

Quick Guide to Peer Review

SCS Journals



ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Peer review plays a vital role in maintaining the quality, integrity, and credibility of scholarly research. This guide provides practical considerations for reviewers assessing manuscripts submitted to SCS Journals. As disciplinary standards and methodological approaches vary across fields, reviewers should apply their subject expertise, professional judgement, and knowledge of current scholarship.

When evaluating a manuscript, reviewers should consider five fundamental questions:

Originality & Contribution

Does the manuscript provide new knowledge, insights, methods, perspectives, or applications that contribute meaningfully to the field?

Research Quality & Methodological Rigour

Is the research appropriately designed, conducted, and interpreted?

Evidence, Transparency & Reproducibility

Are the findings supported by appropriate evidence, and is the study reported with sufficient transparency to enable critical assessment?

Significance, Relevance & Impact

Does the research address an important problem, gap, or challenge, and are its implications clearly articulated?

Ethics & Research Integrity

Has the research been conducted and reported in accordance with recognised ethical standards and responsible research practices?

The reviewer's role extends beyond identifying weaknesses or recommending a decision.

1 Originality & Contribution

Consider whether the manuscript adds meaningful knowledge to the field.

KEY QUESTIONS

- Does the study address an important problem or question?
- Does it provide new knowledge, evidence, methods, perspectives, or applications?
- Is the contribution clearly articulated?
- Does it advance research, theory, policy, or practice?

REVIEWER TIP

A publishable contribution does not need to be groundbreaking. The key question is whether the work adds something new, useful, and sufficiently robust to the existing literature.

2 Research Quality & Methodological Rigour

Assess whether the research has been designed and conducted appropriately.

KEY QUESTIONS

- Are the research objectives clearly stated?
- Is the methodology appropriate for addressing them?
- Are the research design, data collection, and analysis adequately described?
- Do the conclusions follow from the evidence?
- Have important limitations been acknowledged?

REVIEWER TIP

Look for alignment:

Research Question → Method → Data → Analysis → Findings → Conclusions

A strong manuscript demonstrates a logical connection throughout this chain.

Research should be reported clearly enough for others to understand, evaluate, and build upon.

KEY QUESTIONS

- Are data sources and materials clearly described?
- Are analytical procedures adequately explained?
- Are assumptions and limitations disclosed?
- Are software, tools, models, or instruments identified where relevant?
- Could another researcher reasonably understand how the study was conducted?

REVIEWER TIP

Ask yourself:

"Can I clearly understand how these findings were produced?"

Transparency strengthens credibility and confidence in the results.

Consider why the findings matter.

KEY QUESTIONS

- Is the topic relevant to the journal's audience?
- Does the research address a meaningful gap or challenge?
- Are the implications for research, practice, policy, or society clearly discussed?
- Does the manuscript demonstrate potential impact beyond its immediate context?

REVIEWER TIP

Good research should not only be methodologically sound; it should also advance understanding, inform practice, or provide a foundation for future work.

5 Ethics & Research Integrity

Ethical considerations are an essential part of research quality. Reviewers should consider whether the research has been conducted and reported in accordance with recognised ethical standards, including requirements related to participant protection, transparency, conflicts of interest, and the responsible use of artificial intelligence.

KEY QUESTIONS

- Was ethical approval obtained where required?
- Is informed consent reported where applicable?
- Are privacy and confidentiality protected?
- Have conflicts of interest and funding sources been disclosed?
- Are potential risks, biases, and limitations acknowledged?

Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence

Where artificial intelligence (AI) tools have been used in the preparation or conduct of the research, reviewers should assess whether such use has been appropriately disclosed and complies with the journal's policies.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

- Has the use of AI tools been transparently declared where required?
- Is any reported use of AI consistent with the methodology described in the manuscript?
- Have the authors retained responsibility and accountability for all content?
- Are there indications that AI-generated material may have affected the integrity, originality, or reliability of the work?

POTENTIAL WARNING SIGNS

- Missing or incomplete AI declarations.
- Undisclosed use of AI-generated text, figures, or analyses.
- Apparent fabricated, inaccurate, or unverifiable references.
- Inconsistencies between reported methods and reported outputs.
- Excessive reliance on AI-generated content without sufficient human oversight.

REVIEWER TIP

The use of AI tools does not automatically constitute a concern. The key considerations are transparency, appropriate use, and author accountability. Where concerns exist, they should be raised confidentially with the editor.