THE PEER REVIEW PROCESS

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PEER REVIEW FROM THE RECIPIENT PERSPECTIVE

IMAGE BY JAMES YANG HTTP://WWW.JAMESYANG.COM

WHAT PEER REVIEW HAVE YOU DONE?

- Reviewed journal paper or book proposal?

- Reviewed conference abstract?

- Reviewed grant proposal?

PEER REVIEW: WHAT IS IT?

- Literally means a quality review or refereeing process by your peers, often anonymously

- Widely used for journal papers, conference abstracts, grant proposals, book proposals, RAE/REF, recruitment,

- Relies on good citizenship & reciprocity, rarely remunerated

- Often criticised for being too inward-looking or being biased against newcomers

- Some funding bodies have experimented with paying referees but this is expensive and seems no more likely to guarantee fair play

PEER REVIEW LEARNED BY SITTING NEXT TO NELLIE (OR NED)

WHY DOES PEER REVIEW MATTER TO NEWER RESEARCHERS?

- Learning to conduct peer review allows you to see the other side of the fence & to think how your work will be judged by peer reviewers

- It is an indicator of how your own work may be judged

- It is useful, whatever field you end up working in, to help shape the giving of constructive but critical feedback

- You can acquire valuable skills relevant to editorial board membership, conference organising committees, evaluation panels and membership of grant awarding bodies

DIFFERENT TYPES OF PEER REVIEW

- Judgmental – grant proposals

- Developmental/& or judgmental – journal papers, book proposals, conference abstracts

- Differentiating & judgmental - RAE/REF, promotion, new jobs, grant applications

- Advocacy – references for known job applicants

THE ETHICS OF PEER REVIEW

- Only review papers/applications for which you have the expertise

- Respect the confidentiality of the reviewing process

- Be as objective as possible

- Be constructive; peer review should not be impolite

- *Don't* review the work of close colleagues/friends

- Do the review in a reasonable time scale, or ask for extra time *when you are first asked*

- Think hard about reviewing the same thing twice for different organisations/journals/funding bodies

- Do you trust the data and analysis? If no you must say so. Similarly if you suspect plagiarism you must say that.

WHAT DOES GOOD PEER REVIEW LOOK LIKE?

- It is relevant & evidenced, not random, rude or vague

- It includes both positive and negative comments

- It assesses against stated criteria and identifies flaws constructively

- It is politely written (something you could imagine receiving)

- It mentions things that have been omitted in such a way that it is possible for the recipient to learn something rather than just feel wrong-footed, e.g not just 'as Smith argues' but 'as Smith, J.D (2004) *Eclectic perspectives.* London, Sage, argues'

- It makes clear suggestions for changes

REVIEWING JOURNAL PAPERS

- Read the paper carefully; follow any reviewer instructions

- Be positive as well as critical

- If you suggest additional sources, give the full references & don't just cite your own work

- Distinguish between overall general comments and more specific smaller points

- Provide clear suggestions for changes

- Be aware it is only your opinion

- Get evidence of & credit for reviewing: e.g Publons

- https://publons.com/community/awards/2017/

REVIEWING CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS

- Follow any reviewer guidelines provided

- Bear in mind the conference theme and any other orientation such as an overall emphasis (e.g on the European dimension)

- Be constructive as well as critical

- Read the abstract very carefully

- If it is flagged as as a newer researcher's work, be generous in your comments

- Suggest an alternative format if there is one and it would fit there better (e.g, poster, round table etc)

REVIEWING GRANT PROPOSALS

- Background/track record, suitability of applicants to do this project

- Originality

- Timeliness (for some funders)

- Fits the brief if one is provided

- Significance of the study once completed

- Knowledge of relevant literature/theories/debates

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REVIEWING GRANT PROPOSALS (2)

- Theoretical framework should be both robust and appropriate

- Research questions/hypotheses should look well thought out & be answerable by the data used

- Clarity of research design apparent

- Appropriate research methods for the questions posed

- Access to any data source seems plausible & likely to be possible

- Ethics addressed – consent, anonymity, confidentiality, HEI ethical clearance, *GDPR compliant*

REVIEWING GRANT PROPOSALS (3)

- Validity/reliability considered

- Link between research design, questions being posed & intended outcomes/findings is clearly set out

- Outputs/dissemination are appropriate for project/ duration/data

- Non-academic use/impact has been considered for funders that require this

- Costs justified/allowable under scheme

- Value for money evident

LINKS FOR JOURNAL PEER REVIEW

- Taylor and Francis peer review https://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/category/understanding-peer-review/

- Times Higher 2015 http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/peer-reviewing-a-good-deed-and-a-good-career-move-too/2018965.article

- Wiley https://hub.wiley.com/community/exchanges/discover/blog/2015/01/08/helping-early-career-researchers-to-get-peer-review-right

- Elsevier reviewer guidelines

- https://www.elsevier.com/reviewers/how-to-conduct-a-review

SOME USEFUL WEB LINKS ON RESEARCH PEER REVIEW

- EPSRC guidelines on peer review: https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/assessmentprocess/review/intro/

- Peer review: Sense about science

- http://senseaboutscience.org/activities/peer-review-the-nuts-and-bolts/

- European Science Foundation

- http://archives.esf.org/fileadmin/Public_documents/Publications/European_Peer_Review_Guide_01.pdf