0)
- Revisions Being Processed (0)
A “Generic” Manuscript Review Process

Approx. Acceptance Rates:
- JGME = 10-11%
- Acad Med = 8-10%
- Med Ed = 8-12%
- Advances = 10-15%

Average Timeline:
- Review (submission to acceptance): 6 months
- Published Online: an additional 3 months (up to an additional 12 months)

Manuscript Submitted
- Triaged by Staff
- Rejected

Triaged by Editor(s)
- Sent out for Peer Review
- Rejected
- Reviews Adjudicated by Editor(s)
- Revise and Resubmit: Minor Revisions
  - Accepted
  - Revised Manuscript
  - Generally means the article will be published, so long as minor fixes are made
  - Not a publication guarantee; editor will reconsider the article and the adequacy of revisions
- Revise and Resubmit: Major Revisions
  - Rejected

Single-blinded review: Identity of reviewers is anonymous, but author names visible to reviewers (or vice versa)
Double-blinded review: Identity of both the authors and reviewers is kept hidden (hard to accomplish)

Editor also considers journal’s mission, space, what’s been published previously, what’s hot, etc.

Average Timeline:
- Review (submission to acceptance): 6 months
- Published Online: an additional 3 months (up to an additional 12 months)

Desk Rejection
- Editor also considers journal’s mission, space, what’s been published previously, what’s hot, etc.
- Generally means the article will be published, so long as minor fixes are made
- Not a publication guarantee; editor will reconsider the article and the adequacy of revisions

Rejected

Never Resubmitted
- Approx. Acceptance Rates:
  - JGME = 10-11%
  - Acad Med = 8-10%
  - Med Ed = 8-12%
  - Advances = 10-15%

Revise and Resubmit:
Search Reviewer All Reviewers - Manuscript Number 1GME-D-19-#### by Classification

### Change Search Type

- [ ] Search My Publication  
- [ ] Search by Classification Matches  
- from [ ] All Reviewers  
Go

The number next to each Classification term below indicates the number of Reviewers with a Classification match. By selecting the Classification term(s) you will be able to view a list of those Reviewers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Number of Reviewers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36.500</td>
<td>Internal Medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.100</td>
<td>Curricula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.200</td>
<td>Health Disparities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Page: 1 of 1 (3 total Classification matches)  
Display [ ] results per page.

Page: 1 of 1 (3 total Classification matches)  
Display [ ] results per page.

[Cancel]  [Submit]
### Reviewer Candidates

Select a checkbox by each person you wish to select as a Reviewer (more...).

#### Page: 1 of 2 (136 total Reviewers)  
Display [100] results per page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Select As Inv.</th>
<th>Board Member</th>
<th>Classifications</th>
<th>Reviewer Statistics (Agreed Invitations)</th>
<th>Invitation Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|                | MD (Reviewer) College of Medicine Residency | 1 Class match with MS  
* 22.200: Health Disparities | Reviews In Progress: 1  
Completed Reviews: 8  
Un-assigned After Agreeing: 0  
Terminated After Agreeing: 0  
Last Review Agreed: 01/28/2019  
Last Review Completed: 02/05/2019  
Last Review Declined: -  
Avg Days Outstanding: 18  
Manuscript Rating: 70  
Avg Review Rating: 72.6 | Date Last Invited: 01/24/2019  
Outstanding Invitations: 0  
Agreed: 9  
Declined: 0  
Un-invited Before Agreeing: 4  
Terminated: 0  
Total Invitations: 13 |
|                | PhD (Reviewer) | 2 Class match with MS  
* 9.100: Curriculum  
* 22.200: Health Disparities | Reviews In Progress: 0  
Completed Reviews: 0  
Un-assigned After Agreeing: 0  
Terminated After Agreeing: 0  
Last Review Agreed: -  
Last Review Completed: -  
Last Review Declined: 05/28/2019  
Avg Days Outstanding: 0  
Manuscript Rating: 0  
Avg Review Rating: 0 | Date Last Invited: 01/27/2019  
Outstanding Invitations: 0  
Agreed: 0  
Declined: 2  
Un-invited Before Agreeing: 0  
Terminated: 0  
Total Invitations: 2 |
|                | MPH, CCRP (Reviewer) | 2 Class match with MS  
* 9.100: Curriculum  
* 22.200: Health Disparities | Reviews In Progress: 0  
Completed Reviews: 15  
Un-assigned After Agreeing: 0  
Terminated After Agreeing: 0  
Last Review Agreed: 01/31/2019  
Last Review Completed: 02/14/2019  
Last Review Declined: -  
Avg Days Outstanding: 21  
Manuscript Rating: 63  
Avg Review Rating: 85.0 | Date Last Invited: 01/31/2019  
Outstanding Invitations: 0  
Agreed: 15  
Declined: 0  
Un-invited Before Agreeing: 3  
Terminated: 0  
Total Invitations: 18 |
Do Reviewers Always Agree?

| Reviewers Agree: | 33% |
| Reviewers Disagree: | 67% |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Submission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Click the recommendation term to view the comments for the submission.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reviewer</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Reviewer 1)</td>
<td>Major Revision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reviewer 2)</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Author Decision Letter

| (Author) | |

View Manuscript Rating Card
The benefits of being a reviewer, what editors want, and tips for reviewing manuscripts

Laura Weingartner, PhD
Why Review?
Critical Service to Medical Education

Support quality literature

Develop professional identity

Establish national recognition
Improve Your Own Scholarship

See what’s new in your field & gain familiarity with research design

Engage with written scholarship as an *evaluator* rather than a consumer

Become a better researcher

Become a better writer
What do editors want?
Perspective from Your Area(s) of Expertise

As an expert, what are detailed strengths and weaknesses?

