

‘Social Research Practice’ journal – reviewer guidelines

February 2015 v2

Thank you very much for agreeing to review an article for ‘Social Research Practice, the journal of the Social Research Association. We are very grateful to you for taking the time to do this.

Before accepting an invitation to review an article

Does the article fit with your knowledge and expertise?

Only accept an invitation if you are competent to review the article.

Is there a potential conflict of interest?

A conflict of interest may not prevent you from reviewing an article. But please explain the issue to the editor, for example that you have a connection with the author, and take the editor’s advice before going ahead..

Do you have enough time?

Although articles for Social Research Practice are kept short (no more than 4,000 words), a review can still be time consuming. You will need to allocate around 3 hours to read, consider and comment on the article.

The editor will give you a deadline – usually four weeks from you receiving the article. This deadline is important as we are working to a fixed design and publication schedule.

What we are looking for

Please read the author guidelines (<http://the-sra.org.uk/journal-social-research-practice/>) so that you know what we have asked the author to do.

The aims of the journal are to:

- Cover practice-based, rather than pure academic, research (accepting that this distinction is a loose one)
- Focus mainly, but not exclusively, on methodological matters, but also present findings themselves if these are likely to be of wide interest
- Feature applications and case studies which have practical value for research colleagues, rather than discussing philosophical principles and theory
- Highlight the impact of research on practice and on policy
- Show innovative techniques, but without excluding useful research based on more traditional methods
- Cover the full range of approaches – quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, and so on
- Encourage openness from authors – honest admission of problems encountered, and learning from mistakes
- Encourage and promote high standards of social research for public benefit

Questions to consider when reviewing

- Is the article potentially useful for a non-academic audience?
- Does it describe something new or provide a worthwhile contribution to an ongoing debate?
- Is it written clearly, in a readable style and with no unnecessary jargon?
- Are research issues and problems acknowledged and described?
- If the article is not of publishable standard but has potential, what can the author do to improve it?

Reviewing an article

We will send you the article in an MS Word document.

| Please do: | Please don't: |
|--|---|
| Read the whole article through first | Add comments until you have done this |
| Before starting, switch on the 'Track Changes' feature in the Review menu. (And make sure your spell-checker is set to UK spelling) | Write anything directly in the text (even if highlighted with 'Track Changes') |
| Before starting, under 'Track Changes' choose 'Change user name' and make your user name 'Reviewer' and your initials 'REV' – this will ensure your 'Comments' are anonymous. (Don't forget to change it back afterwards!) | Remove comments and start again if you forgot to 'Change user name' – just let us know and we will anonymise at our end |
| Insert your comments at appropriate places in the text using the 'New Comment' feature in the Review menu – so that comments appear off to the side of the text | Make changes to font, paragraph formats, numbering, or other technical aspects |
| Fix spelling mistakes and minor grammatical errors if you happen to spot them | Try to make major improvements to the style of the article |

The editor may wish to pass your version of the article back to the author, or to other reviewers. Please ensure your comments are objective, constructive and respectful and, as far as possible, encouraging. This is especially important when reviewing articles by new and less experienced researchers. Derogatory personal comments are not acceptable.

Title

Does the title describe what the article is about?

Abstract

Does the abstract summarise the article clearly?

Introduction

We do not require a literature review, but we expect the article to include some context and justification of the paper's importance. The introduction should include background information such as the policy context, why the research is significant, and how it came about. Does the introduction provide this?

In general: we would like you to explain and support your judgement so that the journal editors and authors can follow your reasoning. Say if your comments are your own opinion or are implied or shown by the data. If you think something is an error of fact, please note this and supply your correction and reference.

Your recommendations and report to the editor

At the top of the article there are blank boxes for your:

1. Recommendation to the editor

- Accept without revision
- Reject (explain reason in report)
- Revise (either major or minor)

The final decision is for the editor, but your opinion is very helpful.

2. Reviewer report

Your overall evaluation of the article, and why it is, or is not, suitable to publish. There is no need to repeat comments you have already made in the text as the editor will read these. Please note that the editor's decision is final.

If you have any questions or concerns about an article, then please email the office (admin@the-sra.org.uk) to ask for the editor to make contact with you.

Confidentiality

Author confidentiality

- Please treat the article and reviewing process as confidential
- If you want to get a colleague's opinion, you **MUST** ask the permission of the editor first
- You must keep the information in the article confidential
- You must not use it for personal advantage or for the advantage of any organisation

Reviewer confidentiality

The author(s) of the article will see your comments but these will not be attributed (see above table for how to ensure this in Word). We will not tell the author your identity. Please do not put your name in the text of your review, or contact the author.

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