

# Journal of e-Learning and Knowledge Society

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## Review Guidelines

### **THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PEER REVIEWER**

The peer reviewer is responsible for critically reading and evaluating a manuscript in their specialty field, and then providing respectful, constructive, and honest feedback to authors about their submission. It is appropriate for the Peer Reviewer to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the article, ways to improve the strength and quality of the work, and evaluate the relevance and originality of the manuscript.

- All submissions are confidential and please do not discuss any aspect of the submissions with a third party.
- If you would like to discuss the article with a colleague, please ask the editor first.
- Please do not contact the author directly.
- Ethical Issues:
  - Plagiarism: If you suspect that an article is a substantial copy of another work, please let the editor know, citing the previous work in as much detail as possible;
  - Fraud: It is very difficult to detect the determined fraudster, but if you suspect the results in an article to be untrue, discuss it with the editor;
  - Citations: do not ask the author to cite reviewer papers just to increase the citations. This is unfair and unethical.

### **ACCEPTING A PAPER TO REVIEW**

This stage is when you get an invitation to review, and you have to accept or decline it.

- Don't accept a paper if it does not belong to your field of expertise. When you agree to review a paper out of your scope, most probably, your judgment will not be fair. Besides, you will spend a longer time to understand and evaluate. Accepting a paper out of your scope will lead to a delay in the review process also.
- If you have a conflict of interest with one of the authors, or with the topic of the paper, never even accept this paper to review. Accepting to review a paper in a conflict of interest situation may also harm your reputation in the future if the Editor knows that without informing him. Before taking a paper to review you have to explicitly declare the absence of any conflicting interest or the nature of a conflicting interest;
- If you don't have time, don't waste others' time also. If you feel that you cannot finish the paper within the due time (usually 4 weeks), decline the review.
- Respond to the invitation within the due time (even it's to decline) - a delay in your decision slows down the process and means more waiting for the author:
- If for some reason you accept to review a paper, and during the review, you discovered that it is out of your scope, don't hesitate to contact the Editor asking him to pull it out of your responsibility.
- If you agree to review a paper and you have some delay contact the Editor asking him/her a due extension. Don't go to Overdue! This strongly complicates the review process and sharply reduces your reputation.

- At the end of the review process, the Editor will assign a rate (from 1 to 5 stars) to the quality of your review. So consider taking care of your review since it influences your reputation.

## **REVIEWING A PAPER**

This stage is the actual review stage when you accepted the invitation to review.

- Don't start your review when you are not in a good mood.
- Be responsible and do it on time. Don't differ in your review until you get many notifications from the journal. As far as you accept the invitation, it is your responsibility, put it on your agenda and do it.
- Try to write in simple and clear English. Don't make it too complicated.
- Be open to new ideas and don't try to take the author to what you want. As a reviewer, you have to have a vision. Some papers are breakthroughs in the field even they are not long, or they don't have complicated and colorful graphs. Also, think about the impact of the paper in the area. Some papers are establishing new directions of research.
- Complicated papers are not necessarily of good quality. Besides, cumbersome and colorful graphs are not an indication of good results.
- Remember, your style of writing is not standard. The author does not know you to follow your writing style. Give some space and freedom to the author.
- Do not be so harsh. Being tough sometimes is ok, but not "Rude." Of course, be severe (or even harsh) when you see plagiarism.
- Never, ever look at the country of origin of the paper or institute. Nowadays, science is everywhere, and you may get a high-quality paper from a very developing country. There are no boundaries and not limitations nowadays.
- Be specific and don't give general comments. Specify exactly the point of weakness and wherein the paper.
- Check the citation of the references. Check the cited reference and assure that the reference really supports the sentence that cited for and comes from a reliable source.
- When you ask for a revision, you have to be specific about what you want exactly from the author. If you feel that what you want is not possible in less than 4 weeks, it is better to reject the paper at the first stage. Rejecting a paper after revision is disappointing for the authors. Of course, you can reject a paper after revision if you still find significant problems.
- Verifying the results is a big problem. Je-LKS asks the authors to submit data sources. Use data sources, if available, to check the results.
- Sometimes, reviewers are asking to cite their papers. In this case, Je-LKS asks the authors to notify the Editor about this situation. This is an unethical situation, and the reviewer must not force the author to cite his/her papers just to get more citations.