As a non-expert, what might confuse other readers?
Clear Feedback about the Work

- Methodology
- Study Design, Rigor, Limitations
- Presentation
- Organization, Clarity, Consistency
- Contribution
- Generalizability, Novelty, Timeliness
Have you ever been an author on the other end waiting?
Practical Tips for Peer Review
Provide actionable recommendations

Comments that are not clear or actionable may not be addressed appropriately

The results presented here are not novel.

Add context to the second paragraph of the discussion to justify how these findings make a novel contribution to the literature.
Authors frequently answer a question in the response to reviewers but do not revise the actual manuscript.
Tailor a consistent message in your review

- Comments to the Authors
- Brief Summary
- Review Strengths
- Major Improvement Areas
- Specific Feedback by Section

* Comments to the Authors

* Specific Ed. Recommendation
  * Copy Editing
  * Snark or Harsh Feedback
Tailor a consistent message in your review

Confidential Comments to the Editor

- Direct Language
- Fatal Flaws
- Recommendation Rationale
- Sensitive Concerns

- Inconsistent Feedback
- New Info to Improve Work
Limitations are OK if appropriately addressed

A lot of MedEd research is quasi-experimental

All research will have limitations

Ensure project-specific limitations are appropriately discussed

Resist urge to reject based on limitations unless it’s a fatal flaw
Choose a decision recommendation:

Accept
- Use sparingly on first round: copy-editing only

Minor Revisions
- Brief changes or clarifications beyond copy-editing

Major Revisions
- Large re-writes or additional analyses that are feasible

Reject
- Methodological flaws, audience mismatch, lacking novelty

Editors will consider the reviewer recommendations to make a final determination about the work!
Reviewing from the perspectives of conference and grant editors/chairs and reviewers

Heeyoung Han, Ph.D.
Heeyoung Han, Ph.D.

Professor, Medical Education
Southern Illinois University School of Medicine

CGEA MESRE Chair
(2018-2021)

GEA National Grant Committee (2021-)
GEA MESRE Chair-Elect (2024-)

TLM Journal
Deputy Editor (2012 -)
Why Is Reviewing Important?

- Community of practice for scholarship
- Professional network
- Reviewing as learning

Committee

Writers

Reviewers

Audience
Process for Reviewing Conference Abstracts

- Call for reviewers
  - GEA email listserv, regional GEA email listserv, DR-ED listserv
- Sign up for volunteering
  - Your professional experience and interest
- Rating and feedback
  - Evaluation criteria
- AAMC staff
  - Collect all reviews
Process for Reviewing Conference Abstracts (cont.)

- Conference Committee
  - Selection process – reviewer ratings, comments, and committee discussions
- Committee discussion points
  - Review quality
  - Topics – Audience interest, timeliness of the topic, significance
  - Considerations
    - Salami-slicing – redundant multiple abstracts from one project
    - Commercial promotion
Process for Reviewing Grants

- Review committee - Recruiting reviewers
  - Generally invitation-based
  - Call for reviewers
- Reviewer assignment
  - Topic expert
  - Methodology expert
  - Practice expert
- Rating and feedback
  - Evaluation criteria
  - Decision suggestion
  - Confidential feedback
- Review committee chair
  - Collect all reviews
Process for Reviewing Grants (cont.)

- Review Committee
  - Selection process – reviewer ratings, comments for the author/the committee, and committee discussions
- Committee discussion points
  - Review quality
  - Topics – Audience interest, timeliness of the topic, significance, potential impact in the field
  - Team expertise
  - Institutional support
  - Appropriate use of the budget
  - Considerations
    - Feasibility
    - Commercial promotion
Compare the processes of reviewing for conferences, grants, and journals

- **Similarities**
  - Audience specific, program goals specific
  - Evaluation criteria – Rigor standards

- **Differences**
  - Level of the impact of committee discussions on a decision
  - Abstract vs. complete manuscripts vs. proposals
  - Output quality vs. feasibility/team capacity
  - Review for a decision vs. improvement/revisions
Sign up to be a reviewer!

- Medical Education Conference Submissions
- *Academic Medicine*
- *MedEdPORTAL*

www.aamc.org/about-us/mission-areas/medical-education/scholarship-submissions#reviewer
Reviewer Resources

*Academic Medicine* Reviewer Hub:
journals.lww.com/academicmedicine/Pages/forreviewers.aspx

*MedEdPORTAL* Reviewer Hub:
www.mededportal.org/reviewers

Medical Education Reviewing Resources:
www.aamc.org/what-we-do/mission-areas/medical-education/fostering-scholarship#reviewing
Sign Up for Journal Newsletters

academicmedicine@aamc.org

mededportal@aamc.org
Scholarly Publishing Series

Improve your writing and learn about the peer-review and publication processes

- Register for upcoming sessions
- View the recording, slides, and key takeaways from each session

aamc.org/publishingwebinar

Hosted by Academic Medicine and MedEdPORTAL