

## Welcome to the Higher seminar

### Reviewing Manuscripts for Journals

The aim of the seminar is to consider best practices for reviewing manuscripts for journals in the fields relevant for this department.

We will discuss the following topics and jointly generate practical advice:

- how to write reviews that support editors in making fair decisions, and support authors in improving their manuscripts
- ethical behaviour for reviewers
- how to spend your own time wisely when making reviews

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### Seminar agenda

#### Introduction

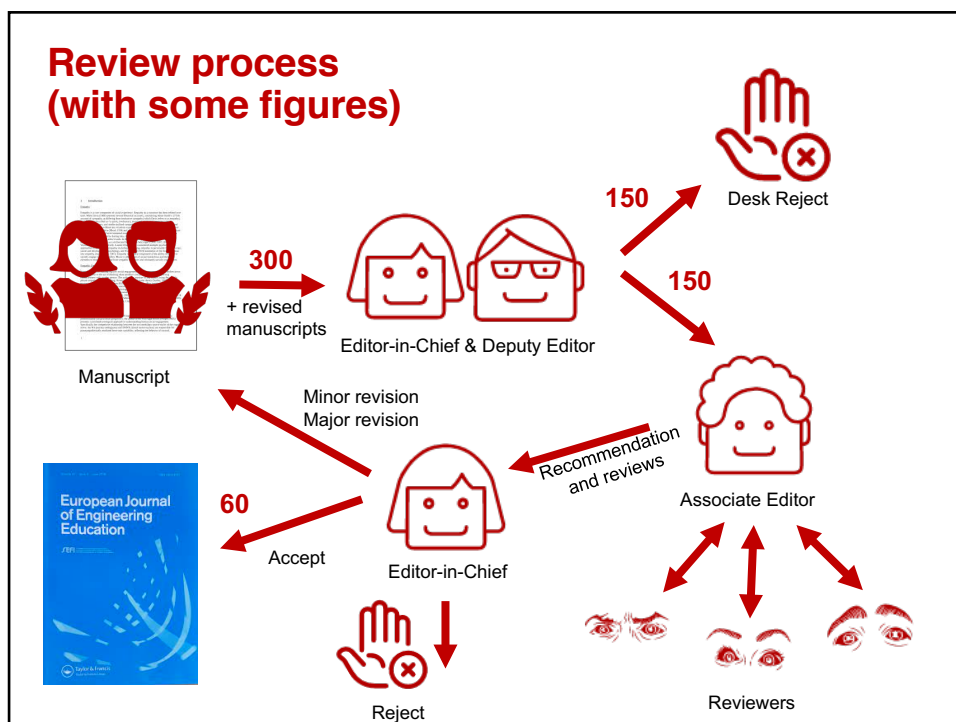
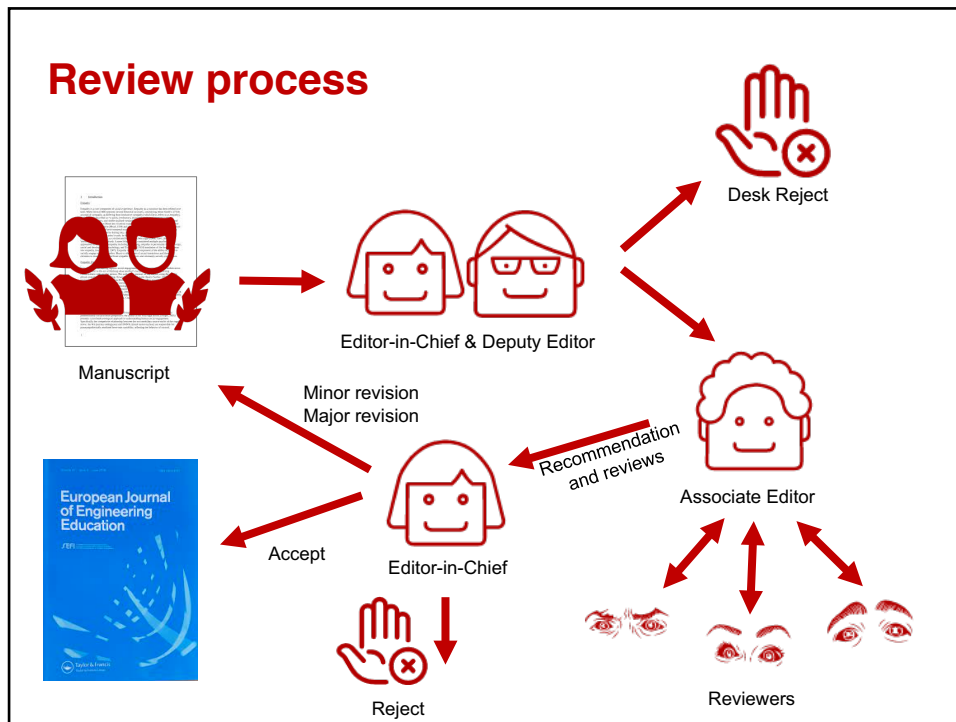
- The review process (an example)
- Our views on reviews