## **THE REVIEW**

When reviewing the article, please keep the following in mind:

## Content Quality and Originality

Is the article sufficiently novel and interesting to warrant publication? Does it add to the canon of knowledge? Does the article adhere to the journal's standards? Is the research question an important one? In order to determine its originality and appropriateness for the journal, it might be helpful to think of the research in terms of what percentile it is in? Is it in the top 25% of papers in this field? You might wish to do a quick literature search using tools such as Scopus to see if there are any reviews of the area. If the research has been covered previously, pass on references of those works to the editor.

## Organization and Clarity

- Title: Does it clearly describe the article?
- Abstract: Does it reflect the content of the article?
- Introduction: Does it describe what the author hoped to achieve accurately, and clearly state the problem being investigated? Normally, the introduction should summarize relevant research to provide context, and explain what other authors' findings, if any, are being challenged or extended. It should describe the experiment, the hypothesis(es) and the general experimental design or method.
- Method: Does the author accurately explain how the data was collected? Is the design suitable for answering the question posed? Is there sufficient information present for you to replicate the research? Does the article identify the procedures followed? Are these ordered in a meaningful way? If the methods are new, are they explained in detail? Was the sampling appropriate? Have the equipment and materials been adequately described? Does the article make it clear what type of data was recorded; has the author been precise in describing measurements?
- Results: This is where the author/s should explain in words what he/she discovered in the research. It should be clearly laid out and in a logical sequence. You will need to consider if the appropriate analysis has been conducted. Are the statistics correct? If you are not comfortable with statistics, please advise the editor when you submit your report. Interpretation of results should not be included in this section.
- Conclusion/Discussion: Are the claims in this section supported by the results, do they seem reasonable? Have the authors indicated how the results relate to expectations and to earlier research? Does the article support or contradict previous theories? Does the conclusion explain how the research has moved the body of scientific knowledge forward?
- Tables, Figures, Images: Are they appropriate? Do they properly show the data? Are they easy to interpret and understand?
- **Scope** - Is the article in line with the aims and scope of the journal?

## **SUBMITTING A REVIEW**

This stage is when you finished the review, and now you are about to submit it.

- Think twice when you filled the review form and about to choose your decision before submission. This is a very critical moment. Be careful, even when you give positive feedback, but you decide to reject, this may lead to rejection. In fact, some editors are reading the comments carefully and don't consider that decision as the main point. However, still, this is very important.

- The Je-LKS review form allow - not mandatory - to insert comments to each score. Use the comments area to support your decision and to suggest how to improve the quality of the paper. Never be general or vague. Be specific!
- There is a section for the confidential comment for the Editor. Here you can write your opinion on the paper frankly. Try to make it clear and don't confuse the Editor. Don't say for example, "I cannot decide on this paper!"
- You have to give a score to different aspects of the submitted paper in addition to the overall decision. Sometimes, this score makes confusion to the Editor also. For example, it is not consistent if you decide to reject the paper but give it four on a scale of 5! Or you decide to accept the paper, but you give it two on a scale of 5!

## **YOUR RECOMMENDATION**

When you make a recommendation, it is worth considering the categories the Editor will likely use for classifying the article:

- **Reject** (explain your reasoning in your report)
- **Accept** without revision
- **Revise** – either major or minor (explain the revision that is required, and indicate to the Editor whether you would be happy to review the revised article). If you are recommending a revision, you must furnish the author with a clear, sound explanation of why this is necessary.

Bear in mind that there will be the opportunity to direct separate comments to both the Editor and author.

## **THE FINAL DECISION**

The Editor ultimately decides whether to accept or reject the article. The Editor will weigh all views and may call for another opinion or ask the author for a revised paper before making a decision.