

## **Accelerating the Publication of Your CTER Contribution**

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### **Purpose of Journal**

Career and Technical Education Research (CTER) publishes refereed articles that examine research and research-related topics in vocational/career and technical education, career development, human resource development, career issues in the schools (Grades K-12), postsecondary education, adult and lifelong learning, and workforce education. The CTER Editorial Board is committed to publishing scholarly work that represents a variety of conceptual and methodological bases (ACTER, 2015).

### **Online Submission System**

In the spring of 2013, the CTER editorial board voted in favor of implementing an online journal management system. The Open Journal System (OJS) from the Public Knowledge Project (PKP) was selected as the open source software (Public Knowledge Project, 2014). The PKP is a federally funded initiative aimed at expanding and improving research. Open Journal System projects have been utilized to provide free journal management system assistance for PKP's projects, helping during every stage of the refereed publishing process.

### **System Benefits**

Successful refereed journal review processes address equally the needs of authors, reviewers, and editorial teams. Authors require an experience that provides clear and easy to follow submission requirements with an expedited turnaround time (Walker, 2010). Reviewers, new and experienced, need an intuitive system requiring little to no training required for use. Editorial teams benefit from the ease at which the authors and reviewers needs are being met, allowing the editorial teams to focus more on the quality of the end product.

New editorial teams for CTER are established every two years per ACTER bylaws. Providing smooth transitions between editorial teams during these supervisory changes is critical for the success of CTER and for providing the best level of quality for the journal. Aiding in this transition, the OJS seamlessly updates all contact information for the new editorial teams, benefitting everyone involved in the publishing process.

### Process Changes

Authors are now required to follow the submission process through the OJS with lead authors being notified of each decision along the way via email. Authors will also be able to track the status of their manuscript throughout. Reviewer’s comments will be relayed to the authors from the editors within the OJS. Reviewer’s timeliness will be tracked in the new OJS, benefiting both the reviewers as well as the authors. These processes assist in providing a seamless transition, from start to finish, helping to eliminate human error in the online process (Walker, 2010).

The new OJS allows the editors and reviewers to asynchronously connect. Reviewers should look for email notifications from the journal. Table 1 explains the email notification process for reviewers. In addition to the review process correspondence emails, reminder emails will be sent out to reviewers within a week of the article review deadline (Milsom, 2009).

Table 1  
*Reviewer Notification Process*

| Email Notification                                     | Action Required   |
|--|---|
| 1. Initial Invitation to Review Email Sent to Reviewer | Log into the online journal system and indicate your ability to review the article within one week of receiving the initial invitation.   |
| 2. Acknowledgement of Consent to Review                | Review the article within three weeks of receiving the initial invitation. Submit your review to the website through the online form. Reviewers may upload additional files in addition to the review form. |
| 3. Thank you email                                     | You are FINISHED!   |

### Manuscript Preparation for Submission

#### APA Formatting

Separate cover letters are now mandatory for proper identification of authorship. Authors will now be required to provide the following author information in the cover letter: physical address, email, instructional affiliation and title. Cover letters will be required as a separate file (Word or PDF) and will not be shared with reviewers to maintain the integrity of the blind-review process (Milsom, 2009).

Formatting guidelines for the CTER Journal will follow current APA guidelines (currently in the 6th edition). Consistent guidelines set clear expectations from both authors and reviewers. Duncan (1995) reports that non-compliance with formatting guidelines will ultimately result in a delay of the publication process. Improper manuscript preparation (i.e., poor formatting) distracts reviewers, causing them to focus more on formatting rather than on content. Journals with large numbers of incorrectly formatted articles tend to experience high reviewer turnover due to burnout. In examining copyediting comments over the past two years of CTER, the most common formatting mistakes occur within the reference section. Reviewers are now asked to provide a comment referring to the Reference section to help address this problem.

## **Blind Review**

While the perfect unbiased blind-review of a manuscript isn't a realistic expectation, you can make an effort to minimize reviewer bias. It is the goal of CTER to provide an unbiased blind-review process for all submitted manuscripts. Prevention of author and reviewer identification ensures the continued integrity of the CTER blind-review process. Authors are responsible for the removal of all identifying information before submitting a manuscript for publication. Simply deleting your name and institutional affiliation from the title page will not ensure an unidentifiable manuscript. It is imperative to diligently remove references to your institution throughout the submission. Milsom (2009) revealed that institutional affiliation is commonly found in the Method section. Obtaining information from study participants often requires the acceptance of the study by the institution's review board (IRB). Deleted content should be replaced with content type in brackets, for example:

Original manuscript

*The University of North Texas approved the use of human test subjects for the study.*

Edited manuscript

*The [Institution] approved the use of human test subjects for the study.*

Use caution when citing your own work, the excessive use of self-citation could lead to author identification (Duncan, 1995). Replace citations of your own work with content type and year in brackets for example:

Original manuscript

*Petrunin (2012) identified three major factors of learning motivation.*

Edited manuscript

*[Author, 2012] identified three major factors of learning motivation.*

If you still have lingering questions about the anonymity of your manuscript, explain your concerns in the cover letter (Milsom, 2009). Cover letters are a private correspondence between the journal editor and the author, unseen by reviewers. Authors have a duty to make the editor aware of any reviewers or editorial board members involved with the manuscript.

