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Table 1: Codes and descriptive themes identified from a qualitative evidence synthesis. Items in bold did not appear in the quantitative questions. Items in italic offer possible explanations to some quantitative findings.

| Codes | Descriptive Themes |
| --- | --- |
| *What does this term mean? [1–5]*  *What does this item mean?* [1–6]  *How are these items different?* [2, 4, 6, 7]  *Have I understood this as intended? [1, 2]*  *Examples help me understand items* [[CSL STYLE ERROR: reference with no printed form.]; [4]; [8]] | What does this mean? |
| *Why is this item important?* [2–4, 9]  *Who is this item important to? [2, 4, 10]* | Why is this item important? |
| ***Have I understood the guideline’s scope as intended? [4, 5]***  ***Does this item apply to me?*** [2, 4–7]  ***Is this item optional? [2, 6]*** | **Does this apply to me?** |
| **What are reporting guidelines? [10, 11]**  **How should I use a reporting guideline? [12]** | **I don’t understand what reporting guidelines are** |
| I find guidelines useful in general [5, 13]  **Guidelines make me feel confident [10]**  **Guidelines help me develop as a researcher [10, 14]**  Guidelines may help me improve my manuscript [2, 7, 10, 13, 14]  I believe guidelines may help me publish more easily [15] | Guidelines benefit me |
| I may use guidelines because journals and editors tell me to [10, 12, 14, 15]  I may use guidelines because other researchers expect it [12, 15] | I use guidelines because of other people |
| Standardized reporting benefits the community [10, 15, 16] | Guidelines benefit others |
| **Immediate benefits are more important than hypothetical ones [10, 15]**  **Personal benefits are more important than benefits to others [15]** | **Some benefits are more important than others** |
| I use reporting guidelines for planning research [2, 10]  I use reporting guidelines for designing research [6, 10, 11, 13]  I use reporting guidelines for writing [2, 6, 10, 13]  I use reporting guidelines for checking my own or other people’s writing [10, 11]  I use reporting guidelines to appraise the quality of other people’s reporting [3]  I use reporting guidelines for peer reviewing [10] | Researchers use reporting guidelines for different tasks |
| **I want items presented in the order in which I must do them [[CSL STYLE ERROR: reference with no printed form.]; [16]; [8]]**  **I want design or methods advice [2, 4, 10]**  **I want templates for writing [13]**  **I want checklists that are easy to fill in [5, 17]**  **I want checklists embedded into journal submission workflows [13]**  **I want items embedded into data collection tools [14]** | **I want guidance presented in formats that are better suited to the task I am doing** |
| Guidelines take time to read, understand and apply [12, 14, 15]  Some items require extra work which takes time and effort [1, 2, 18]  **I want an indication of which items to prioritize [2, 6]**  *Perceived complexity [2, 13, 15, 17]*  *Long guidelines are off-putting [5, 7, 10, 14]* | Guidelines take time |
| ***Itemization helps me navigate guidance[4]***  ***Itemization summarizes the guidance[13]*** | **Itemization may decrease costs** |
| ***Itemization makes guidance appear longer[4]***  ***Itemization blocks the bigger picture[2]*** | **Itemization may increase perceived costs** |
| **Following reporting guidance can result in long, bloated articles [2, 6, 7, 14]**  **Long, bloated articles may exceed journal word limits [6, 7, 12, 17]**  **I want options for where to report this item** [1, 2, 4, 7, 10, 12] | **I think guidelines make my manuscripts long and bloated** |
| ***The benefits of using a reporting guideline may not outweigh the costs [7, 10, 12]*** | **The benefits of using a reporting guideline may not outweigh the costs** |
| Guidelines are more valuable when used early [2, 5, 10, 13] | The balance of benefits vs costs may be more favourable when guidelines are used early |
| **I would clarify this item [4, 6]**  **I would move this item [1, 2]**  **I would split this item into two** [2, 4, 8]  **I would add or remove items from this guideline** [2–4, 6]  **I would add or remove requirements from this item [[CSL STYLE ERROR: reference with no printed form.]; [4]; [6]; [10]; [9]]** | **I think the guidance could be improved** |
| **Guidelines can become out of date [2]**  **Guidelines need to be updated [4]** | **Guidelines need to be kept updated** |
| **I cannot report this because I didn’t do it** [6]  **I cannot report this because of intellectual property issues** [7]  **I cannot report this because it clashes with journal guidelines [4]**  **I cannot report this because data was missing from my primary studies [14]**  **Editors, reviewers or co-authors asked me to remove this item [6, 18]** | **I feel unable to report this** |
| **I feel uncertain because I don’t know how to say that I didn’t do it [4]**  **I feel worried that I will be judged for transparently reporting something I didn’t do [4, 10]** | **I feel nervous or uncertain if I am unable to report an item** |
| I may not know that reporting guidelines exist [3, 5, 12, 13, 15]  I may not be able to easily access guidance [5, 15] | I can only use what I know about and have |
| **Reporting guidelines may be less valuable to experienced researchers [7, 10, 13]**  **Experienced researchers feel that they already know how to report [2, 10, 13]**  **Experienced researchers find guidance patronizing and feel untrusted [4, 7, 12, 17]** | **Reporting guidelines are more valuable to inexperienced researchers** |
| **Reporting guidelines can be hard to use at first but get easier with experience [2, 12, 15]** | **Reporting guidelines can be hard to use at first but get easier with experience** |
| **I want design or methodological advice [4, 10, 17]**  **I don’t know how to do this item [2, 4, 6]** | **I want or need design advice** |
| **Guidelines are procedural straightjackets [10]**  **This guideline is too prescriptive [4, 9, 10]** | **I think this guidance prescribes how research should be designed** |
| *The guideline’s applicability criteria are not clear [3, 5, 13]* | A guideline’s scope can be unclear |
| *This guideline isn’t a perfect fit for me [5]*  **This guideline doesn’t generalise [4, 9, 10, 13, 17]**  **This guideline is too prescriptive [4, 9, 10]** | A guideline can be too narrow |
| **I don’t want to see optional items that only apply to other types of study [5, 6]** | A guideline’s scope can be too broad |
| **I need to adhere to journal guidelines or other research guidelines [4, 6, 12, 13]**  **I might need to use multiple reporting guidelines [10]** | Authors often need to adhere to multiple sets of guidance |
| **I want reporting guidelines to be linked or embedded [3, 4]**  **I want reporting guidelines to use similar structure [4]**  **I want reporting guidelines to use similar terms [4]** | I want guidelines to harmonize |
| **I don’t like checklists[5, 7, 10, 13]**  **I may use the checklist instead of the full guidance [[CSL STYLE ERROR: reference with no printed form.]]**  **I may use the checklist before I read the full guidance [[CSL STYLE ERROR: reference with no printed form.]]** | I experience reporting guidelines primarily as, or through, checklists |

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