

## CSSEP Reviewer Guidelines

### What is Peer Reviewing?

Peer reviewing is a collaborative process that provides both scrutiny and feedback on manuscripts submitted to *CSSEP* by independent experts within the field of applied sport and exercise psychology. This peer-review process provides authors with feedback that is designed to improve the quality of submitted manuscripts. Also, this feedback enables the relevant editor to assess the manuscript's suitability for publication in *CSSEP*.

### Why Act as a Reviewer?

There are a number of reasons why you might agree to act as a reviewer for *CSSEP*. These include:

- To help authors improve their manuscripts by providing your professional insight into the subject in question.
- To play an important role in maintaining a good, rigorous peer-review process that maintains the quality of our profession's evidence base.
- Expand your awareness of the current case study research and professional practice approaches emerging within your field.
- Build relationships and improve your academic and professional profile. Although often anonymous, the review process can enable a discussion (between author, reviewer, and editor) around a specific applied topic.
- Improve your own writing skills. Reviewing others' work can make it easier to spot common errors in your own writing.

### Before Saying "Yes"

It is important before you agree to review a manuscript for *CSSEP* that you understand what is required of you as part of this process. Relevant questions to ask yourself include:

- What is the form of review (i.e., single, open, etc.)?
- How will you submit the review report?
- How much detail is required as part of the review?
- Do you have any conflicts of interest?
- Do you have time to undertake the review?

### The Process of Reviewing for *CSSEP*

If you agree to act as a reviewer, the next steps include:

#### **1. Understand the journal.**

If you visit our journal website (<https://journals.humankinetics.com/view/journals/cssep/cssep-overview.xml>), you will get a sense of the types of manuscripts we publish and the style of writing and presentation. Understanding the approach taken by *CSSEP* in publishing will go a long way in helping you understand if a manuscript you are reviewing is suitable for publication or not.

#### **2. Read the instructions for authors.**

It is important to appreciate the specific guidance that has been provided to manuscript authors to have a clear understanding of submission criteria for *CSSEP* (i.e., manuscript length, scope, presentation style). *CSSEP* adopts a different focus to many research-led journals. As a result, it is important to understand the constraints that have been placed on submitting authors.

## Conducting the Review

Your review will help the relevant editor decide whether or not to publish the manuscript. Giving your overall opinion and general observations of the manuscript is essential for the decision-making process. Your comments should be courteous and constructive, and should not include any personal remarks or personal details including your name.

## Write Your Reviewer Report

The main factors you should provide advice on as a reviewer are the originality, presentation, relevance, and significance of the manuscript's subject matter to the readership of the journal. It might be helpful at this point to re-familiarize yourself with the CSSEP Mission (<https://journals.humankinetics.com/view/journals/cssep/cssep-overview.xml>).

Questions to have in mind when reading the manuscript (in no particular order):

- Does the manuscript fit the scope of the journal?
- Would the manuscript be of interest to the readership of the journal?
- Does the manuscript help to enhance knowledge and understanding of professional practice or case study research?
- Do you feel that the significance and potential impact (on the readership) of the manuscript is high or low?
- Is the manuscript complete? Is there an abstract or summary of the work undertaken as well as a concluding section?
- Is there a clear articulation of the context of the case (for applied practice case studies)?
- Is the methodology (for research case studies) presented in the manuscript and any analysis provided both accurate and properly conducted?
- Are all relevant accompanying data, citations, or references given by the author, and does the manuscript conform to APA Style?
- Would you recommend that the author reconsider the paper for a related or alternative journal?
- Is the standard of writing of a sufficient standard (e.g., structure, flow, level of critical thought, delivery of key arguments/messages)?
- Is the submission in Standard English to aid the readers' understanding?

## Providing Feedback

Reviewers generally (but not always) format their reviews in such a way to offer general/overview comments, feedback on specific sections, and potentially also specific editorial errors.

### *General feedback/ overview.*

- Summarize the article in a short paragraph for the editor.
- Give your main impressions of the manuscript, including whether it is novel and interesting, whether it has a sufficient impact and adds to the knowledge base.
- Point out any journal-specific points – does it adhere to the journal's standards?

