

## Instructions for *Journal of Graduate Medical Education (JGME)* Peer Reviewers

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### 1. The Purpose of Peer Review

The purpose of scientific journal peer review is to provide editors and the editorial committee with objective, unbiased advice about the quality and scientific, educational, and practical merit of a manuscript; and offer constructive suggestions to authors for how to improve the quality, clarity, and presentation of their manuscript.

Peer review benefits authors, the journal, and the reviewers, by providing them insight into current literature. Reviewers also may be asked to write a commentary on an accepted article. *JGME* annually publishes a list of all individuals who provided reviews during the prior year. This highlights high-volume and high-quality reviewers.

### 2. Peer Review Process

- All manuscripts submitted to *JGME* undergo an initial screening to assure concordance with the *Journal's* focus and audience. Approximately 45% of manuscripts are sent out for peer review. Generally, articles are reviewed independently by 2 peer reviewers. An additional statistics review may be requested, if needed.
- The handling editor makes the final decision that takes into consideration the reviewers' comments. The decision of the editor(s) is communicated to the authors and the reviewers.
- All reviewers are asked to declare any competing interests.
- A manuscript submitted for peer review is a **confidential** document. Please do not share or discuss the manuscript or its contents with colleagues, and destroy all copies of the manuscript and related documents after the review has been completed.
- The review process for *JGME* is single-blind. Reviewers remain anonymous (reviewers have the option to sign their name with the comments to the authors, if they wish).
- Peer reviewers also may not make personal or professional use of the data or interpretations before publication, except when the reviewer has been asked to author an editorial or commentary to accompany the article.
- To ensure the quality of the peer-review process for *JGME*, handling editors evaluate the peer reviews. Scores are used to guide future reviewer assignments, and the highest-scoring reviewers for each year are recognized in the first issue of the following year.

### 3. Peer Review Instructions

- Peer review evaluates the manuscript for scientific merit, including whether it addresses a topic of interest and relevance to the *Journal's* audience, connection with existing literature/best practices in the field, methodological rigor, and whether the quality and clarity of the writing is generally acceptable.
- Your review should be an objective evaluation of the paper, and its value to the *JGME* audience in a kind, constructive, and respectful way.
- Before writing your review, you may find it useful to access the reviewer form and tools provided in the editorial management system. If during the review, you become aware that you do not have the expertise to evaluate a component of the research, inform the editor in your reviewer notes.
- *JGME* and the authors who submit to the journal value timely review and decisions on submitted manuscripts. Please return the review within the period specified in the reviewer invitation. If circumstances arise that prevent this, please inform the editor at your earliest convenience, or contact Rebecca Zumoff at [rzumoff@acgme.org](mailto:rzumoff@acgme.org).

### 4. Reviewer Recommendation/Comment Form in the Editorial Software System

A structured form for reviewer recommendations, comments, and scoring is included in the reviewer pages of *JGME's* editorial software system (PeerTrack). Reviewers are asked to provide a recommendation, with options including:

- Accept without change
- Minor Revision
- Major Revision
- Reject

The final decision is made by the handling editor, with input from the editor-in-chief, and incorporates the reviewers' recommendations.

Your review should support your recommendation; you are asked to complete an overall manuscript rating and a scoring sheet. This will provide the handling editor with summary information to assist in the assessment of quality and suitability of the manuscript for publication in *JGME*.

- For the overall score:
  - A score between 90 and 100 denotes that the manuscript under consideration is a very strong paper and is suitable for publication with no or only minor editorial changes.
  - A score between 75 and 89 denotes that the manuscript under consideration is strong, but could use minor modification that would further strengthen the work, such as shortening lengthy sections, or offering minor clarification on points such as methods, presentation of the results, or the discussion.

- A score between 60 and 74 denotes a manuscript that addresses a topic of interest but is in need of substantive revisions to address such issues as a lack of a clear description of the methods, a lack of accurate reporting of findings, over-interpretation in the discussion, among others.
- A score of 50–59 denotes a manuscript that is borderline suitable for consideration for publication. For a novel study or a topic of critical importance it may be considered with very substantial revisions, but for other topics rejection may be the appropriate decision.
- A score of less than 50 denotes a manuscript and the underlying work is not suitable for publication, and should be rejected.

The manuscript rating questions use a scale of 1–5 or 1–3, and ask for your perspective on key aspects of the manuscript. Here is also where you should indicate whether a manuscript would benefit from a review of the writing and grammar, or whether it needs a review of the statistics or other quantitative methods. To assist you in making these assessments in your review, **Attachment 1** and **Attachment 2** are checklists that will assist you in considering key attributes of the manuscript. **Attachment 3** shows some key features of different *JGME* manuscript categories.

