Reviewer's report

Title: Research across the disciplines: Quality criteria for empirical-ethical studies

Version: 2 Date: 4 October 2013

Reviewer: Jonathan Ives

Reviewer's report:

This paper is much improved, and I would like to thank the authors for taking on board my points. Whilst there are, probably inevitably, specific points in the paper that I would take issue with, the paper is now well written and coherently argued, and I would be happy to recommend it for publication.

I would like to draw the authors attention to a potential problem, which they may wish to address - but this would be discretionary. I think the authors are leaving themselves open to criticism because of the relative opacity in the section outlining their own methods. Whilst this part of the paper is much improved, more detail would offer a more convincing account of the robustness of the study. In particular, I would be looking for:

1) Detail of the search strategies employed - how does the reader know that the literature consulted was reliable, trustworthy or comprehensive.

2) Who was part of each subgroup?

3) How was consensus achieved and what kind of consensus was it (ie did everyone have to agree, or just a majority. Was it vote based or solely based on discussion)?

4) Can any references be given to explicate the kind of textual analysis that was used?

5) Can the process be demonstrated more clearly by presenting the reader (using figures/tables/flow charts/diagrams) how many criteria were identified at each stage, which ones were kept and which ones rejected - so that the reader gets clear view of what was kept and what was eliminated.

I would strongly encourage the authors to address these points, because a paper that advocates quality criteria needs to be more careful than most to demonstrate to the reader that it's own methodology is robust. I think that greater detail about methods would result in the methodological transparency needed to achieve this. Without this the paper will be too easily perceived as solely an opinion/argument based paper - which would be fine, but I do not think that is what the authors want or intend.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable
**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests