Reviewer’s report

Title: Guidelines for open peer review implementation

Version: 0 Date: 04 Nov 2018

Reviewer: Virginia Barbour

Reviewer's report:

General comments

Thanks for asking me to review this commentary.
In general, this is a useful summary of the various issues and will be of interest to anyone thinking of implementing open review.

There are a few revisions that could make this even more valuable:

Produce the guidelines in the form of a downloadable checklist, perhaps with a way of indicating how feasible each approach is at the specific journal.

A flowchart might also be another way to present the information.

I think it would be worth trialing these guidelines themselves and then aiming for a revision after feedback is received - basically following a more formal process for guideline development - as the EQUATOR network recommends for example.

There is not enough discussion of interdisciplinary differences. In my experience discipline is the biggest determinant of uptake, with the humanities having specific concerns.

Figures - eg screenshots of examples would help to illustrate who has already adopted the ideas in the paper.

There are a number of typos throughout the manuscript, so it needs a close read for these.

There are also places where URLs are given for some examples, but not for others.

Specific comments

P1 line 21 It would be worth talking more about the very early history of open peer review - especially at the BMJ and the BMC Medicine which were the leaders in this and which have the most experience.

P2 line 1 "Fringe elements" - I'm not sure this is right term.
Did the background research include a formal literature review? The methodology for the research, including search terms, needs to be stated.

What form did the "expert interviews" take?

Peer review serves to validate the soundness, substance and originality of a work, to assess and help improve it until it meets required standards for these criteria, as well as sometimes to select for "appropriateness" or "fit" for certain venues."

A better way might be to consider peer review as a form of QC - and then opening up aspects of it becomes more logical.

"Examine which particular aspects of your peer review process you would like to improve - for example transparency, participation, speed - and choose the elements of the process to open up based on this."

I'd suggest this actually should be the first piece of general advice - ie why do you want to do this. Then listen to your research community is next. As noted above it may just not be appropriate at all for some communities.

"It is important to note that there is no real evidence yet beyond anecdotal comments to demonstrate that either of these concerns hold."

It might be true that most evidence here is anecdotal, but it is very well established that these concerns are very common. It is essential to deal with these concerns early on.

"If you are keen to invite a specific person who is reticent, be ready to negotiate to persuade them (e.g., by offering more time to review)."

I'm not sure how this would work as an incentive - and does raise the whole issue of how to properly reward those who review openly.

"A further issue to consider is whether the identity of the handling editor(s) should also be open. After all, at journals with very high desk rejection rates, editorial selection is also a form of peer review."

This part needs clarification - all editorial letters have to be signed so in the vast majority of cases editors' identified are already open. Do you mean on the published report? If so, some journals do this already (at least for academic editors).

"Finally, wherever reviewer names are disclosed along with publication, be sure to use identifiers (e.g., ORCID) to link that activity to reviewer profiles and further enable credit and career evaluation."
The importance of ORCID is almost a throw away comment - it would be an opportunity to note that persistent identifiers are a really key part of current publishing practices and include it in best practices specifically.

P7 line 23 "any interested members of the scholarly community"
Actually can be anyone - does not have to be an academic

P7 line 48 "In any case, some mediation of the community will help to stimulate engagement."
This point is worth expanding on - this is not a trivial undertaking.

One issue missing is whether confidential comments to editors should be allowed and if so, how they are handled.

Virginia Barbour

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