Peer review in 2015
A global view
A white paper from Taylor & Francis

The UKSG webinar

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authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/peer-review-in-2015
1. Most important motivation to publish in peer reviewed journals: making **contribution to the field** and **sharing research** with others.

2. Most important motivation to review: playing a part in the **academic process** and **improving papers**.

3. The benefit of peer review: towards improving an article rated as **8 or above out of 10** (most important aspect in **ideal** and **real world**).

"If there is integrity it works well but we are dealing with people, and things go on."

*Researcher, Business and Economics, UK*
1. Methodology
2. Ideal world & real world objectives
3. Ethical concerns
4. Timing discrepancies
5. Different models of peer review

October 2015

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43,000 Science Technology Medicine
43,000 Humanities & Social Sciences
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2,398 STM responses
4,750 HSS responses
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Methodology

1. Ideal world & real world objectives

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Confidence Interval:

1.95%

2,398 STM responses

4,750 HSS responses

Confidence Interval:

1.34%

@ 95%
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2% confidence interval at 95% confidence level for the population of all 2013 published authors
1. **Methodology**

2. **Ideal world & real world objectives**

3. **Ethical concerns**

4. **Timing discrepancies**

5. **Different models of peer review**

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**All survey respondents:**

- **STM**
  - Authors: 16%
  - Reviewers: 21%
  - Editors: 63%

- **HSS**
  - Authors: 18%
  - Reviewers: 18%
  - Editors: 63%
Qualitative research

Numbers: 6 focus groups, 46 participants

Locations: UK, China and South Africa (early 2015)

Participants: Editors, authors and reviewers. Minimum of two articles peer reviewed (with Taylor & Francis or any other publisher)

Disciplines: sciences, technology, medicine, social sciences, and humanities.
In an ideal world...

...to what extent do you agree or disagree the following objectives should be the purpose of peer review?
In an ideal world...

...to what extent do you agree or disagree the following objectives should be the purpose of peer review?

- Detect plagiarism
- Detect fraud
- Check factual accuracy
- Relevant to scope
- Judge novelty
- Provide polite feedback
- Check methodology

Ideal World – rating out of 10
In an ideal world...

...to what extent do you agree or disagree the following objectives should be the purpose of peer review?

- Check methodology
- Provide polite feedback
- Judge novelty
- Relevent to scope
- Check factual accuracy
- Detect fraud
- Detect plagiarism

Ideal World – rating out of 10

1. Methodology
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In the **real world**...

...to what extent do you agree or disagree that peer review is *currently achieving* the following objectives effectively?

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In the real world...

...to what extent do you agree or disagree that peer review is currently achieving the following objectives effectively?

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Ideal World – rating out of 10

Real World – rating out of 10

HSS
In the real world...

...to what extent do you agree or disagree that peer review is currently achieving the following objectives effectively?

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Ideal World – rating out of 10

Real World – rating out of 10

Relevant to Aims & Scope

Taylor & Francis Group
1. Methodology

2. Ideal world & real world objectives

3. Ethical concerns

4. Timing discrepancies

5. Different models of peer review
1. Methodology

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Detect plagiarism

- **Ideal world mean score**
- **Real world mean score**
1. Methodology
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Improve quality of published article

- Ideal world mean score
- Real world mean score
1. Methodology
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Provide polite feedback

- Ideal world mean score
- Real world mean score
Correct spelling, punctuation & grammar

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Ideal world mean score
Real world mean score
Most **important** objective...

Improve quality of published paper

**Expectation exceeds reality**...

- Politeness
- Detect Fraud

**Expectation matches reality**...

Relevant to the Aims & Scope

**Reality exceeds expectation**...

Correcting spelling, punctuation & grammar
“The worst reviews are short, snitty, patronising and not remotely useful. The best are critically engaged, add something and improve the quality.”

Editor, Linguistics, United Kingdom

“Editors should be more pre-emptive in detecting plagiarism & other types of fraud.”

Researcher, Medical Research, United Kingdom
How common are the following situations in peer review?

- Gender bias
- Regional bias
- Seniority bias

Methodology

Ideal world & real world objectives

Ethical concerns

Timing discrepancies

Different models of peer review
How common are the following situations in peer review?

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- Gender bias
- Regional bias
- Seniority bias
How common are the following situations in peer review?

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- Gender bias
- Regional bias
- Seniority bias
How common are the following situations in peer review?

