

Journal of Bioethical Inquiry

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1. Roles of Associate Editors

In addition to handling individual manuscripts, the roles of Associate Editors include:

- *Soliciting submission of manuscripts to the JBI* from both major scholars of international standing and emerging scholars including Focus Articles, Review Articles, Current Controversies, Original Research, and Responses.
- *Developing proposals for Symposia and Special Issues* (see Information for Guest Editors for Symposia and Special Issues)
- *Soliciting submission of proposals for Symposia and Special Issues*
- *Contribution to JBI community* through: attendance at Editorial Board meetings; promotion of JBI at relevant academic and professional fora; and contribution to discussion and project-work regarding the mission and functioning of the JBI.
- *Identification and registration of reviewers* who are willing to be included on the JBI database.

2. Editorial Etiquette

Scholarship is stimulating but difficult and it is challenging to have one's ideas or work critiqued by others. For this reason, we would ask that in performing your role as an Associate Editor you consider the following:

- *Be respectful to the authors.* Be critical, constructive, fair, and respectful of disciplinary differences. If a reviewer's comments are not constructive and respectful, then you should consider selecting those parts of the review that are useful and/or seek alternative reviews.
- *Be respectful of confidentiality.* The unpublished manuscript that you are managing is a privileged confidential communication so, once you have

completed your editorial responsibilities, please do not keep copies on your computer or in hard copy, use it for teaching, use it in your own research, or copy or distribute any part of it.

- *Declare any relevant competing or conflicting interests.*
- *Be brave.* You have been invited to manage this manuscript because of your expertise in the topic, discipline area and/or methodology – so please feel free to make recommendations to the Editor-in-Chief (Content) that you believe are appropriate.
- *Be frank when making confidential comments to the Editor-in-Chief (Content).* The review process allows both you and external reviewers to make comments to the Editor-in-Chief (Content) that the author will not see. This may include your opinions about the ethical probity of the manuscript.
- *Be consistent.* It is important that the feedback that you give to the author aligns with that you give to the Editor-in-Chief (Content). While there may be things that you wish to share with the Editor-in-Chief (Content) and not with authors, providing positive feedback to the authors while at the same time recommending to the Editor-in-Chief (Content) that the paper be rejected can be confusing for authors and place the Editor-in-Chief (Content) in a difficult situation.
- *Be humble.* Do not write a review describing the paper you would have written – this does not help the Editor-in-Chief assess the merits of this manuscript and does not help the authors improve *their* paper.

3. Editorial Tasks of Associate Editors

As an Associate Editor your day-to-day role entails handling manuscripts within your portfolio through the review process and then making a recommendation to the Editor-in-Chief (Content) based on the reviews and your own assessment of the manuscript. For each manuscript you must commission a minimum of two independent reviews – your recommendation is in addition to these two reviews. The JBI aims to complete the review and final decision process as quickly as possible. This requires regular and prompt attention to the process of inviting reviewers, replacing reviewers who have declined to review or failed to submit their review with new reviewers, and reminding reviewers who have agreed to review. All of this must be done through our publisher's online manuscript management system, Editorial Manager, to ensure that manuscript progress can be tracked and to meet the requirements of our publisher.

a. Receiving an Assignment

When the Managing Editor has selected you to handle a manuscript you will receive an email notification of a new assignment. To access the manuscript you will need to click on the link contained in this invitation email to accept the assignment. You will then need to look at the manuscript to determine whether it is of sufficient standard to be sent out for review. This is an important step because if you feel that the manuscript is of low quality and

that there is little likelihood that it will be published, even with revision, it is better for both the authors and the JBI to make this determination early and make a recommendation to *Reject without Review*. If you think that the manuscript is not of sufficient standard to send out for review you may also choose to recommend *Revise before Review*. (This option is particularly useful in cases where the English language skill of the author is the primary problem.)

b. Inviting Reviewers

Each manuscript should be reviewed by at least two independent reviewers. To ensure that peer review is completed in a timely manner there are several things that you should do. The first is to invite three to four reviewers to review the manuscript – assuming that often reviewers are unavailable, too busy to assist, or simply do not reply to the invitation to review. The second is to check if the corresponding author has made reviewer suggestions in their cover letter. If you decide to invite a reviewer suggested by the author, it will be important to verify that they are independent. The third is to stay aware of the status of reviews for the manuscripts you are managing.

The Editorial Manager system allows you to search for reviewers who are already in the JBI reviewer registry. You may, however, wish to send the manuscript to other reviewers who are not already registered. To do so you must first register a new reviewer. This is done by clicking on ‘Register and invite new reviewer’.

