

Creating gold standards for peer review

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John Wiley & Sons

Objectives

- Create a definition for the essential areas of peer review
- Define a set of standards for peer review
- Provide editorial offices with guidelines to improve their peer review process

Background

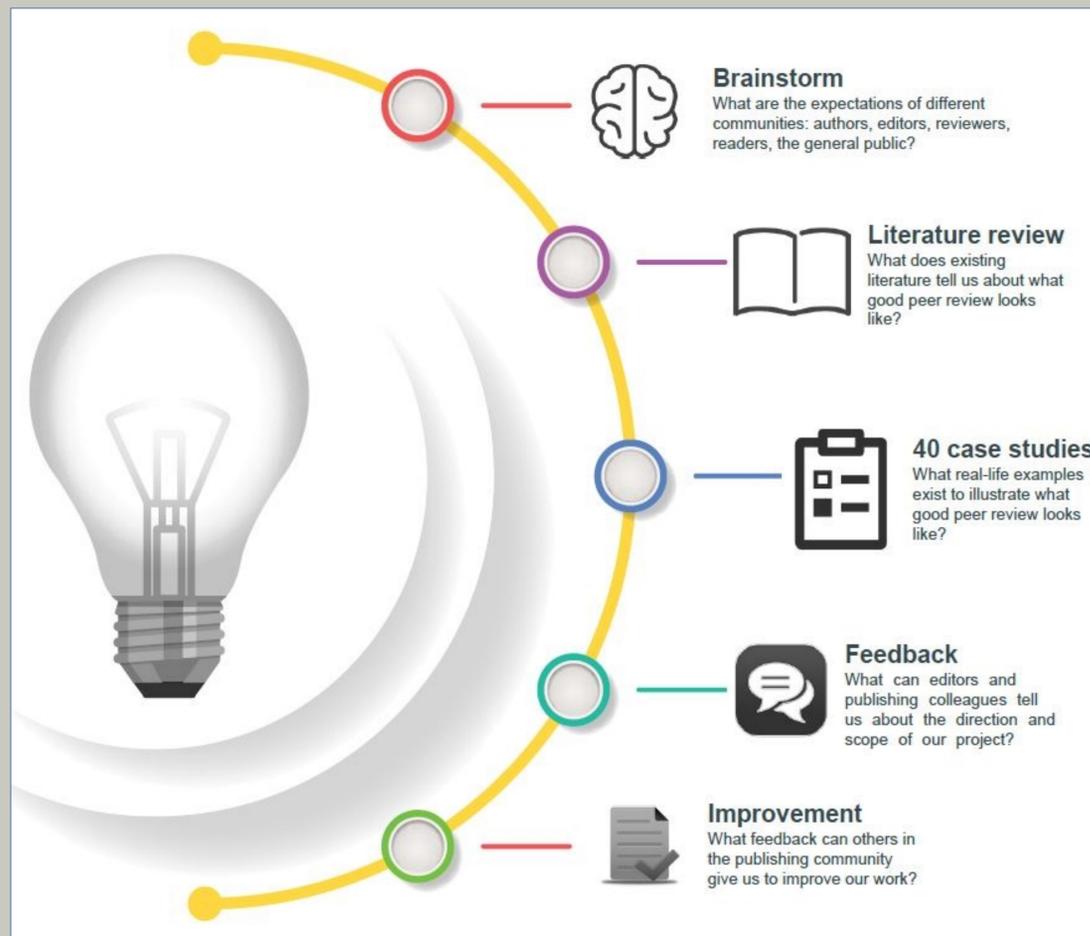
Peer review exists to serve the scientific and scholarly literature by assessing the quality of the way research is reported. It has, however, been shaped by historical constraints and interests, and it can be improved. Improving peer review will improve the scientific and scholarly literature.

We conducted a literature review for research on peer review and research integrity. This included looking at existing guidelines and standards for peer review and editorial practices.

After reviewing the literature, we defined five essential areas of peer review.

- **Integrity:** peer review establishes that the work is reliable and potentially reproducible
- **Ethics:** peer review establishes that the work was conducted ethically
- **Fairness:** peer review is objective and impartial
- **Usefulness:** peer review is constructive and helpful
- **Timeliness:** peer review provides timely feedback for authors

Methods



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Recommendations

We devised a checklist of recommended actions for journal teams to implement to help them achieve better standards of peer review in the five essential areas. Our full recommendations are given in our preprint at <https://osf.io/4mfk2/>.

Here we give an example from each section:

- **Integrity:** Editors should ensure the journal's standards for article acceptance are transparent to authors and reviewers.
- **Ethics:** Journal teams should use software to check for plagiarism.
- **Fairness:** Articles should include a list of each individual's contribution to the work.
- **Usefulness:** User-friendly author guidelines should be easily accessible so that manuscripts are in the best possible format to reap the full benefits of the peer review process.
- **Timeliness:** Journal teams should take active steps to improve timeliness through regular audits of their workflow.

Case studies

- We created a Google Form to obtain data on examples of peer review being 'done well'.
- A link to the form was advertised on Wiley's public-facing Exchanges blog and circulated to Wiley colleagues.
- We received 40 case studies from editorial office colleagues and journal editors.
- The case studies came from journals across the globe and represent diverse subject areas.

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Peer Review Gold Standards: Case studies from journals published by Wiley

Written by the Peer Review Gold Standards project team at Wiley, including: Michael Willis, Stephanie Loh, Alex Cury, Heidi Allen, Ben Hogan, Tom Gaston, Hannah Wakley, Chris Graf. Version 1.2. August 24, 2017.

What does good practice in peer review look like? We'd love your help to answer that question.

We're collecting anecdotal evidence that describes good peer review practice. Our goal is to capture through case studies how peer review works best across the many communities for which we publish. We will use this to help understand and illustrate a diverse range of good practices, and to inspire other editors, peer reviewers, and authors.

Please, can you share your thoughts and experiences, in the form of a case study? We're particularly interested in how you ensure peer review supports good standards in research integrity and ethics, how it can be conducted with fairness and usefulness, and how it can be organised to provide feedback for authors in a timely manner.

At this stage we're gathering information for the project team members, including the colleagues listed above. But our eventual goal is to share what we learn from the case studies we collect, so that together we inspire others. So please let us know whether you're happy with us sharing your case study beyond our project team. And we'll commit to sharing what we learn back with you, too.

Our deadline, if you can work to it, is now the end of September, 2017. Thank you, from the project team at Wiley.

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Are you happy with us sharing your case study? *

1. I give you full permission to share my case study as it is

Next steps

- We will develop and promote our checklist to help journals audit their performance and we will use this work to underpin our peer review philosophy at Wiley.
- We intend to create badges to show authors and readers how a journal is performing and to help journals pursue good practice in each area.
- We will continue to garner feedback from journal staff so our thinking will evolve to meet evolving practices within research communities.

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