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- Reviewers delay assessment
- Reviewers take ideas
- Reviewers use false identities
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Lower frequency of occurrences reported

Higher frequency of occurrences reported
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“Peer review can be used as a gatekeeping mechanism to keep certain views out of circulation. In which article are there not personal views?”
Researcher, Anthropology, South Africa

“Some of the reviewers don’t exist. The author forges a name, creates an identity, applies for a new mailbox and reviews their paper themselves.”
Researcher, Healthcare, China

“I used to be at a university which is low ranking in my current field. When I was there I couldn’t get a paper accepted but now I am at a well-respected institution, I feel some papers are accepted too easily!”
Researcher, Environmental Science, UK
As an **editor**, what do you consider a realistic amount of time to expect reviewers to deliver their initial report?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 days</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 days</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 days</td>
<td>48%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7+ months</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As an editor, what do you consider a realistic amount of time to expect reviewers to deliver their initial report?

- 0.4%
- 6%
- 48%
- 41%
- 4%
- 0.0%

- 7 days
- 14 days
- 30 days
- 2 months
- 6 months
- 7+ months
As a reviewer, how long was the duration between your acceptance to review and the delivery of your initial report?

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96% of respondents indicated a duration of 30 days.
As a reviewer, how long was the duration between your acceptance to review and the delivery of your initial report?

- 7% delivered their report within 7 days
- 16% delivered their report within 14 days
- 40% delivered their report within 30 days
- 30% delivered their report within 2 months
- 5% delivered their report within 6 months
- 1% delivered their report within 7+ months

Methodology
Ideal world & real world objectives
Ethical concerns
Timing discrepancies
Different models of peer review
As an author, how long did you wait after submission before you received the peer reviewer’s initial comments?

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As an **author**, how long did you wait after submission before you received the peer reviewer’s initial comments?

- **1%** 7 days
- **13%** 14 days
- **9%** 30 days
- **30%** 2 months
- **42%** 6 months
- **96%** 7+ months

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1. Methodology
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5. Different models of peer review
1. Methodology

2. Ideal world & real world objectives

3. Ethical concerns

4. Timing discrepancies

5. Different models of peer review

- Editors: 2 months is realistic (96%)
- Reviewers: 2 months to deliver report (93%)
- Authors: 2 months to receive report
1. Methodology
2. Ideal world & real world objectives
3. Ethical concerns
4. Timing discrepancies
5. Different models of peer review

- Editors: 96% is realistic
- Reviewers: 93% to deliver report
- Authors: 44% to receive report
1. Methodology

2. Ideal world & real world objectives

3. Ethical concerns

4. Timing discrepancies

5. Different models of peer review

Editors:
- 2 months is realistic: 96%
- 2 months to deliver report: 93%

Reviewers:
- 2 months to deliver report: 95%

Authors:
- 2 months to receive report: 60%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ideal world &amp; real world objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ethical concerns</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Different models of peer review</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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“An extremely lengthy and frustrating wait for your research to appear when administrative errors and issues hold it up - for two years in my case!”

**Author, Psychology, South Africa**

“There really is quite a difference between natural science and social science. Most economic journals to which I submitted often take six months for review.”

**Researcher, Economics, China**
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1. Methodology

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Double blind:

Neither the author’s nor the reviewers’ names are known to each other.

- Authors: 8.0
- Reviewers: 8.4
- Editors: 8.1
- Very comfortable: 8.9
- Uncomfortable: 8.6
Single blind:

Only the author’s name is known to the reviewer, but the reviewers’ names are not known to the author.
1. Methodology

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Open:

Both the authors’ and reviewers’ names are known to each other

- 5.1
- 5.7
- 5.3
- 5.8 & 5.9
- 6.0

Uncomfortable

Very comfortable
Open and published:

Both the authors and reviewers’ names are known to each other and the reviewers’ signed reports are published.

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1. Methodology

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Post-publication:

Online readers comment on, or rate the paper following publication
**Methodology**

1. **Ideal world & real world objectives**

   “You have to be quite secure about your career to un-blind yourself. I don’t want to offend a future employer or someone sitting on an interview panel…”

   Researcher, Environmental Sciences, UK

2. **Ethical concerns**

   “I think this is the most transparent way... It may put some pressure on the reviewer, but it also gives him/her credit...”

   Reviewer, Humanities, Lebanon

3. **Timing discrepancies**

   “This method is limited to those who can actually read the articles (are subscribed) online unless the articles are open access..”

   Reviewer, Agriculture & Food Science, Zimbabwe

4. **Different models of peer review**
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To come:

1. Motivations to review
2. Training and support
3. Geographical analysis

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