Once you agree to manage a manuscript you will receive email notifications of your invitations to reviewers; the responses of reviewers (whether they agree to review, decline to review, or do not reply and are ‘uninvited’); submissions of reviews; and when reviews are complete and a decision is needed on the manuscript. You can respond to these email prompts instantly by logging into the system. Alternatively, you may find it easier to simply log in to your account each week to check the status of your reviewer invitations and editorial tasks. However you decide to manage your manuscripts, it is critically important that you act promptly wherever an editorial action is needed (to accept a manuscript from the Editors, to invite reviewers, to invite additional reviewers if initial invitations are not responded to or in reviewers are unable to assist, and to make editorial decisions once reviews are complete), as delays in processing manuscripts are unfair on authors and reviewers.

c. Reminding Reviewers

Once a reviewer has agreed to review it is often useful to send the reviewer a reminder both so that they complete the review and that they are not automatically ‘uninvited’. You might do this by checking the status of these reviews when you log in to your account each week. Or you might set yourself a reminder in your calendar when each review is due so that you can send an email reminder to the reviewer a week or so before their review is due. These reminders should be sent within Editorial Manager so that the Editorial Manager technical support person, and the Managing Editor, both of

whom check on the progress of overdue manuscripts, do not duplicate these reminders and unintentionally bombard the reviewers with multiple reminders! To do so find the manuscript in your 'Reviews in progress', 'Submissions requiring additional reviewers' or 'Submissions with one or more late reviews' menu item and then select 'Send email' from the left-hand column.

If, after a couple of reminders, the reviewer has not responded you will need to invite a replacement reviewer.

Depending on the length of time the manuscript has been in the system, you may choose to shorten the review period for these replacement reviewers. To do so you may edit the number of days to review after selecting your intended reviewer.

d. *Reviewing the Manuscript Yourself: Review Checklist*

Once the independent reviewers have completed their reviews you will receive an email notification that 'All reviews are complete'. At this point you should assess the manuscript yourself.

The following checklist may assist you in completing your own review and in evaluating the adequacy and comprehensiveness of the reviews that you have commissioned. (It is important to keep in mind, however, that the type, disciplinary background, and methodology of the manuscript will determine the types of questions that need to be considered when reviewing it.)

Topic

- Is the topic important and does the paper make an important contribution to the literature – to what is known about the issue being addressed by the author(s)?

Title

- Is the title informative?
- Does the title describe what the manuscript is about or catch the reader's attention?
- Would an international reader searching for publications about a particular issue understand it?

Abstract

- Does the abstract provide a clear summary of the paper?
- Does the abstract align with the research findings?
- Is the abstract structured in a way that confirms with the article type?

Structure

- Is the structure of the paper appropriate to the content, methodology and approach?

Introduction, background, and literature review

- Is the background and literature review adequate and current and does it place the manuscript in the appropriate context?
- Does it tell the reader why this research needs to be done and why it is important?

- Is the research question, hypothesis or focus clearly stated?

Methods

- Is the study well-designed and is the paper technically sound?
- Are the methods and analysis clear and appropriate to the type of research being done?
- Are the methods described in sufficient detail that the reader can make a judgement about their quality and enable the study to be replicated by other researchers? (In general, the methods should outline the study type, place and time of study, research population, data collection and recording, and data analysis.)

Ethics approval

- Do the authors outline the ethical oversight and approval of the study?

Funding

- Have the authors described the funding (if any) of the research and the involvement of the funder in the research and preparation of the manuscript?

Results

- Are the results clearly structured?
- Are the tables and figures clear and necessary?
- Is the analysis of the data sound? (Is the data valuable but just inappropriately analysed, and therefore potentially able to be re-analysed?)

Discussion

- Does the discussion summarise the implications of the results and identify the strengths, weaknesses, and potential limitations of the study?
- Are the conclusions valid?
- Are the claims fully supported by the data or arguments? If not, what further evidence is needed?
- Are the claims appropriately discussed in the context of previous literature?
- Does the discussion offer useful insights?
- Is the discussion clear, rigorous, relevant, and well-argued or does it contain major flaws, e.g., errors of reasoning, unsound arguments, unjustifiable generalisations, or inappropriate claims of significance for empirical results that are not statistically significant?

References

- Are the references appropriate, properly cited, authoritative and accessible?
- Have the authors failed to refer to important studies relevant to their work?

Other

- Is the writing and presentation clear and concise?
- Does the text include jargon or technical terms that may not be understood by a reader from a discipline or background different to the author(s)?
- Is the text badly written and could it be improved by copy-editing?
- Does the study raise any ethical concerns?
- Does the availability of data adhere to the expected standards of your research community?
- Could the manuscript be revised to address any potential limitations?

e. Completing Your Recommendation

Once you have reviewed the manuscript yourself and read the reports of the independent reviewers you must submit a recommendation to the Editor-in-Chief (Content).

You are provided with several recommendation options and the opportunity to make both comments to the author and confidential comments to the Editor-in-Chief (Content).

The following considerations may help you prepare your report and assist both the Editor-in-Chief (Content) and the authors.

