Reviewer guidelines for *The Researcher*

Thank you for agreeing to review a manuscript for inclusion in *The Researcher: An Interdisciplinary Journal*. Each manuscript will be sent to two reviewers, and the review process is double-blind.

Since the peer-review process aims to provide authors with constructive feedback from relevant experts which they can use to make improvements to their work, we are providing our reviewers with some helpful guides to ensure an honest and constructive appraisal, which is completed in a timely manner and provides feedback that is both clear and concise.

Reviewing the manuscript

Use the review questions below to indicate the relative strengths or weaknesses of the paper. As a referee, you may disagree with the author's opinions, but you should allow the opinions to stand provided they are consistent with the available evidence. Remember that authors will welcome positive feedback as well as constructive criticism from you.

Answer key questions

The main factors you should provide advice on as a reviewer are the originality, presentation, relevance, and significance of the manuscript's subject matter.

Try to keep the following questions in mind while you are reading the manuscript:

- Is the submission original?
- Is the research topical or cutting edge?
- Does it help to expand or further research in this subject area?
- Does it significantly build on previous work of the author or others in the field?
- Does the paper fit the scope of the journal?
- Would you recommend that the author reconsider the paper for a related or alternative journal?
- Should it be shortened and reconsidered in another form?
- Is there an abstract or brief summary of the work undertaken as well as a concluding section? Is the paper complete?

- Is the submission in Standard English to aid the understanding of the reader?
- Is the methodology presented in the manuscript and any analysis provided both accurate and properly conducted?
- Do you feel that the significance and potential impact of a paper is high or low?
- Are all relevant accompanying data, citations, or references given by the author?

Other aspects to consider

- **Abstract** – Does it adequately summarize the key findings/approach of the paper?
- **Length** – You are asked to consider whether the content of a paper is of sufficient interest to justify its length. Each paper should be of the shortest length required to contain all useful and relevant information, and no longer.
- **Originality –** Is the work relevant and novel? Does it contain significant additional material to that already published?
- **Presentation** – Is the writing style clear and appropriate to the readership? Are any tables or graphics clear to read and labeled appropriately?
- **References** – Does the paper contain the appropriate referencing to provide adequate context for the present work?

Make a recommendation

Once you have read the paper and have assessed its quality, you need to make a recommendation to the editor regarding publication. The key decisions are:

- **Accept** – if the paper is suitable for publication in its current form.
- **Minor revision** – if the paper will be ready for publication after light revisions. Please list the revisions you would recommend the author makes.
- **Major revision** – if the paper would benefit from substantial changes such as expanded data analysis, widening of the literature review, or rewriting sections of the text.
- **Reject** – if the paper is not suitable for publication with this journal or if the revisions that would need to be undertaken are too fundamental for the submission to continue being considered in its current form.

Provide detailed comments

- These should be suitable for transmission to the authors: use the comment to the author as an opportunity to seek clarification on any unclear points and for further elaboration.

- If you have time, make suggestions as to how the author can improve clarity, succinctness, and the overall quality of presentation.
- Confirm whether you feel the subject of the paper is sufficiently interesting to justify its length; if you recommend shortening, it is useful to the author(s) if you can indicate specific areas where you think that shortening is required.
- It is not the job of the reviewer to edit the paper for English, but it is helpful if you correct the English where the technical meaning is unclear.

Think about the following when compiling your feedback:

- Does the paper make a significant contribution to the field?
- Is the research likely to have an impact on practice or debate in the field?
- Does the paper present or expand upon novel or interesting ideas?
- Is the paper likely to be of sufficient interest to be cited by other researchers?
- Are the methods, analysis, and conclusions robust and to a high standard?
- Is the paper well integrated and up to date with the existing body of literature?
- Being critical whilst remaining sensitive to the author is not always easy, and comments should be carefully constructed so that the author fully understands what actions they need to take to improve their paper. For example, generalized or vague statements should be avoided along with any negative comments which are not relevant or constructive.

Sample comments

Please note that these are just examples of how you might provide feedback on an author's work. Your review should, of course, always be tailored to the paper in question and the specific requirements of the journal and the editor.

Positive comments

- *The manuscript is well-written in an engaging and lively style.*
- *The level is appropriate to our academic readership.*
- *The subject is very important. It is currently something of a "hot topic," and it is one to which the author(s) have made significant contributions.*
- *This manuscript ticks all the boxes we normally have in mind for an X paper, and I have no hesitation in recommending that it be accepted for publication after a few typos and other minor details have been attended to.*
- *Given the complexity involved, the author has produced a number of positive and welcome outcomes including the literature review which offers*

a useful overview of current research and policy and the resulting bibliography which provides a very useful resource for current practitioners.
- *This is a well-written article that does identify an important gap.*

When constructive criticism is required

- *In the "Discussion" section I would have wished to see more information on…*
- *Overall I do not think that this article contains enough robust data to evidence the statement made on page X, lines Y–Z.*
- *I would strongly advise the author(s) of this paper to rewrite their introduction, analysis, and discussion to produce a more contextualized introduction to…*
- *There is an interesting finding in this research about .... However, there is insufficient discussion of exactly what this finding means and what its implications are.*
- *This discussion could be enlarged to explain…*
- *The authors could strengthen the paper by…*
- *The paper would be significantly improved with the addition of more details about…*
- *The abstract is very lengthy and goes into detailed accounts that are best suited for the article's main discussion sections. As such, it is suggested the section is reduced in size and that only the most important elements remain.*
- *To make this paper publishable the author needs to respond to the following substantive points...*

When linguistic alterations are required

- *This paper would benefit from some closer proof reading. It includes numerous linguistic errors (e.g. agreement of verbs) that at times make it difficult to follow. I would suggest that it may be useful to engage a professional English language editor following a restructure of the paper.*
- *The paper is to benefit from making stylistic changes in the way it has been written to make a stronger, clearer, and more compelling argumentative case.*
- *There are a few sentences that require rephrasing for clarity.*

We are very grateful for the contribution made to *The Researcher* by our referees and would be pleased to hear any comments or suggestions on our current peer-review procedures.