AGU
ADVANCING EARTH
AND SPACE SCIENCE

GEMS Reviewer Statistics System FAQ

AGU is evaluating the reviewer statistics within GEMS to determine how we can make the information better for everyone. We aim to create a system that increases editors' efficiency while making it easier for new voices to engage in Earth and space sciences publications.

Recognizing that volunteers are instrumental to the journal process, we want to make sure they feel valued by promoting their work and thoughtfulness. Many find reviewer rating data to be one useful metric, but it certainly isn't the only one that editors use. We encourage editors and reviewers to expand their networks to be more inclusive and diverse.

To find out what makes a helpful review, please use our Peer Review Guide.

What is the "Mean Reviewer Ranking" in the reviewer statistics?
Individual reviews are rated on how helpful their feedback is to an author, and how valuable the review is in the associate editor recommendation and the editorial decision. The average ratings, on a scale of 0 to 4 with 4 being the best, are then calculated for each individual reviewer across all journals.

Editors can then see each reviewer's mean ranking.

The original intent for this system was to encourage editors to expand their reviewer pool beyond their personal and established networks and easily identify referees that have provided strong, impactful reviews. It also lets editors know if certain reviewers regularly submit low quality reviews (e.g., one word or vague submissions). Some editors may refer to these metrics when composing the annual list of outstanding reviewers to honor each year.

Why did AGU decide to make this ranking system available?
The ranking system was created so that editors could keep record of helpful and timely reviews. This information has been used to identify potential reviewers for submissions and for reference when editors honor outstanding reviewers each year. Many referees that have consistently delivered comprehensive reviews have been invited to join our journal editorial boards.

We inadvertently made the ranking system visible to reviewers before full discussion with editors and reviewers. However, this ranking system is not public.

Only individual reviewers were given access to see their reviewer ratings from the last 1 month and their lifetime record. AGU made the metrics visible to reviewers because reviewers requested increased transparency. This was one of the ideas they suggested.

We have now turned visibility off until we have the opportunity to talk with editors and reviewers and determine if and how we can make this system equitable and useful for all parties. In preliminary discussions with editors, many questioned the usefulness of averaging the review ratings at all.

Why has it been called "Reviewer Ranking" instead of "Review Rating?"
Although this process was originally called "Reviewer Ranking," the goal was to assess the value of individual reviews to the authors and editorial board members in the development of a submission rather than the significance of the actual referee. Earth and space research is dependent upon the contributions of volunteers who participate in peer review and provide critical assessment to help shape raw submissions into impactful publications. To simplify access to ratings for internal use, review scores were assigned to the reviewer, and thus became "Reviewer Ranking." A more appropriate title might have been "Mean Review Rating."

How can I see my mean review ranking?
Reviewers were able to login to their accounts in GEMS to see their ranking. This feature has now been deactivated. However, reviewers can still see other statistics on the number and timeliness of completed reviews.

What factors go into a review ranking?
After a reviewer submits their assessment for a paper, the editor evaluates that review on a scale from 0 to 4 with 4 being the best as a subjective measure of helpfulness and timeliness.

For example, if a reviewer did 100 reviews in one year, but only submitted cursory assessments, the editors may not perceive this as helpful and the reviews might receive a lower score even if the reviews were turned in promptly. However, if a reviewer consistently delivered impactful reviews with thoughtful detail and analysis of three papers, the editors and authors might recognize that detail and the editor could give a higher ranking, even if some of those reviews were not as timely as requested.

Editors have the following options when selecting the review ranking:

- 4 star: Review was on time and particularly insightful, helpful, and constructive. (a great review)[1]

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[1] Quality and timeliness of the review should be considered when assigning a ranking, but note that the average review duration is a separate statistic calculated for each person. Editors are encouraged to choose 3 stars if they receive a great review, but it is

- 3 star: Review was on time or almost on time; comments helpful. (a good review)
- 2 star: Review was on time or a little late and/or comments could have been more useful or were too brief. (an average review)
- 1 star: Review was late or very late, comments were generally not helpful or even wrong. (a poor review)
- 0 star: Reviewer never returned comments and did not respond to reminders or review was useless. (no review - useless)

If reviewers want to know what makes a helpful review, please use our [Peer Review Guide](#).

How is this review ranking system used by AGU?
The original intent for this ranking system was to encourage editors to find new reviewers outside of their personal networks and easily identify strong reviewers. It also lets editors know if certain reviewers regularly submit low quality reviews (e.g., one word or vague submissions). Some editors may refer to these metrics when composing the annual list of outstanding reviewers to honor each year.

How can I improve my reviewer ranking?
We would recommend using our [Peer Review Guide](#) to see what makes a good review.

Please note that all your completed reviews may not reflect in your ranking.

If you reviewed under more than one GEMS account, some of your past reviews may not appear in your reviewer statistics.

Reviewers who have more than one account under separate email addresses should email the individual journal inbox or publications@agu.org to request the accounts are merged.

What steps can I take if I feel my statistics are inaccurate? I reviewed a lot more papers than are listed. Where are those?

In many instances, people have more than one GEMS system account.

If you reviewed under more than one account, some of your past reviews may not appear in your reviewer statistics.

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late. 4 stars should be reserved for great reviews that are submitted near their due date. AGU respects each editor's capacity to assign fair and objective rankings that will be useful to other editors when assigning reviewers in the future.

Reviewers who have more than one account under separate email addresses should email the individual journal inbox or publications@agu.org to request the accounts are merged.

If reviewers want to know what makes a helpful review, please use our Peer Review Guide.

Do I have to participate in the ranking system?
Editors rate the utility and timeliness of a review, so it requires no active participation by the reviewer.

When will you make the rankings available again for an individual reviewer can see it?
We are working with editors and reviewers to refine the ranking system so that it is both useful and transparent for all.

We would like more early career researchers to join the conversation with the publications committee to refine the process. If you can volunteer, please email: publications@agu.org