

Guidance: Peer Review

What is peer review?

The purpose of peer review in academic publishing is to uphold the quality, integrity, and credibility of the journal. The process acts as a quality assurance mechanism, ensuring that only papers which meet exceptional standards of rigour, relevance, and originality are accepted. Reviewers, as experts in their respective field, assess whether the work features worthy contribution and adheres to the journal's expectations. The process also provides constructive feedback to help authors improve their papers, from clarifying arguments to strengthening methodologies. Editors rely on reviewers' evaluations to make informed decisions about acceptance, revision, or rejection. Additionally, peer review acts as a safeguard for ethical and professional standards, helping to identify issues such as plagiarism, data manipulation, and unethical practices. Overall, the process is about ensuring the journal can be trusted by its audience, by ensuring that only well-conducted, credible papers are published.

Our approach to peer review

The Journal of Vocational Research and Practice (JVRP) operates a double-blind peer review system. This means the author does not know who is conducting peer review, and the reviewer does not know who the author is, with the paper and any associated documentation being anonymised. Peer review is conducted by two people simultaneously, and they do not know who each other are so that they cannot confer. Each reviewer provides feedback and a recommendation as to whether the paper should be accepted in its current form, needs minor revisions, needs major revisions (a significant overhaul), or rejected. The editor then considers the two reviewers' recommendations before making a decision as to what happens next.

Initial considerations

Responsibilities of a reviewer

Reviewers have several key responsibilities. Confidentiality must be maintained at all times; manuscript content should never be shared or discussed with others. Conflicts of interest, whether that be personal, professional, or financial, must be declared immediately. Reviewers should also act in a timely manner with the provision of their feedback, which should contain a professional, objective, and constructive tone throughout the evaluation.

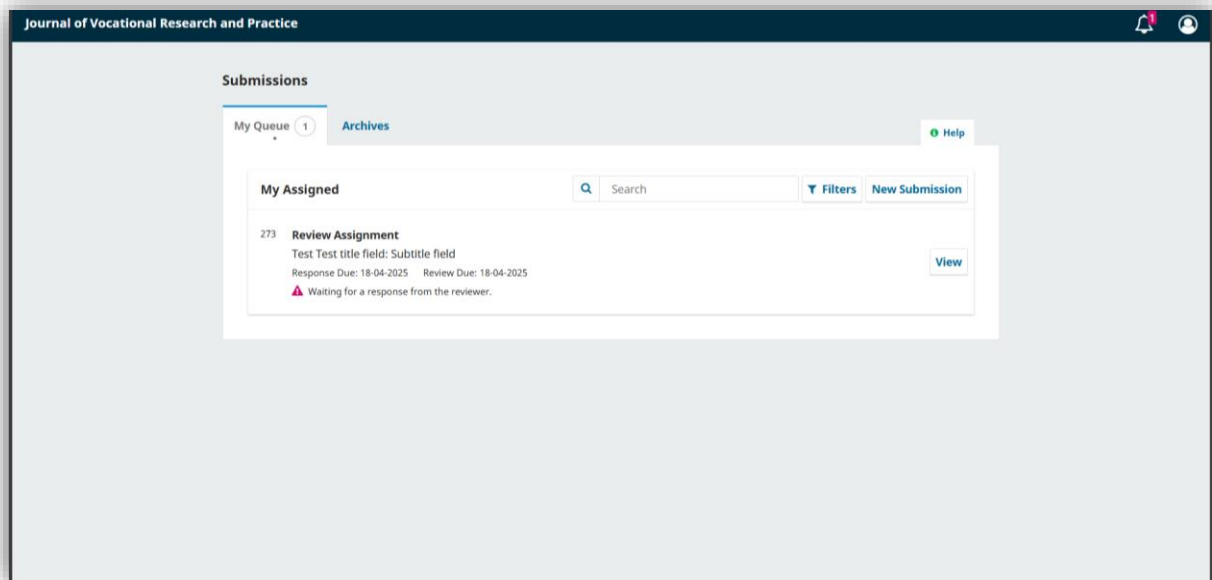
Reviewer suitability

Before accepting a review, assess whether you have the necessary expertise and time to conduct a thorough evaluation. If you have any potential conflicts of interest or reservations about your suitability to review the manuscript, inform the editor promptly.