### Manuscript Rating Considerations

- *Writing and Grammar*: For manuscripts with problems in the area of grammar, writing, and clarity that are otherwise of a quality to ultimately warrant potential acceptance, please indicate the need for a review of the writing to the handling editor(s). You do not need to provide editorial or grammar suggestion in your comments to the authors. All accepted manuscripts are copy edited for grammar, punctuation, clarity of language, and the *Journal's* style.
- *Statistics and Methods*: The instructions to authors emphasize the appropriate use of statistical tests, attention to  $\beta$ -error/power calculations, and corrections such as adjustments for multiple comparisons. Your review should assess the degree to which a manuscript complies with these criteria. Basic guidance on common statistical tests and methodology, including statistical significance, sample size determination for adequate statistical power, reliability, and a range of other relevant topics can be found in the STATISTICA/StatSoft open access textbook.
- If you indicate that the manuscript would benefit from an addition of statistics or methods, the *Journal* staff will find an expert to review to ensure manuscripts accepted for publication meet established scientific and quality criteria.

In addition to a completed score sheet, as a peer reviewer, you are asked to provide constructive feedback that will be shared with the authors, and confidential comments to the editor. This feedback should offer concrete suggestions for how to improve the manuscript, but should not offer your recommendation for a decision (eg, reject or accept).

Comments to the editor should offer the rationale for your decision recommendation along with any supporting documentation. The reviewer sheet also allows you to suggest manuscripts as especially noteworthy for greater prominence, such as a commentary or added publicity through a press release or other means.

## **5. Frequently Asked Questions**

### ***How do I know whether I have a conflict of interest or a competing interest for a manuscript I have been invited to review?***

The review form asks about competing interests that might bias a reviewer's opinion of a paper. You should be frank in declaring these, and if significant conflict of interest exists, you should decline to review the manuscript.

Conflicts and competing interests exist in many contexts, and may stem from financial ties, such as payment for research, ownership of stock and options, honoraria for consultations, speaking engagements, and related activities; academic and institutional affiliations (such as working at the same institution); personal relationships; a prior history of personal or professional differences with the author(s); or political, religious, or other beliefs, among others.

### ***How will JGME inform me of the decision on a manuscript for which I completed a review?***

A copy of the decision letter, including the comments from both peer reviewers, will be shared with you once the decision has been made. In addition, reading the editor's comments and those of the other reviewer can provide important feedback on your review.

### ***Does the journal provide formal evidence of my work as a peer reviewer?***

Yes, after the end of a calendar year, JGME staff will send out thank you letters to all reviewers, which also indicate if you were a top reviewer for either quantity of quality of your reviews, or both. The cover e-mail gives you the option of designating another recipient, such as your department chair, or an individual on your promotion send tenure committee, for whom this information would be relevant.

### ***I want to have learners assist me in a peer review as a learning opportunity. Does JGME allow "group peer reviews" or "joint peer reviews," with mentees assisting with a review?***

*Group Peer Review:* JGME encourages group peer review, as a way to broaden its peer reviewer base, and to create professional development opportunities for more novice reviewers.

Experienced reviewers have the opportunity to partner with 1 or more novice reviewers in a face-to-face or virtual group. The resulting “group review” should be edited/finalized and submitted by the experienced reviewer.

*Including a Mentee or Colleague in a Joint Peer Review:* You may include a mentee or colleague in your review.

For both Group and Joint peer reviews, the experienced reviewer is expected to emphasize the confidential nature of manuscripts, and have the other individual(s) ensure that no conflict of interest or a competing interest exists.

After a Group or Joint peer review is completed, the submitting reviewer (usually the experienced group member or colleague) needs to explicit credit to all participants in the review, by naming the members of the peer review group, their professional titles and institutional affiliations, in the section that contains the confidential comments to the editor. As the experienced leader of the peer review group, you may also disclose to *JGME* editorial staff (Rebecca Zumoff at [rzumoff@acgme.org](mailto:rzumoff@acgme.org)) when you believe a mentee or peer review group member has gained sufficient experience to function as an independent peer reviewer.