#### Group activity *20 min*

- Make a poster: "Advice for reviewers"

#### Synthesis *20 min*

- Plenary discussion of results
- Collected wisdom and conclusions



## How the editorial process works (text version)

- When a manuscript is submitted to a journal, the editorial team checks whether the topic is within the aims and scope of the journal, and decide whether the manuscript should proceed for peer review. Desk reject or going out for review?
- They invite reviewers with relevant expertise, usually two to four scholars, who volunteer their time to go through the manuscript carefully. The review is double-blind, meaning that reviewers receive an anonymous version so as not to be influenced by the identity of the authors, and neither will the authors know who reviewed their manuscript.
- The first function of a review is to help editors make an appropriate decision about the manuscript. Each reviewer makes a recommendation, e.g. Accept, Minor revision, Major Revision or Reject. The reviewers' recommendations can be quite disparate, so when making a decision the editors must consider them together with their own impressions from reading the manuscript.
- A decision of Major or Minor revision requires that the author also gets suggestions to guide the revisions.
- The second function of reviews is to support authors in improving the manuscript. Reviewers provide comments to explain their assessment of the manuscript and give thorough, constructive advice for how it could be developed. If suggestions are disparate, authors must decide, sometimes with guidance from editors, how to navigate contradictory advice as they revise their manuscript.
- The aim of the peer review process is to identify which manuscripts most deserve to be prioritised over other good manuscripts, and then also to improve them as much as possible before they are published.
- This process furthers the quality of the journal papers, and by extension the whole research field. It is only thanks to the reviewers, and their anonymous efforts, that it is possible to maintain a well-respected research endeavour.

## The role of reviewers

- **Reviewers make recommendations to editors**  
to inform their decisions
- **Reviewers make suggestions to authors**  
to support further development of the manuscript, or future work

### This is how we further the field

Without peer review there would not be a field

The journal depends on reviewers for

- Weeding out unsuitable papers
- Improving the quality of papers that are published (archived)

## What we like about reviewing (summary of our input)

### Learning

- Always learn a lot: about the topic, methodology, references etc
- Improves my own writing
- Useful to read papers really deeply (compared to regular more shallow paper reading)
- Inspiration
- Development of critical thinking skills

### Experience variation

- See different perspectives on a particular phenomenon and the different methods used
- See how others write
- Helps me reflect on my own papers

### Contributing

- Nice to give advice on how to improve the paper
- Nice to contribute to improving quality
- Contribute to someone else's work and development

### Part of being a researcher

- Keep me up to date with the field
- Necessary for the field
- A nice merit in my CV, shows that I am entrusted

### Interesting

- A very interesting task and actually quite enjoyable

## What we find challenging (summary of our input)

### Being constructive

- It is always hard to be constructive, especially if the manuscript is badly written
- Be professional
- Be constructive and corrective
- The number of bad manuscripts have increased, difficult to decide whether to just reject without comments or sacrifice time to formulate feedback on crap

### Making judgement

- Who am I to judge if a paper is good or bad?
- Avoiding bias (e.g., confirmatory bias)
- Being objective and disinterested
- Challenging as you don't know what the other reviewers have focused on

### Skills

- Writing in accurate English, being clear and lucid
- Understanding the methodology of the study
- Topics, methods and theories that I am not familiar with
- Being up-to-date with the latest research in the field

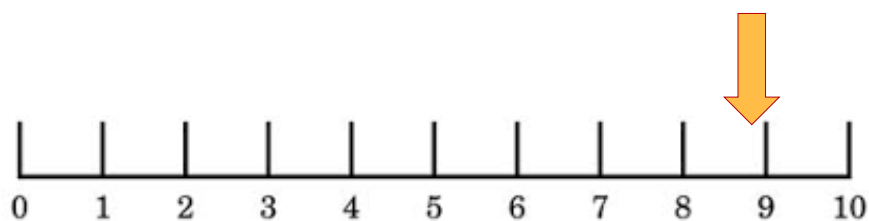
### Making sense of the manuscript

- Trying to make meaning of a methodology that does not fit well for a particular study
- Articles that are not in my subject area

