American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education

AJPE Peer Review Guidance Document

General Guidance:

- Your role is critical in the scholarship process. Conscientious peer review of manuscripts is usually a time-consuming task but is essential to ensure high-quality content for the Journal. Your recommendation for publication (see below for recommendation choices) and your comments serve as a vital advisory role to the editor; however,

- When reviewing a manuscript, keep in mind that the purpose of the Journal is to disseminate high-quality scholarship and scholarly works related to pedagogy, pharmacy, and pharmacy education. To be published, a manuscript must provide useful data or information for the national/international audience of the Journal. If a manuscript has only local relevance, its usefulness to the general audience of the Journal is limited. Accepted manuscripts should be important, original, sound in research design and statistical analysis. They should be high-quality, timely papers that advance academic pharmacy.

- Comments and suggestions should be as complete and as detailed as possible and should contain clear opinions regarding the strengths, weaknesses, relevance, and importance to the field. Specific comments that cite manuscript sections, pages, paragraphs, and line numbers are most helpful. Reviewers should consider themselves as mentors of the author(s). Comments should be constructive in nature and suggestions should be offered to enhance the quality of the manuscript whether the suggestion being made is to accept or reject.

- It is best practice to review the paper from three different perspectives, each with their own value to the review process:
  - Read to seek understanding of the content of the manuscript *(What did you learn by reading the paper?)*
  - Read with a critical, but fair and objective eye *(What are weaknesses of the paper? What did the authors not accomplish?)*
  - Read as a colleague who wants to improve the quality of the manuscript *(If the author were next door to your office, how would you suggest the manuscript be improved?)*

- Other points important for the reviewer to consider:
  - Is the topic of the manuscript appropriate for the Journal?
    - If no, reject.
  - Is the information of significant interest to the Journal readers?
    - If no, reject.
  - Is the title accurate and sufficiently descriptive of the content?
  - Is the purpose or objective clearly stated?
  - Are the methods appropriate and scientifically sound?
    - If no, reject.
  - If a manuscript is based on data, do the data represent an adequate population and is a valid statistical justification included to support the conclusion?

- If the manuscript is descriptive of educational theory, content, or processes, is the information new to most Journal readers?
- If the manuscript describes a new laboratory or classroom demonstration, or a novel method of instruction, does it include examples for teaching purposes?
- Are the conclusions supported by the data presented?
- Are the tables and figures well designed and do they add to comprehension of the text?
- Is information in the tables and figures redundant?
- Are the references cited following AMA style to support the manuscript and have the authors cited appropriate literature from other health and/or pedagogic disciplines and sources?
- Should the manuscript be shortened? Does it comply with the word count limits set for its article type?

Overall Recommendation:

- **Highly recommend:** This paper adds to the literature in a substantial way and only requires minor revisions to grammar, syntax, or formatting *(may not be required to be sent back to author).*
- **Recommend:** This paper contributes to the literature and should be published. There are only minor issues that need to be addressed, and the author may or may not need to address them.
- **Recommend with minor revision (Revise minor):** There are minor issues with the paper that require the author to address prior to publication. However, these issues are not able to be dealt with by minor copy editing alone (eg, reference issues, moving paragraphs from the introduction to the discussion).
- **Recommend with significant revision (Revise major):** There are substantive issues with the paper that require considerable work on the part of the author to examine and address (but it is salvageable). After resubmission, this paper will likely require another round of peer review.
- **Reject:** This paper does not contribute to the literature and should not be published, or the writing quality is so poor that it is impossible to evaluate the paper without a substantial rewrite. Other reasons to recommend "Reject" include inappropriate methods, poor execution of study design, or lack of relevance of the results. A "Reject" for poor writing alone should be rare. Please reach out to the assigned editor for clarification and help if necessary.

Confidential Comments to the Editor:

- 1-2 sentence synopsis of the paper (what it was about, what you took away)
  - This is critical to allow the editor to know that you read the paper.
  - Example: "This paper described the impact of a pre-course reading on learning outcomes in a drug-induced diseases elective course at a small, private college of pharmacy."
- Confidential comments to the authors should be congruent with comments made to the authors. For example, if the reviewer is recommending to the editor that the paper be rejected then comments to the authors should also reflect this recommendation.
- General comments:
  - Provide an overall analysis of the paper, with respect to its strengths and weaknesses, its place in the literature, and overall writing quality.
  - Provide evidence to support your publication recommendation (recommend, reject, etc.). Be as specific and helpful to the editor as possible. If the paper would be better suited in a different section (ie, a study that has serious flaws but the intro and discussion sections are written well enough to be a review), include that here.

- Specific comments:
  - If there are specific sections or elements of the paper that contribute to your recommendation (eg, the discussion section seems to refer to a different study than the one described in the methods), note that here.
  - Most of the page-by-page and line-by-line comments go in the "Comments to the authors" section.

Comments to the Authors:

- 1-2 sentence summary of the paper (what it was about, what you took away)
  - Include your very brief synopsis to let the author know what you considered to be the "story" or "main point" of the paper. This may tell the author that the intended message did not come across.
- General comments:
  - Provide your overall feedback on the manuscript to the authors. Discuss the importance of the topic, the overall quality of the methodology, and any other general feedback.
  - If there are consistent issues with the writing, but you were able to read through the errors, an overall comment to that effect could be included in this section. Try to consider the "voice" of the manuscript (the perspective from which it is written) and how consistent that "voice" is throughout the paper.
- Section-by-section analysis:
  - Use this section to provide assistance/help to the author on how the manuscript may be improved using the page/line numbers and section as guideposts. This is what the author will use to create the "Response to Reviewers" document if the recommendation is to revise or accept.
  - Specific grammatical suggestions are typically not advised, as minor copy editing is performed prior to publication.
  - You may be as specific as you like but be helpful and positive with your comments. Any comments deemed excessive, inflammatory, or inappropriate will be removed by the editor.
  - Even in cases where you recommend to "Reject," constructive comments can be helpful to the authors should they revise and submit elsewhere.