After the removal of all visible identifiable information, the CTER journal suggests that authors inspect submissions through their document creation platform. Directions for individual platforms are listed in Table 2.

Table 2

*Directions for removing identifiable data from digital documents*

| Platform                                  | Directions  |
|---|---|
| Adobe                                     | With PDFs, authors' names should also be removed from Document Properties found under File on Adobe Acrobat's main menu   |
| Microsoft 2010 (Windows)                  | Under the File menu select: Prepare for sharing > Check for issues > inspect document > Uncheck all of the checkboxes except [Document Properties and Personal information] > Run the document inspector > Remove All > Save      |
| Microsoft 2007 (Windows)                  | Click on the office button in the upper-left hand corner of the office application: Prepare > Properties > Prepare > Delete all of the information in the document property fields that appear under the main menu options > Save |
| Previous versions of Macintosh Word       | Under the File menu select: Save As > Tools (or Options with a Mac) > Security > Remove personal information from file properties on save > Save  |
| MacIntosh Word 2008 (and future versions) | Under the File menu select: Properties > Summary tab > remove all of the identifying information from all of the fields > Save  |

**Formative Feedback**

**Formal Feedback**

For manuscripts that are not accepted immediately for publication, authors will receive formal feedback from the editor. CTER requires articles to be reviewed by a minimum of three reviewers. One of the reviewers must be currently serving on the CTER editorial board. The editor is responsible for forwarding feedback from all reviewers in an official email to the corresponding author.

The first paragraph of the feedback will include the editor's decision and will ask the author to review the review the editor's and the reviewer's comments. The editor will include a summary of the reviewers' comments as well as any additional editor notes. At the conclusion of the feedback, the author will be instructed to create a blind cover letter to addressing the editor's and reviewers comments.

Authors are recommended to first focus on the comments that appeared to be major issues with the manuscript. If any comments are not fully understood or agreeable, authors should request further clarifying information in the cover letter for the resubmission. Author's questions/comments should be carefully worded so that they are not critical of reviewers. CTER reviewers are highly qualified researchers and are working, voluntarily, to assist the author to achieve a highly quality manuscript worthy of publication. It is possible that the authors could enlighten reviewers about a particular issue on which the manuscript focuses. Authors must provide sufficient documentation to support a position to reviewers. Previous deficits for CTER submitted manuscripts include authors not providing supporting documentation / references explaining how their specific methodology is warranted. Authors need to provide supporting documentation for their chosen methodology.

## **Turning Reject Into Accept**

Rejection of a manuscript may occur for many reasons (e.g., irrelevant topic, manuscript disorganized, missing statistical and practical significance, lack of effect size). Research is a process and a rejection is an opportunity for authors to make the necessary changes to prepare their manuscript so that it becomes publication ready. Higgins and Kortlik (2006) highlighted that authors should view the submission / rejection / resubmission process as a learning process and avoid feeling anxiety toward the research process. With this in mind, it is CTER's goal to make the rejection process one of a learning experience, guiding authors toward the path of publication.

Revising a previously submitted manuscript can be a daunting task. To aid in revising a manuscript, CTER recommends that the authors ask the following questions in addition to addressing the reviewer's comments:

1. Why am I doing the study?
2. Has anyone else addressed this question?
3. Will the answer to the question improve career and technical education?
4. Who is my target audience?

Author's motivation for submitting their research should be aimed at advancing the field of study within the CTER discipline. Numerous studies in education are motivated by convenience and availability of current courses taught by the researcher (Stout, Rebele, & Howard, 2006). Authors should expand their resources so that coverage includes research findings from a number of cognate disciplines that inform and support the CTER discipline. Authors should aim to inform the readers of CTER of new and advance research from academia as well as from practitioner sources. Consideration of the audience and assurance that the readers of CTER will find value in the research being presented must be a priority for authors. Pragmatic solutions to current problems will provide the best benefit to the readers of CTER.

Positioning the study to the target audience of the journal is critical. Readers should be interested and motivated to read the article. CTER readers crave innovative manuscripts that answer relevant questions in a practical environment.

The CTER journal aims to maintain its rigor by continuing to improve on its quality in the manuscripts that are published. Transparency provided through the OJS is critical in supporting the authors, reviewers, and editors of the journal. In addition, the guidelines provided in the current manuscript is aimed at providing the readers of CTER with a higher level of quality in the manuscripts that are being published as well as informing readers with pragmatic solutions to the problems that they are having to deal with daily.

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