### Time

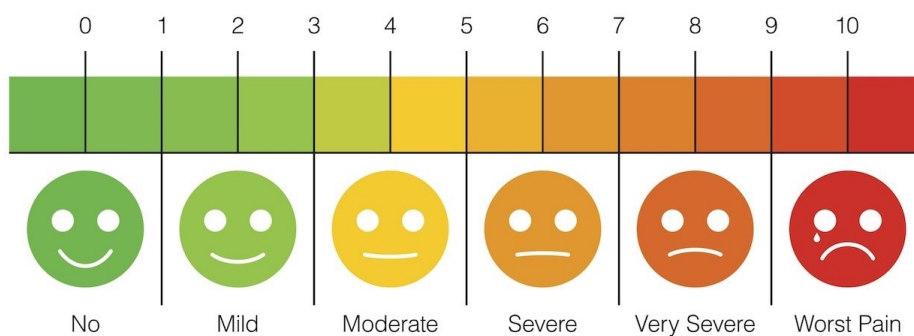
- Time - It takes so much time - It takes time I don't have - Having enough time... (many similar answers)
- Finding the time to do a thorough and detailed review especially when the research paper is not adequately underpinned and or methodologically insufficient for direct publication
- How much time and effort you should put into it

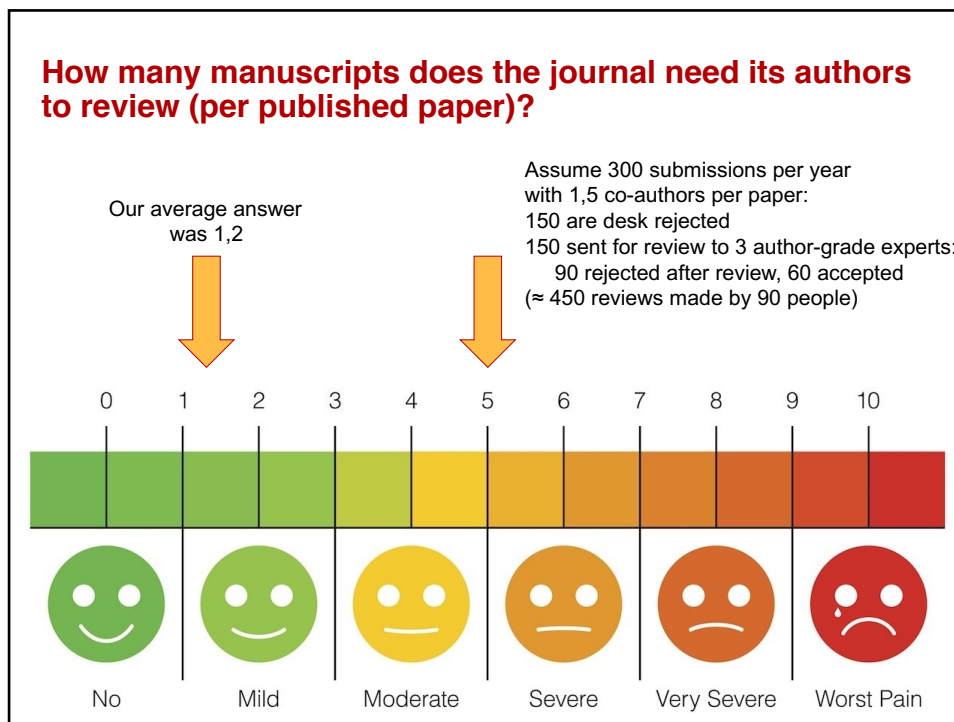
**How many papers have you published?  
(our average answer)**



**How many reviews do you expect to make per  
paper you publish yourself?**

**Write in the chat!**





## Ethical behaviour

### 1. Just do it

- Accept the invitation!
- Ask for more time if you need
- You may contact editors to indicate your willingness
- Stay on and review the revised manuscript

### 2. Do it well

- identify positive aspects of the paper (not just to be kind)
- identify weaknesses and give advice for development (give options if possible)
- consider also the title and abstract
- suggest relevant references

### 3. Keep a professional tone

- be clear
- be kind and respectful

### 4. Do NOT

- offend or make assumptions about the author, just comment on the manuscript
- propose your own publications as references, but you may ask the editor to consider suggesting them (use the field for confidential comments to the editor)

## Reviewing as a learning activity with your PhD students

When you are invited to review a manuscript:

- Ask your PhD student(s) to write a review
- You draft a review yourself (important)

### In a meeting

- Compare and discuss the draft reviews
- Discuss reviewing in general, how to do it constructively, the tone, ethical aspects (e.g. confidentiality, suggesting references, no-no's), the golden rule (review the work of others as you would have them review yours)

### Submit your improved review. Follow up:

- + Share the comments from editor & other reviewers with the students
- + Repeat when you are invited to review a revised version

## Advantages

- Helps the PhD students **understand the peer review process** of journals, and how academia works
- Gives the PhD students **feedback**
  - comparing their own review draft with the others'
  - comparing their own writing with the manuscript
- Helps them develop important **skills**
  - Develop an eye for good/bad writing
  - Strategies for developing a manuscript - it is often easier to see clearly how someone else's text can be developed
  - How to formulate constructive comments
- The supervisor teaches through **role modelling** while making your own review tasks more **interesting**
  - Perhaps you will also learn something 😊
  - You still have full responsibility for the quality of the review
  - Check with the editor if it is ok?

