

The Peer Review Process for Expert Panels and Appointment of Peer Review Monitors for Two Current Panels

By
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RSC/SRC Committee on Expert Panels
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1. The Peer Review Process for Expert Panels.

National academy panels employ a special process in this regard that is illustrated by the appointment of a Peer Review Monitor. This person is charged with overseeing the peer review process, starting with the naming of the peer review panel. Since the subject-areas of panel projects typically range more widely than do most academic publications, the number of peer reviewers is usually larger than usual (two, in the case of academic books). In the case of the EoL project, there will be at least three peer reviewers, one for each of the specialized subject-matter areas indicated above, and there may be more than three, if the Monitor so recommends (the Monitor is not a peer reviewer).

The Monitor's main function is to examine the panel's responses to the peer review comments, and then to prepare a written report for the CEP in which the adequacy of the panel's responses is independently assessed. Of course, just as in other academic peer review situations, the authors in this case (the panel) may disagree, perhaps strenuously, with one or more review comments and recommendations for changes in the text; but the Monitor must agree that in this case the panel responses are appropriate.

The general assignment given to peer reviewers for national-academy expert panel reports is generally the same, no matter what the area of inquiry:

1. Has the panel addressed, satisfactorily, the study requirements as contained in the terms of reference?
2. Does the draft final panel report cite, and rely upon, the up-to-date academic literature, as published in peer-reviewed journals and books in all of the relevant subject-areas?
3. Do the arguments advanced by the panel, in response to the terms of reference, display the requisite range, balance, appeal to evidence, and consideration of diverse perspectives in its response to the relevant literature?
4. Do the arguments advanced by the panel display the requisite degree of conceptual and analytical rigour? If the report contains policy recommendations, are those recommendations well-supported by evidence and argument?

The peer review process is not completed until the Peer Review Monitor has reported, in writing, to the Chair, CEP that the final panel report has passed these tests satisfactorily.

2. Appointment of Peer Review Monitors for Two Current Panels.

RSC/SRC Expert Panel on Environmental and Health Impacts of Canada's Oil Sands Industry:

Peer Review Monitor: Dr. David Layzell, FRSC, Executive Director, Institute for Sustainable Energy, Environment and Economy (ISEEE) and Professor, Department of Biology and the Energy and Environment Systems Group, University of Calgary. He was a panel member on the RSC/SRC International Panel on the Canada Foundation for Innovation (2001).

RSC/SRC Expert Panel on End-of-Life Decision Making:

Peer Review Monitor: Dr. Conrad Brunk, Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society (2002-2008), University of Victoria. He was Chair of the RSC/SRC Expert Panel on the Disposition of the Health Canada Primate Colony (1997) and Co-Chair of the RSC/SRC Expert Panel on the Regulation of Food Biotechnology in Canada (2001).