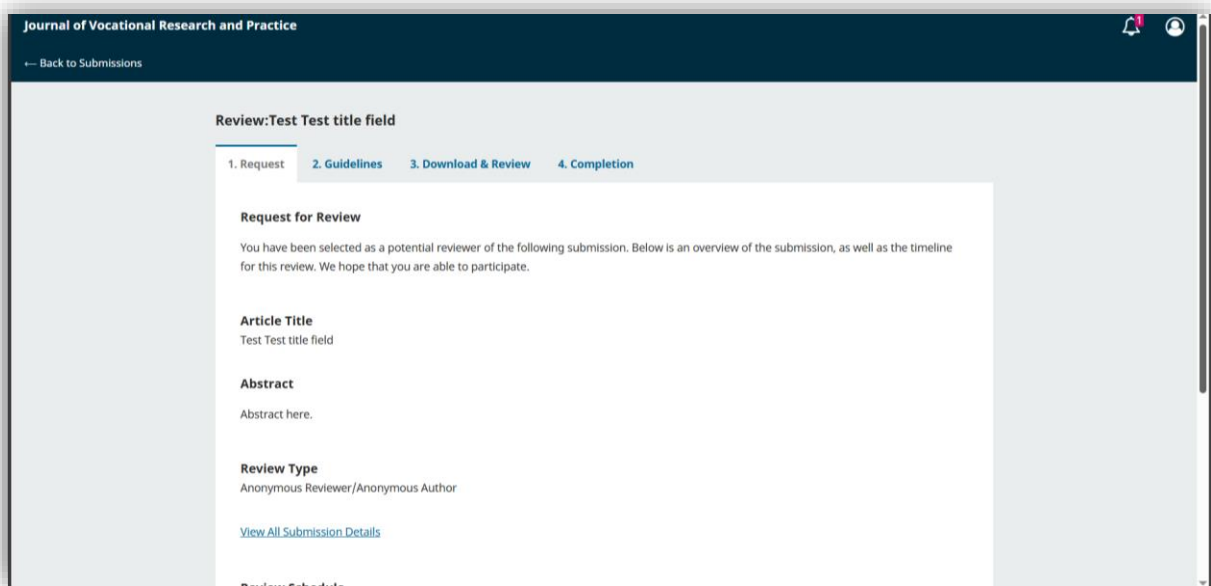
Review process

Step 1: invite and acceptance

Should you receive an invite to review, you are given the option to accept or reject this assignment. If you accept, you may need to register if you have not done so already. Once you have an account, sign in and you will see the review assignment in your queue.

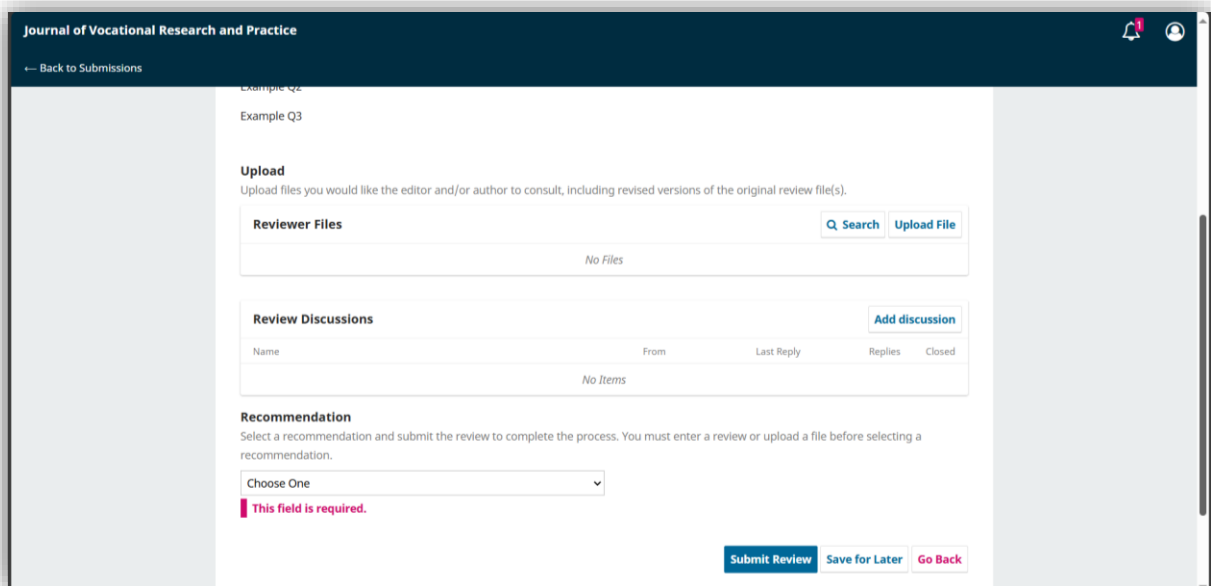
**Step 2: access the four-step review system**

Click on view, and this will take you to the four-step review window. The tabs associated with each step can be seen at the top, and as you continue through, you be provided this guidance document and the [peer review form](#). When you reach the download and review section, you can access the anonymous paper and any associated documentation, e.g., datasets.



Step 3: upload the complete peer review form and make a recommendation

Once you have read the paper and any associated documentation, and completed the peer review form, you can proceed through the system. You will reach a page which requests upload of the reviewer file (peer review form) and requests a recommendation (accept / minor revision / major revision / reject). Indicate your option and click submit review.



Good practice in peer review

Provide specific, actionable feedback. Avoid vague comments and instead suggest specific improvements. Maintain a respectful and professional tone throughout. Support your feedback with evidence where appropriate, for example, you may refer to a specific page and paragraph number in some cases. Always aim to help the author

improve the work, regardless of your recommendation. Avoid personal criticism of the author or sharing the manuscript with others. Do not overstep your mark by attempting to rewrite the manuscript, and refrain from suggesting citation of your own work unless it is genuinely relevant.

What happens next?

Following submission of your peer review form and recommendation, the editor will consider your comments and that of the other peer reviewer, incorporating these into the decision as to what happens next. If the paper requires minor or major revisions, you may be asked to conduct a further round of peer review, a task you can accept or reject. It is ideal to have the same two people review the revised paper so that there is consistency, however, the editors acknowledge this is not always possible.

Recognition

On behalf of the editorial board, I thank you for taking the time to conduct peer review. We appreciate the commitment of individuals who do this task on a voluntary basis who, because of the nature of the process, are rarely publicly acknowledged for their efforts. I encourage you to add this to your CV and I trust you feel part of the team here at JVRP.