- Start with a summary of the manuscript and your overall impression of the work, noting both its strengths and weaknesses.
- Provide detailed comments on the manuscript. (See Review Checklist above.)
- Be clear and prioritise your concerns. Your review will help the Editor-in-Chief (Content) make a decision about the manuscript and guide the author in revising it for publication. It is helpful, therefore, if the review is clearly worded and distinguishes between major issues that must be addressed for the paper to be considered for publication, more minor issues that are not as critical to the acceptability of the paper for publication, including where clarification or additional details are needed, and grammatical or typographical issues.
- Be specific and give examples. The more specific your feedback is, the better. Both authors and editors find general statements, such as 'not a significant contribution', 'under-theorised' or 'poorly analysed' unhelpful as they are not sufficiently clear or explicit enough to guide decision-making or revision.
- Explain your recommendations to the Editor-in-Chief and author(s) and offer specific and constructive suggestions for how the manuscript may be improved. This will help the Editor-in-Chief (Content) better understand the basis of your decision and will help authors to understand the deficiencies in their

manuscript and how it may be revised to enable publication (in the JBI or elsewhere).

- Consider whether you wish to make separate comments to the Editor-in-Chief (Content). The JBI's online manuscript submission system allows you to make Confidential Comments to the Editor-in-Chief (Content). While the JBI encourages an open and constructive peer review process you may wish to make confidential comments to the Editor-in-Chief (Content) regarding, for example, ethical concerns that you may have with the manuscript of the peer review process, the limitations of your own review, the limitations of the invited independent reviews, or whether you feel the manuscript would benefit from copy-editing to assist English-language expression.
- Take time for a final reflection. Before you submit your report and recommendation, take a moment to read it through. Are you satisfied that you have been fair in your assessment and are you satisfied that your recommendation is the correct one? And if you were the author, how would you feel if you received this report? Would you find the review constructive, and would you feel that you had been treated respectfully and professionally?

Importantly, you should not correspond directly with the author as the Editor in Chief (Content) will correspond with the authors after they have considered your recommendation and the reports of reviewers.

f. **Handling Revisions**

When revisions are submitted to the journal the manuscript will be sent back to the original handling Associate Editor. You must assess the author's response to the reviewer's concerns and recommendations and the changes they have made to their original submission. After doing so, you have the option to make a recommendation to 'Accept', 'Reject', or you can request further revisions. If, however, you do not feel confident making a recommendation straight away you have the option of returning the manuscript to the original reviewers or seeking new reviewers. This process should be completed as quickly as possible. Once further reviews are complete a recommendation will need to be entered according to the same process outlined for original manuscripts.

4. Expedited Review

Authors may request that a manuscript be considered for rapid review. This request must be made directly to the Editors at the time of submission and the request must be clearly justified. Reasonable grounds for rapid review may arise where there is a high likelihood that timely publication may prevent significant harm or where there is an important external deadline (e.g., the passing of legislation) or event (e.g., epidemic) which affects the relevance and impact of the potential article. All such requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Authors should be aware that rapid review places extra demands on themselves as well as editors and reviewers. This is because the following conditions will need to be satisfied:

- The submitted manuscript must conform to the stylistic and other requirements set out on the JBI's website.
- The manuscript must be accompanied by an article submission form, a clear statement of any competing interests, a license for publication and, if relevant, details of informed consent processes or ethics committee approval.
- The author should nominate three or four people who might be suitable reviewers for the manuscript and provide their contact details, including phone numbers and e-mail addresses.
- The Editors will undertake to inform the authors as quickly as possible whether the JBI can offer expedited review. If the request is declined the editors may offer to consider the manuscript for publication in the usual way.
- If the authors are offered an expedited review, they will be required to return the revised manuscript within 5 days of receiving the reviews from the editors and must agree to return the corrected proofs within 5 days of receiving them.

If these conditions are satisfied and the manuscript is accepted for publication, the JBI will aim to publish it in the next issue (providing it is not a special themed issue).

5. Solicited Manuscripts

JBI editors may invite specific authors to contribute material for the journal (a practice referred to as 'soliciting manuscripts'). This may be for Symposia or Special Issues, because the journal is seeking their expertise for an Editorial or Current Controversies paper, or because the journal is acting to ensure representation of groups or perspectives which may otherwise be unrepresented (or under-represented) in accordance with its mission.

From an editorial perspective:

- Solicited manuscripts are subject to peer review according to the same standards as any other manuscript. As with other papers submitted to the JBI, reviews provide a service to authors and help to ensure the quality of material that is published.
- It is in general not appropriate for the person soliciting a manuscript also to act as a reviewer of that manuscript.
- It is important to recognise that an invitation to submit a manuscript may sometimes be misinterpreted by the invitee as implying a promise or guarantee of publication. Given this, soliciting editors should be careful to explain to authors that no promise or guarantee of acceptance or publication can be made before the review process has been completed and the manuscript has been formally accepted for publication.
- Where a manuscript has been solicited as a means to ensure representation of groups or perspectives which may otherwise be unrepresented (or under-

represented) the soliciting editor may choose to take on a more active role in giving authors guidance and assistance, such as:

- providing specific guidance to authors about how to revise manuscripts in light of reviews.
 - directing authors to commercial services that assist with English language expression, editing or academic writing.
 - providing this kind of assistance to the authors directly or teaming the authors up with other persons who may provide this kind of assistance. (In such cases co-authorship or acknowledgement may need to be negotiated depending on the specific arrangement that is agreed upon, and the extent and type of contribution of the persons providing assistance.)
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