## The skills we want to develop? (summary of our input)

### Critical and helpful

- Critical view of manuscripts, in terms of how my notes can be more clear and helpful to the writers
- Analyse information critically in a way that can be helpful to the authors
- Critically examine the content of the work and providing constructive feedback to help the author(s) improve the quality of their work
- Reading and commenting on the text in a way that will provide relevant feedback to the author
- Be able to give relevant feedback that may help the writer

### Analytical skills

- Critical thinking
- Better detailed analytical depth in statistical methods

### Speed

- I am quite good but for sure my main improvement need is to be faster but remaining quality
- To be faster, it often takes too much time
- Be faster - what is good enough?
- Speed, of course. But then being kinder, more helpful and constructive
- Perhaps how to do it more time-efficiently

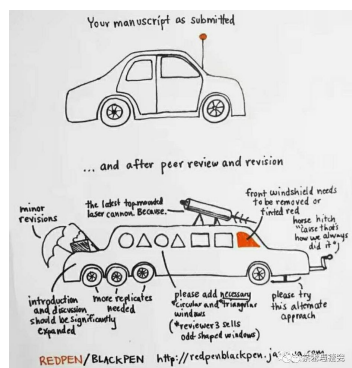
## Group activity

- Breakout groups of 3-4
- Scroll down to your group's space in the collaborative document (see link in chat)
- Make a poster:  
**Advice for reviewers**
- Start writing as you are talking
  - you can all write at once
  - no need to wait for consensus
- You have until 09.40



Annica, Björn, Khayala

- Do it as soon as possible. You won't have more time in 4 weeks.
- 3-4 hours sounds very fast. For us it takes at least a day
- Only accept to review papers close to your area that you feel comfortable to review. Reviewing other kinds of papers can take much more time since you have to look up more stuff.
- Have this picture in mind while reviewing



Ellinor, Linda, Ida

- Vänlig, konkret och konstruktiv: Inte bara "utveckla" utan var precis, ge gärna exempel. Vilka aspekter behöver utvecklas?
- Koherensen i artikeln är viktig: Var öppensinnad, försöka förstå andra perspektiv
- Bedöma vetenskapligheten i artikeln inte vad som är rätt eller fel utifrån det egna tyckandet eller intresset
- Se sina begränsningar: Vara ärlig med sina begränsningar, tex inte bedöma analysmetoder som man inte behärskar
- Gärna ge tips på centrala referenser, men gör inte hela det arbetet åt författarna.

Malaguias, Helena, Anders

- Be careful with your time and effort and find a way judge when to make the effort of a deep review with thorough feedback, for example by approaching the review iteratively:
  - 1) Start by making a very quick review to decide whether to reject immediately or to go on with a more thorough review. I have some simple criteria (for example if I find more than 2 errors on the first page, even very minor errors) for quick reject with a comment that neither the author nor the editor has made a serious effort.
  - 2) If you from the first step decide to go on with the review, then make a somewhat deeper review which either results in rejecting or major revision recommendations with more overarching feedback, or in going on to the third step.
    - 3.1) Here either you are already ready to recommend acceptance...
    - 3.2) ...or you go on making a deep review with thorough constructive feedback, either for minor or somewhat major revisions.
- Literature review and methodology
- The ethical guidelines Kristina talked about are good!

Panos, Louise, Elisabeth

(no previous experience reviewing journal papers)

- Clear explanation of choices (method, sample)
- Check ethical considerations in the paper
- Constructive feedback - be very clear

Helena IP, Eva H, Marie M

- Do it... you will learn a lot and you have a lot to contribute with
- Read the paper..
- Don't hesitate to write what you think about the paper
- Use the possibility to send comments about the paper and your review to the editor
- Watch out for fishy journals

Ernest, Tingjun, Stefan

- Constructive feedback
- Being professional
- Being precise, clear and detailed
- Being open-minded, avoiding bias
- Spend sufficient time on each review
- Suggest realistic revisions

## Some further reading

- Gravett, K., Kinchin, I. M., Winstone, N. E., Balloo, K., Heron, M., Hosein, A., ... & Medland, E. (2020). The development of academics' feedback literacy: Experiences of learning from critical feedback via scholarly peer review. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 45(5), 651-665.
- Atjonen, P. (2018). Ethics in peer review of academic journal articles as perceived by authors in the educational sciences. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, 16(4), 359-376.
- Martin, J. (2020). Time for a culture change – moving academia from destructive to constructive feedback. *Journal of Women and Minorities in Science and Engineering*, 26(1).



**Thank you all for  
reviewing!**