ALEC 604: Writing for Professional Publication

Week 10: Faculty/Peer Reviews

Activities
- Describe the peer review process for research manuscripts
- Discuss possible outcomes from a peer review
- Conduct reviews of your draft manuscript

What is peer review?
- An evaluation of your manuscript by experts (peers) in your discipline
  - Theories
  - Methods
  - Practices
- Decision if research should be published in conference proceedings or journals

Why conduct peer reviews?
- North Dakotans raise wheat…and chaff
  - Bakers only want the wheat to make bread
  - Farmers must screen out the chaff
- Peer reviews screen out the chaff, leaving only the wheat for consumption
  - Eliminates “bad” science from being consumed
  - Produces quality papers
- Collegial stamp of approval on your work
- Professional responsibilities

Goals of Peer Review
- Provide reliable, honest, unbiased judgments by informed individuals about a study’s:
  - Importance
  - Significance
  - Contribution to the body of knowledge
- Peers help you improve your research
- Gatekeepers of scholarship

Peer Review Processes

- Conduct research
- Prepare manuscript
- Submit manuscript
- Peer Review
- Decision
- Rejection
- Revision
- Resubmission
- Re-review
- Acceptance
- Publication
- Rejection

- Conduct research
Typical Peer Review Formats

- **Editor**: No reviewers in the process
- **Blind**: Reviewers may know the authors’ identities, but authors don’t know reviewers’ identities
- **Double-blind**: Neither reviewers nor authors know each others’ identities
  - Best practice for producing unbiased reviews
  - All processes occur through an editor

Peer Review Outcomes

- **Accept/publish**
  - Best type of outcome… time to celebrate, depending on the “level” of acceptance
  - Minor revisions – reviewers’ concerns
  - Editor revisions – not publishable without edits
  - Always address reviewers and/or editors’ concerns, suggestions, etc., before submitting a final draft
  - Do not delay in submitting the final draft

- **Reject/revisions/resubmit**
  - Not the end of the world
  - Usually one or more reviewers must be convinced to accept your manuscript
    - Address reviewers’ concerns earnestly
    - Provide defensible logic for not making corrections
    - Provide an “open” cover letter to reviewers about the changes made/not made between reviews
    - Resubmit the manuscript for second review
    - Check journal’s policy for number of reviews allowed for total review process

- **Reject/do not resubmit**
  - End of the trail… for this journal
  - Ask editor for suggestions to improve the manuscript for a different journal
  - Use reviewers’ comments to improve writing
  - Seek help from an experienced author
  - Rejection is more possible than acceptance in publishing your research
  - Develop a thick skin; it’s not personal
  - Learn from experience to improve your skills

Major Reasons for Rejection

- Inappropriate for journal
- Poorly written
- No new knowledge
- Poor research:
  - Superficial theoretical framework
  - Insufficient reason for research study
  - Inappropriate methods
  - Inconclusive findings
  - Outdated problem

General Tips for Novice Authors

- Know the journal’s purpose/audience
- Read the “Instructions for Authors” section
- Write for the journal’s style
- Spelling, grammar, & punctuation matter
- References are complete and accurate
- Be patient with the peer review process
- Seek out and rely on experienced authors
**JIAEE Reviewers’ Reasons to Reject**

- Top Five Reasons for Rejection
  1. "...research is not related to the purpose of the JIAEE..."
  2. "...references are outdated and/or not additive to the JIAEE...
  3. "...manuscript is unreadable..."
  4. "...manuscript is not formatted to JIAEE guidelines..."
  5. "...manuscript has non-referenced passages that I’ve read in other publications..."

**JIAEE Editor’s Tips**

- Editor’s Top Five Publication Criteria:
  1. Original thoughts/ideas:
     - Interesting and timely topics
     - Significant contributions to the knowledge base
     - Relevant/related sources and/or references
  2. CLEAR and FOCUSED narrative
  3. Strict adherence to the JIAEE Manuscript Submission Guidelines
  4. Follow-up communications with JIAEE Editor
  5. Persistence

**Research Conference Peer Reviews**

- Different process than used in journals
- Less rigorous review than journal process
- Conference chair serves as editor
  - Receives submissions (proposals/papers)
  - Assigns to reviewers (2-3); Time-shortened
  - Assembles reviews for final judgment
  - Notifies authors of acceptance or rejection
- Authors resubmit final versions of accepted papers

**Conference Poster Peer Reviews**

- Less rigorous review than processes used for conference research papers
- Conference chair serves as reviewer
  - Receives submissions (proposals)
  - May complete all reviews, or
  - Assigns to reviewers (2); Time-shortened
  - Notifies authors of acceptance or rejection
- Authors resubmit final versions of accepted poster abstracts

**Internal vs. External Peer Reviews**

- Internal peer review of your manuscript may significantly increase the probability of acceptance by an external peer review
  - Colleagues (students/faculty) can identify strengths and weaknesses that blind authors
  - Removes emotional attachment to writing
  - Provides “safe harbor” to launch your writing
- Do not ask for a cursory review
- Use a valid Internal Peer Review Form

**Summary**

- Peer review is not perfect, but necessary
- Initial rejection is not the end of all
- Persistence pays off:
  - Improved research studies
  - Enhanced research writing skills
  - Increased confidence in scholarly activities
- Increase your publication probability with an internal peer review before submission to an external peer review process