



Guide to Mentoring ECRs

 **SAGE**
Publishing

Introduction

Early career researchers (ECRs) are researchers currently working on an advanced degree, like a PhD or postdoc, as well as those who are only a few years out of his or her program. ECRs are eager to establish themselves in their field or discipline and often this reputation stems from papers published and conducting peer review. ECRs may help with peer review before they are even published.

In the 2016 Publons' Editor Survey 75 percent of journal editors say that "finding reviewers and getting them to accept review invitations" is the hardest part of their job. Reviewer selection challenges are a frequent topic at board meetings and in our day-to-day communications with SAGE journal editors. The issue also significantly impacts our peer review times. In many instances, Editors invite a higher-level faculty member to conduct a peer review. That person will respond they don't have the time, so they suggest a student complete the review for them.

ECRs are eager to perform peer review and contribute value to their colleagues and field of expertise thorough feedback for the author in question. However, in the early stages of their career they do need guidance from senior colleagues as to whether the review they conducted was suitable and in line with others in the field. Some will have highly supportive supervisors who can provide this mentoring support, but others will be looking for that support elsewhere, for example from journal Editors. We've put together a handy guide for Editors on what to consider when working with ECRs and how to best engage them in the academic publishing arena.

How to Conduct Reviews

First and foremost, we recommend that mentors provide ECRs with resources to aid them in conducting peer review. SAGE offers some great guides and videos on how to conduct peer review:

- [Read our website on how to review articles](#)
- [Watch a video on how to become a peer reviewer](#)
- [Watch a video on how to conduct peer review](#)
- [Download our Reviewer's Guide](#) for written instructions on how to assess a manuscript and what to include in a review

Peer Review Ethics

Responsibilities, Expectations and Code of Conduct

A clear introduction into peer review ethics is necessary for any ECR starting their reviewer career and SAGE has developed some useful resources to ensure that our reviewers are mindful of their responsibilities. We strongly recommend sharing and discussing these resources with all ECRs before they start reviewing. Mentors also need to be available for any questions or clarification they may need.

- We have a site dedicated to [the ethical responsibilities when conducting peer review](#)

- [Watch a video on peer review ethics](#)

Research Integrity

SAGE is committed to upholding the integrity of the work we publish. Our in-house Research Integrity Group sets out SAGE's publishing policies in relation to ethical practice and we facilitate membership to the [Committee on Publication Ethics](#) (COPE) for many of our journal editors. We encourage our authors, editors, and reviewers to refer to the wealth of information and practical help available on the COPE website. COPE has published a set of Guidelines for Peer Reviewers that we recommend reading prior to beginning a review.

Web of Science Academy

[Web of Science Academy](#) is another fantastic resource for ECRs. As well as providing a resource for peer reviewers to be able to claim credit for the peer review that they carry out, Web of Science Reviewer Recognition also provides a wealth of free resources that we recommend and encourage ECRs to utilize, especially in conducting peer review.

Below are some of the topics covered in the Web of Science Academy:

Welcome to Web of Science Academy

Get an overview of what will be covered in the modules and how the course works

Academic publishing and peer review

Get an overview of the workflow of academic publishing and different types of peer review

What journals want

Learn how to communicate with editors and what skills they value in peer reviewers

Ethical considerations

Learn about author and reviewer biases, conflicts of interest, and misconduct

At first glance

Learn how to approach a review, and what to look for in titles, abstracts, and reference lists

Evaluating introductions

Learn what should be included in an introduction and what to look out for and comment on

Evaluating methodology

Learn what makes a sound study design and how to recognise a poor one

Evaluating data and results

Learn what to look for when evaluating data in tables and figures in the results section

Evaluating discussions and conclusions

Learn what should be included and what to look for and comment on when evaluating discussions and conclusions

Structuring your reviews

Learn how to structure and effectively communicate your constructive review

Journal Involvement

We encourage supervisors and faculty members to utilize ECRs in the review process, but we ask that when utilizing ECRs who have not yet completed their PhD that they obtain permission from you, the journal editor, prior to completing the review. The supervisor must agree to provide guidance during the review process and approve the final review. Note the names of those who contributed to the review in the 'Confidential Comments to the Editor' box when submitting your review. Below is a potential email template:

[Journal name] supports peer review mentoring and accepts reviews from students and junior researchers. Should you decline this invitation but wish to suggest a junior colleague to review the paper, type 'Early Career Researcher' or 'ECR' in the Comments Box when recommending alternative reviewers for the paper. Note that you will be expected to provide guidance and approve the final comments before the review is submitted.

Some journals opt to use a Reviewer in Training reviewer rubric, where the supervisor submits a review together with an ECR. On the right is the reviewer in training rubric some journals use. Please note these questions can be customized. Please work with your Publishing Editor and SAGE Track point of contact to set up this reviewer form.

Journal editorial boards may offer positions for ECRs, like social media fellows or more junior positions to help early career researchers establish themselves. Most who sit on an editorial board tend to be further along in their career and this provides an opportunity for junior members to get involved earlier on in their career and receive mentorship from the more senior editorial board members

Mentors/Mentees

As the Society for Scholarly Publishing (SSP) states, "Mentorship is an ideal way for professionals at all career levels to develop new relationships, share experiences, and learn from others outside their organizations by connecting with a mentor." The SSP has a fantastic [mentorship program handbook](#), which you can use as a potential outline and reference for establishing your own mentorship programs.

Sample Rubric for Reviewers in Training

Reviewers have the option to invite a Reviewer in Training (a graduate student, postdoctoral fellow, early-career research assistant or associate) to serve as a co-reviewer. This is completely optional. This opportunity is afforded as an educational experience to the Reviewer in Training. The quality of the review is the responsibility of the lead reviewer and not of the Reviewer in Training. The Reviewer in Training will not receive any communications about the manuscript. The use of the contact information for the Reviewer in Training may be used to invite and authorize reviewer roles in the future.

1. Did a Reviewer in Training work with you on this review?

- Yes
- No

2. Please fill in the following information about the Reviewer in Training:

- Name: _____
- Organizational affiliation (University or Department): _____
- Email address: _____

3. Note the position of the Reviewer in Training:

- Graduate student
- Postdoctoral fellow
- Undergraduate student
- Research associate/assistant
- Other _____

4. Select the option that best describes how the Reviewer in Training was involved in the review:

- They were mostly an observer of the work
- They shared equally in the work

5. Would you deem this person to be ready to review manuscripts independently?

- Yes
- No

Help your ECRs to build their reviewer profile

- [5 ways to become an expert reviewer](#)
- [Becoming a Journal Peer Reviewer: Tips and ideas for early career professionals](#)
- [Our Commitment to Peer Review: Resources and Support](#)
- [Register as reviewer with Web of Science Reviewer Recognition](#) and get credit for your review work

Additional reviewer education resources

- [What to consider when asked to peer review](#)
- [Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers](#)
- [How to be a Peer Reviewer Webinar](#)
- [SAGE Peer Review Best Practices and Publishing Policies](#)

Recommended reading

- [Innovation in Peer Review: interview with the organisers of the Peer Review Congress](#)
- [How to be a Peer Reviewer](#)
- [Peer Review Week YouTube channel](#)
- [Open peer review at SAGE](#)
- [What is Open Peer Review? A systematic review](#)