

Lehigh Rising Scholars Journal

Peer Reviewer Guidelines

I. Purpose of Peer Review

The Lehigh Rising Scholars Journal (LRSJ) is a peer-reviewed academic journal dedicated to showcasing undergraduate research within the Lehigh University community. The purpose of our review process is not only to assess scholarly merit but also to foster growth, confidence, and academic curiosity among undergraduate authors.

Our review process is designed to promote undergraduate involvement and development. Rather than traditional judging, we emphasize constructive and encouraging feedback. Qualified reviewers with relevant expertise provide thoughtful evaluations that highlight strengths and offer clear, actionable suggestions for improvement. In doing so, we aim to familiarize undergraduate students with the peer review process and prepare them for future publication experiences.

LRSJ relies on the thoughtful and professional contributions of graduate student reviewers to ensure that submitted manuscripts meet high standards of academic rigor and clarity. Peer review at LRSJ is both an evaluative and educational tool, meant to promote constructive academic exchange, enhance the quality of undergraduate research, and foster a supportive and inclusive intellectual community. Reviewers are expected to provide feedback that is specific, actionable, respectful, and developmentally focused.

II. Reviewer Responsibilities

All reviewers are expected to:

1. Provide thoughtful, timely, and constructive evaluations of assigned manuscripts.
2. Maintain confidentiality throughout the review process.
3. Recuse themselves in the case of conflicts of interest.
4. Submit their review within ten (10) calendar days of receiving the assignment.
5. Abide by the principles and tone outlined in this guideline document.

III. Structure of Review

Reviewers must organize their evaluation into the following three sections:

1. **Summary of the Manuscript:** Provide a brief (2–4 sentence) summary of the study's aims, methods, and key findings to confirm understanding of the manuscript.
2. **Major Comments:** Address fundamental aspects of the manuscript that affect its validity, clarity, or organization. These may include:
 - Clarity of the research question
 - Appropriateness and transparency of methods
 - Quality and interpretation of data
 - Logical coherence of argument and conclusions
 - Alignment with journal scope and submission requirements
 - Use of appropriate and recent references
 - Quality, labeling, and integration of tables and figures within the manuscript

Each major comment should be clearly stated and followed by specific suggestions for improvement.

3. **Minor Comments:** Note issues of grammar, style, formatting, and other localized matters that do not substantially affect the core content or conclusions of the manuscript.

IV. Principles of Constructive Feedback

Reviewers must uphold the following standards of constructive critique:

- **Specificity:** Comments must include direct references to specific sections, paragraphs, or lines.
- **Actionability:** Feedback must include suggestions for revision where appropriate.
- **Prioritization:** Feedback should distinguish between major and minor concerns.
- **Balance:** Constructive reviews include recognition of strengths in addition to critique.
- **Positionality:** When relevant, reviewers may identify their disciplinary background or perspective to contextualize comments.
- **Professionalism:** Reviews must be free of personal or disparaging remarks. All comments should pertain to the manuscript rather than the author.

V. Sample Review Language

- "The manuscript presents a compelling research question; however, the methods section lacks sufficient detail for reproducibility. I recommend specifying the sample preparation steps in more detail."
- "The discussion section could benefit from a clearer connection to the stated hypothesis. Consider reorganizing this section to more directly address the central research question."
- "Figures are generally clear, but Figure 2 requires axis labels and a caption that fully describes the content independent of the main text."

VI. Submission and Communication

Completed reviews will be submitted via [TBD]. If a reviewer is unable to complete their review by the deadline, they must notify the editorial team promptly so that the manuscript may be reassigned.

VII. Reviewer Recognition

All peer reviewers will be formally acknowledged by the journal at the end of each academic year. Additional opportunities for editorial involvement may be available to reviewers who demonstrate exceptional commitment and rigor.

Thank you for your participation in the peer review process for the Lehigh Rising Scholars Journal. Questions or concerns may be directed to the LRSJ team at inlrsj@lehigh.edu.

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