

PEER REVIEW FOR JSE MANUSCRIPTS

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PEER REVIEW INTRODUCTION

For new scholars, peer review can seem like a confusing and mysterious scholarly activity. According to Mulligan, Hall, and Raphael (2013), the following is the fundamental purpose of peer review:

. . . the evaluation of an author's manuscript by selected reviewers who make recommendations to the journal's editor as to whether or not the manuscript should be accepted, revised prior to publication, or rejected. The reviewer is invited to make observations on the quality, originality, and importance of the work. (p. 132)

Due to the innovative nature of the Journal of Scholarly Engagement (JSE), and given the desire to limit bias in our peer review process, this editorial was written to explain best practices for peer reviewing our unconventional manuscript types. JSE is unique in the field of scholarly publishing in that it is dedicated to documenting and disseminating unconventional forms of scholarly activity (Greenberger & Mandernach, 2018). While most scholarly journals focus on the scholarship of discovery, JSE is focused on the scholarship of application and the scholarship of integration. The scholarship of application explores the application of scholarly or academic knowledge to solve human problems in the context of human situations, while the scholarship of integration brings multiple domains of knowledge together in a way that gives new insight into a problem, issue, or situation. As a result, the story being told in JSE manuscripts should be clear and compelling and the human dimension clearly discussed.

JSE manuscripts typically provide more narrative evidence or discussion of the situations surrounding the scholarly activity, while traditional discovery research provides more analysis and discussion of collected data to support conclusions and generalize results. While JSE manuscripts

may include statistical and textual analyses, the quality of the manuscript is not judged by inclusion of such methods. The emphasis on reflective critique indicates the importance of faculty awareness of the implications of applying their disciplinary knowledge to solve real world problems. This unconventional scholarship is documented in one of three innovative manuscript types: reflective practice, professional profile, and community engagement portfolio (Greenberger & Mandernach, 2018).

A rigorous peer review process exists for manuscripts published in JSE. We offer this information in hopes it will be useful to the academic community, including peer reviewers and authors. Peer reviewers will gain insight into how to approach the process of conducting a peer review for manuscripts submitted to JSE. Authors will gain an understanding of the expectations for JSE manuscripts and will be better prepared to develop manuscripts that are more closely aligned to what a peer reviewer will be looking for in making recommendations on manuscripts. Discussion of the peer review process is centered on the types of questions that a peer reviewer will ask as he or she conducts a review.

GENERAL QUESTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

A thorough peer review process for JSE manuscripts will include a set of general questions that are applied to any scholarly manuscript, irrespective of the manuscript type. These general questions are listed below.

1. Is the literature review adequate for the topic being addressed in the manuscript?
Does it provide breadth/depth of the relevant literature, appropriate to the topic and nature of the manuscript?
2. Does the author step back to tease out the lessons from the literature?

3. Does the author actually utilize the literature in the topic analysis and discussion?
4. Is the purpose of the article clear?
5. Does the author articulate how the manuscript aligns to the focus of JSE?
6. Is the manuscript well-constructed? Does it flow well when reading it? Does the logic embedded in the manuscript make sense?
7. Does the author use grammar that is professional and appropriate for a scholarly journal?
8. Is it clear to the reader why the author wrote the piece and what the author is trying to accomplish with the article?
9. Does the author have a compelling story to tell and is it told well?

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Greenberger and Mandernach (2018) point out that “Reflective practice manuscripts provide practitioners with an opportunity to explore practical problems in more detail, relate this deeper understanding to larger issues within their discipline, and document this reflection in written form” (p. 3). Reflective practice focuses on the conduct or practice of some type of scholarly activity and the process the scholar undertakes to learn from experience and others to improve the practice.

The peer reviewer will consider the following questions, which are more specific and tailored to a peer review for a reflective practice manuscript.

1. Is the core issue/problem/opportunity being explored clear to the reader?
2. Does the author give evidence of understanding the issue/problem/opportunity at a level of depth that makes a reflective analysis possible and valuable?
3. Is the theoretic foundation/perspective on reflection clear? Is the author clear about how he or she is approaching the reflective analysis?
4. Is there evidence of reflection on the part of the author? Or is the author taking an approach that is more like reporting information?
5. Are the author’s conclusions clear and grounded in the literature?

6. Is the author clear on the application/next steps to be taken and are these logical given the analysis and discussion?
7. Does the author provide a clear critique of the reflective practice itself?

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PORTFOLIO

Greenberger and Mandernach (2018) explain that the “Community engagement portfolio provides practitioners with an opportunity to contextualize community engagement, organize community engagement according to a standard schema (i.e., purpose, process, and outcomes), and document community engagement in written form” (p. 3). Community engagement focuses on bringing some type of change into a community setting. It is the human story of the scholar, the community, and any other engagement partners.

The peer reviewer will consider the following questions, which are more specific and tailored to a peer review for a community engagement portfolio manuscript.

1. Is the author clear about what community has been engaged?
2. Is the author clear about the purpose, nature, and scope of engagement?
3. Does the author establish the context for the community engagement through the literature review?
4. Is the supporting evidence convincing/compelling given the nature of the engagement?
5. Is the nature of the scholarship clear: scholarship of application or scholarship of integration?
6. Does the author clearly explain the scholarly outcome?
7. Does the author describe the benefits that accrue to the external engagement partners, including the community?

8. Does the author provide a clear reflective critique of the process of developing the community engagement portfolio and of the community engagement activity itself?

PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

Greenberger and Mandernach (2018) point out that “Professional profile manuscripts provide practitioners the opportunity to contextualize scholarly engagement using a biographical sketch and an outline of concurrent responsibilities, organizing scholarly activities according to standard criteria, and documenting unconventional scholarship in written form” (p. 3). The professional profile focuses on the scholar and what he or she is doing to make a difference in his or her world.

The scope of what could constitute a professional profile is more wide open than either the community engagement portfolio or the reflective practice manuscript. Therefore, the questions that the peer reviewer considers for a professional profile are more general in nature.

1. Is the author clear about what is intended with the professional profile? Is the author clear about what the professional profile is about and why he or she is writing it?
2. Is the nature of the scholarship clear: scholarship of application or scholarship of integration?
3. Does the author clearly explain the scholarly outcome?
4. Does the author follow the suggested outline/topics covered in the Guide for Writing the Professional Profile?
5. Does the author provide a clear reflective critique of the process of developing the professional profile and the scholarly engagement that is at the heart of the professional profile?

The purpose for this editorial is to provide insight into the peer review process for JSE manuscripts to the academic community, especially peer reviewers and authors. The organizing framework for this editorial is built around the questions the peer reviewer will ask during manuscript review. These questions provide thorough coverage mandated in rigorous peer review for all manuscripts, while being tailored to the nuances of each of the three JSE manuscript

types. This information can be used by the academic community to evaluate JSE’s academic rigor. Sharing the questions that frame the peer review helps authors plan the presentation of their scholarship of application and the scholarship of integration. Sharing the review considerations for JSE affirms peer reviewers’ commitment to conducting quality evaluations.

References

- Greenberger, S. W., & Mandernach, B. J. (2018). Documenting and disseminating unconventional scholarship. *Journal of Scholarly Engagement*, 1(1).
- Mulligan, A., Hall, L., & Raphael, E. (2013). Peer review in a changing world: An international study measuring the attitudes of researchers. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 64(1), 132-161.