Academic Medicine Guide to Reviewer Recommendations

Thank you for reviewing for *Academic Medicine*. This guide is intended to serve as a quick reference to reasons to consider recommending that the journal reject, accept, or invite major or minor revisions to a manuscript. Suggestions for the types of information to include in your comments to the author and to the editor are also provided.

Your review comments and recommendation will influence the editors' decision regarding the manuscript. Moreover, the peer-review process depends on the submission of high-quality reviews that represent thoughtful consideration of the manuscript and are clear and sufficiently detailed. Please be sure to:

- provide constructive feedback in your comments to the authors,
- ensure that your comments to the author align with your recommendation, and
- provide support for your recommendation, including strengths and weaknesses, in your confidential comments to the editor.

Please note that the author will see your anonymous comments to the author, but only the editors and journal staff will see the recommendation you select. Please do not make publication recommendations in your comments to the author.

Note: If you believe that there are special circumstances—for example, suspected conflicts of interest, substantial or duplicate prior publication, use of others' work without acknowledgment, or identifiable data—please describe these issues in your confidential comments to the editor.

Reject

This recommendation is for a paper that you do not think should be published. Some examples of reasons to recommend reject appear below.

- There are fatal flaws in the analysis or argument that cannot be fixed.
- The study design is not appropriate.
- After reading the paper, you ask, "So what?" Your opinion is that the paper does not add to the literature.
- The topic is not of sufficient interest to this journal's audience.

Writing the review: In your confidential comments to the editor, please be frank and direct in explaining why you recommend rejecting the manuscript. When writing your comments for the author, though, please keep tone in mind as you point out the paper's flaws. Be sure to offer the authors some constructive feedback on this manuscript or for their future work on the topic.

1

Reconsider after major revisions

This recommendation is for a paper you think could contribute to the literature but needs substantial or important additional work first. You believe the authors should be allowed to revise with the understanding that future publication will depend on the quality and sufficiency of the revisions. Some examples of issues that are common in papers needing major revisions are listed below.

- The review of the existing literature is insufficient to place the authors' contribution in the context of previous work and/or is missing key sources. (Please suggest any missing citations that you think they should include.)
- The research question, hypothesis, or purpose is missing or unclear.
- The Method is missing information that would help you assess the study design (e.g., inclusion/exclusion criteria are missing from a systematic review, the thematic analysis method is not named/described in a qualitative study). You are not certain exactly what the authors did, but you think the author can fix this by revising.
- There are flaws in the analysis that you think the authors can fix by redoing their analysis using a different statistical method or adding another analysis.
- Results are not reported for all analyses described in the Method and/or results are reported for analyses not described in the Method.
- There are errors or discrepancies in data across the text, tables, figures, etc., that you think the author should be able to fix.
- Data are presented in the tables and/or figures but they are not reported in the Results section of the text.
- The Discussion does not directly address the research question/purpose or is missing limitations.
- The Discussion and conclusions greatly overstate the findings or do not appear to be fully supported by the findings or the literature.
- The tables and/or figures need significant revisions; for example, (a) you think a table should be removed and its contents incorporated into the text of the manuscript, or (b) you believe a table should be added to present data or content currently reported in the text.
- The paper is poorly written or poorly organized but the author can address this with rewriting.
- The paper doesn't succeed in its current format but you think it would work well in another format; for example, a research report that describes an innovative program at one institution with a small sample size and data for just the first year may be more appropriate as an innovation report. Please note such recommendations in your confidential comments to the editors rather than directing the authors to reformat their paper in this way.

When writing the review: In your comments to the authors, be sure to provide constructive, actionable feedback that details your concerns and your suggestions. Include questions you may have about the method, analysis, argument, etc. Do not worry about pointing out specific typos or errors of grammar unless they affect the science or relate to terms that a copy editor without your expertise would not be aware of (e.g., errors in measurement units, errors in test or procedure names); instead, include a general comment about the writing. In your confidential comments to the editor, be sure to indicate whether any of your recommendations are deal breakers—for example, if the authors cannot complete the additional analysis you recommend, should the paper be reconsidered?

2

Reconsider after minor revisions

This recommendation is for a solid, well-written paper that you think will make an important contribution to the literature. The revisions needed are not substantive, as the paper is in good shape and close to ready for publication; in fact, you believe publication should be almost certain based on the current draft. Your suggestions are primarily directed at helping strengthen the paper's presentation and clarity. Some examples of issues that are common in papers needing minor revisions are listed below.

- The argument needs fine tuning.
- There are minor discrepancies in the data across elements of the paper; for example, some data in the abstract do not match data in text, but the data in the text and tables match.
- There are additional details the authors should add to clarify aspects of their study or argument.
- There are some easily fixed organizational issues.
- The conclusions somewhat overstate the findings.
- You think there are additional points/areas the authors should consider addressing but it is not essential that they do so.

When writing the review: In your comments to the author, provide constructive, actionable feedback that details the issues you noticed and how you think the author can address them best. If you propose additional areas to consider, be clear as to whether you think these are essential. Please do not characterize the revisions as minor in your comments for the authors. In your confidential comments to the editor, be sure to indicate why you think the paper makes an important contribution and whether any of the suggested changes are critical.

Accept

This recommendation is for a paper you view as being excellent in quality and concept. It is very well written but it may need a few minor clarifications that would fit within the scope of copyediting.

When writing the review: In your comments to the author, please highlight the areas of excellence you have identified in the paper and indicate in what ways the manuscript represents an important contribution. Detail any clarifications or changes that you think are needed or would improve an already excellent contribution. In your confidential comments to the editor, make a case for why a recommendation of "accept" is appropriate for this paper.