### *Specific sections.*

- **Title:** Does the title clearly describe the article?
- **Abstract:** Does the abstract reflect the content of the article?
- **Introduction:** Does it describe what the author hoped to achieve accurately, and clearly state the problem being investigated? Normally, the introduction should summarize relevant research to provide context, and explain what other authors' findings, if any,

are being challenged or extended. It should describe the experiment, the hypothesis(es), and the general experimental design or method.

- **Context (Professional practice):** Has the author reflected on the context and the key agents underpinning the case study? In particular, has the author focused upon their approach to practice, their philosophy, and briefly outlining experiences that have helped to shape and evolve their particular approach?
- **The case (Professional practice):** Has detail been provided of the specific case itself? Is there sufficient detail regarding the interventions adopted and associated empirical underpinning? Also, is detail provided regarding the outcome of specific interventions?
- **Reflection (Professional practice):** The author(s) will be required to reflect on their experience, their approach, things they would do differently, lessons learned, and recommendations for future practice, research, or both.
- **Method (Research):** Does the author accurately explain how the data was collected? Is the design suitable for answering the question posed? Is there sufficient information present for you to replicate the research? Does the article identify the procedures followed? Are these ordered in a meaningful way? If the methods are new, are they explained in detail? Was the sampling appropriate? Have the equipment and materials been adequately described? Does the article make it clear what type of data was recorded; has the author been precise in describing measurements?
- **Results (Research):** This is where the author(s) should explain in words what he/she discovered in the research. It should be clearly laid out and in a logical sequence. You will need to consider if the appropriate analysis has been conducted.
- **Reflection (Professional practice):** The author(s) will be required to reflect on their experience, their approach, things they would do differently, lessons learned, and recommendations for future practice, research, or both.
- **Conclusion/Discussion (Research):** Are the claims in this section supported by the results; do they seem reasonable? Have the authors indicated how the results relate to expectations and to earlier research? Does the article support or contradict previous theories? Do the conclusions relate to applied practice within the field?
- **Tables, Figures, Images:** Are they appropriate? Do they properly show the data? Are they easy to interpret and understand?

***Providing detailed comments.***

- 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 manuscript is sufficiently interesting to justify its length.
- 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.
- A referee may disagree with the author's opinions, but should allow them to stand, provided they are consistent with the available evidence.
- Remember that authors will welcome positive feedback as well as constructive criticism from you.

Being critical whilst remaining sensitive to the author isn't always easy and comments should be carefully constructed so that the author fully understands what actions they need to take to improve their paper. Generalized or vague statements should be avoided along with any negative comments that aren't relevant or constructive.

It is also important to remember that, while rigorous, the process is supposed to be constructive and collaborative. **It is important to consider the impact of the language you use and the impact potential comments might have.**

### **Sample Comments**

Please note that these are just examples of how you might provide feedback on a manuscript. Your reviewer report should, of course, always be tailored to the manuscript in question.

#### ***Positive comments.***

- “The manuscript is well-written in an engaging and lively style.”
- “The level is appropriate to our 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 is a well-written article that does identify an important gap.”

#### ***Constructive criticism.***

- “In the “context” section I would have wished to see more information on ...”.
- “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 reflection could be expanded to explore ...”.
- “The authors could strengthen the paper by ...”.
- In general, when offering constructive criticism, make sure the critique is specific, sensitive, balanced (points out areas of improvement and strengths), and identifies the ways the manuscript can be improved.

### **Make a Recommendation**

When you make a recommendation, it is worth considering the categories the editor will use in communicating a decision to the manuscript author(s):

- **Accept** (Without revision)
- **Accept with minor revisions** (The manuscript well presented, but could be enhanced by further specific modification)
- **Accept with major revisions** (While the manuscript has merit, it lacks clarity of argument and/or is missing significant information)
- **Revise and resubmit**
- **Reject** (Explain reason in report)

### **The Final Decision**

The editor ultimately decides whether to accept or reject the manuscript. The editor will weigh all reviewer views and may call for a third opinion or ask the author for a revised paper before making a decision.

### **A Note About Revisions**

When authors make revisions to their article in response to reviewer comments, they are asked to submit a list of changes and any comments for transmission to the reviewers. The revised version is usually returned to the original reviewer, if possible, who is then asked to affirm whether the revisions have been carried out satisfactorily.