Best Practices for Effective Reviews

As you prepare to complete your reviews, here are tips to think about when reviewing conference proposals.

1. **Evaluate Potential Conflicts of Interest**

   o Abstain from reviewing scholars with whom you might have ideological or personal conflicts. Notify the Planner ASAP so that the submission may be reassigned to another Reviewer.

2. **Start with the Positive**

   o Be mindful that this review is different from a journal review. Be constructive and hopeful.

   o Emphasize the proposal's unique contributions

   o Acknowledge the scholarly effort

   o Identify specific strengths before addressing limitations

   o Set a constructive tone for the entire review

   o **Effective:** "This proposal offers a timely examination of social media's impact on political discourse, with particularly strong theoretical grounding."

   o **Avoid:** "This work fails to impress and has numerous problems."

   o Remember: Every submission represents significant scholarly effort

3. **Evaluate the Work as Presented**

   o Evaluate what the authors did, not what you would have done

   o Assess the work within its chosen theoretical framework

   o Assess the work according to the method that was used

- o Consider the appropriateness of methods for stated goals

- o **Effective:** "While I appreciate the qualitative approach taken, the methods section would benefit from more detail about the interview protocol."

- o **Avoid:** "You should have used a quantitative approach instead of interviews."

- o Remember: Different methodologies serve different research purposes

4. **Provide Specific, Actionable Feedback**

- o Offer concrete suggestions for improvement

- o Point to specific sections needing revision

- o Recommend relevant sources or examples

- o Link feedback to scholarly standards

- o *Effective*: "Consider strengthening the literature review by incorporating recent work on digital activism, particularly studies from 2022-2024."

- o *Avoid*: "The literature review needs work."

- o Remember: Authors need clear guidance to improve their work

5. **Maintain Professional Tone**

- o Use collegial language

- o Frame critiques constructively

- o Avoid dismissive or harsh commentary

- o Write as if speaking to a colleague face-to-face

- o **Effective:** "The analysis would be more compelling with a clearer connection between your theoretical framework and findings."

- o **Avoid:** "Your analysis is confusing and doesn't make sense."

- o Remember: Professional courtesy enhances scholarly dialogue

6. **Address Methodology Appropriately**

    o   Evaluate methods based on research goals

    o   Consider sample size in context

    o   Address the demographic diversity of participants

    o   Assess analytical rigor

    o   Recommend methodological refinements when needed

    o   *Effective:* "The sample size of 12 participants aligns well with your phenomenological approach. Consider discussing how saturation was determined."

    o   *Avoid:* "12 participants isn't enough to prove anything."

    o   Remember: Different research questions require different approaches

7. **Focus on Scholarly Merit**

    o   Evaluate intellectual contribution

    o   Consider advancement of knowledge

    o   Assess theoretical development

    o   Examine practical implications

    o   **Effective:** "This research contributes to our understanding of crisis communication by identifying new patterns in social media response strategies."

    o   **Avoid:** "This topic isn't interesting or relevant to the conference theme."

    o   Remember: Value can exist independent of convention themes

8. **Suggest Clear Improvements**

    o   Provide specific revision strategies

    o   Outline priority changes

    o   Suggest additional resources

    o   Offer constructive solutions

- **Effective:** "The discussion section could be strengthened by explicitly addressing the practical implications for communication practitioners and including examples of how findings might be applied."

- **Avoid:** "The discussion needs to be better."

- Remember: Specific suggestions are more helpful than general critiques

Essential Review Components

1. Topic Relevance and Innovation

- Current Issue/Topic Relevance (1-10 scale)

    - How well does the submission align with the division/interest group?

    - How does the submission connect to the conference theme?

    - Is the topic timely and significant?

- Innovation and New Ideas (1-10 scale)

    - What novel contributions does this work offer?

    - How does it advance existing knowledge?

- Contribution to the Communication Field (1-10 scale)

    - Does it extend our understanding of communication?

    - What gaps in knowledge does it address?

2. Research Quality

- Theoretical Rigor (1-10 scale)

    - Is the theoretical framework well-developed?

    - How effectively are concepts defined and applied?

- Methodological Rigor (1-10 scale)

    - Are methods appropriate for research questions?

    - Is the research design clearly explained?

- Analytical Rigor (1-10 scale)

    - Is the analysis systematic and thorough?

    - Are conclusions supported by evidence?

3. Presentation Quality

- Writing Quality (1-10 scale)

    - Is the work clearly written and well-organized?

- o Are ideas presented coherently?

- o Is the writing polished and professional?

4. Panel-Specific Criteria (if applicable)

- Distinctiveness of Papers/Topics (1-10 scale)

  - o Do papers have unique focuses while fitting the panel theme?

- Institutional Diversity (1-10 scale)

  - o Multiple institutions represented?

  - o Diverse educational levels/roles?

  - o Various theoretical/methodological approaches?

- Presenter Expertise (1-10 scale)

  - o Are presenters qualified to address the topic?

  - o Do they bring appropriate expertise?

5. Overall Assessment

- Recommendation Options:

  - o Strongly Recommend Accepting

  - o Recommend Accepting

  - o Undecided

  - o Recommend Rejecting

  - o Strongly Recommend Rejecting

6. Required Feedback Components

- Comments to Planner

  - o Provide rationale for your recommendation

  - o Note any special considerations

- Constructive Feedback to Submitter

- - o Highlight strengths

    o Provide specific improvement suggestions

    o Offer guidance for enhancement

    o Maintain anonymity unless choosing to identify yourself

Additional Considerations

- Award Potential

    o Top competitive paper consideration

    o Student competitive paper eligibility

- Co-Sponsorship Opportunities

    o Relevant divisions/interest groups

    o Rationale for co-sponsorship