Additional resources about Group Peer Review:

- Ilgen JS, Artino AR, Simpson D, Yarris LM, Chretien KC, Sullivan GM. Group Peer Review: The Breakfast of Champions. *J Grad Med Educ.* 2016;8(5):646–649. <http://jgme.org/doi/full/10.4300/JGME-D-16-00531.1>
- Yarris LM, Simpson D, Ilgen JS, Chan TM. Team-Based Coaching Approach to Peer Review: Sharing Service and Scholarship. *J Grad Med Educ.* 2017;9(1):127–128. <https://doi.org/10.4300/JGME-D-16-00833.1>

***What should I do if I really want to review a given manuscript but I cannot make the return deadline in the invitation?***

If the time required is just a few days or another week, please agree to review the manuscript, and indicate to the editorial staff (Rebecca Zumoff at [rzumoff@acgme.org](mailto:rzumoff@acgme.org)) that you will submit the review slightly late. Similarly, if you have already agreed to review a manuscript and experience a problem with the deadline, please use the *JGME* reminder e-mail to let journal staff know that you will submit the review somewhat late.

For additional questions not covered in the FAQ may be addressed to Rebecca Zumoff at [rzumoff@acgme.org](mailto:rzumoff@acgme.org).

## PEER REVIEWER WORKSHEET

| MANUSCRIPT SECTIONS (IMRD) | QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS / RESPONSE TO PROVIDE AS A PEER REVIEWER   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>General Statement</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide a 1-sentence general comment about the basic purpose of the manuscript that sets the stage for your constructive feedback aimed at strengthening the submission.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Write a sentence or two listing the strengths and weaknesses of the manuscript and commenting if the manuscript is written with clarity and is of interest to readers.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Title</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does the title accurately reflect the content of the manuscript?</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Abstract</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does the abstract follow the guidelines of the manuscript?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is there sufficient information for the reader to decide whether to read the paper?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are the findings presented objectively?</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Introduction</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are relevance and importance of the topic presented, and followed by a short description of the research gap in the field?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is there prior work or theory to support the authors' approach?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are the aims of the study and hypothesis clearly stated?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If the manuscript does not offer new information, are there citations of prior manuscripts that have already addressed the topic presented in the manuscript.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Methods</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are the methods organized and presented in the journal's specified format?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> What is the quality of the methods of investigation and the quality of the sources of data?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Was the study design appropriate?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Was institutional review board approval obtained, if applicable?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are the statistical methods appropriate?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Should you ask the editor for assistance for statistical review of the manuscript?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If it is a qualitative paper: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is the theoretical support for the methods provided?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are the qualitative methods rigorous and standardized (i.e., not "feedback")?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| <b>Results</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are the results presented objectively and clearly?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are negative findings presented as well as positive findings?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> For quantitative studies, are the magnitude of differences and statistical significance presented?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> For qualitative studies, do the results tell a coherent story?</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Discussion</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does the discussion compare and contrast the data with existing literature?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Did the authors thoroughly review and present existing literature on the topic?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are the effects of limitations on the results discussed?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are conclusions supported by the data and conservative?</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Tables and Figures</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Do the tables and figures present data in a visually clear manner?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are tables and figures appropriately labeled/titled?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are all of the figures and tables necessary?</li> </ul>   |
| <b>References</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are the references relevant and up to date?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are there additional references that should be added, to strengthen the manuscript?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are there too many references, for a non-review paper?</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Before You Submit</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Did you number each of your points with manuscript page/line references?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Have you proofed your review, reading it as editor/author to be informative, constructive, respectful and error-free?</li> </ul>   |



*JGME* MANUSCRIPT CATEGORIES

- *Original Research*: Studies of graduate medical education curricula, evaluation, teaching methods, or settings, with a word limit of 1,700 words (2,500–3,000 words for qualitative research). Research articles require a structured abstract and should follow the Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion, and Conclusion outline
- *Educational Innovation*: New approaches in medical education, with a word limit of 1,700 words. Educational Innovation manuscripts should answer the question: Should this innovation be tried in other settings or disciplines? Submissions require a structured abstract. Educational innovations do not have to be successful; manuscripts may report on approaches that should not be tried.
- *Brief Reports*: Summaries of new curricula, assessment, or teaching methods, or best practices for implementation, with a word limit of 1,200 words. Sample sizes may be smaller, and results may be preliminary or self-reported. A structured abstract should be included.
- *Reviews*: Systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and narrative reviews, with a word limit of 3,000 words. A structured abstract should be included.
- *Perspectives*: Views and opinions on issues of broad interest to program directors, educators, researchers, and deans for GME, with a variable word length (averaging 1,200 words). Perspectives will be evidence-based but will also reflect the author's opinion. An abstract may be included but is not required.
- *On Teaching*: Personal essays or reflections, with a variable word length (average 1,200 words). These articles may speak to the experience of teaching, learning, or other aspects of the physician experience, and will be of interest to multiple specialties. Both educators and learners submit articles for this category.