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## **Reviewers**

### **Reviewer Roles and Responsibilities**

Peer review is the principal mechanism by which the quality of research is judged. Most funding decisions in science and the academic advancement of scientists are based on peer-reviewed publications. Because the number of scientific articles published each year continues to grow, the quality of the peer-review process and the quality of the editorial board are cited as primary influences on a journal's reputation, Journal Impact Factor (JIF), and standing in the field. Scientific journals publishing peer-reviewed articles depend heavily on the scientific referees or reviewers who typically volunteer their time and expertise. In most circumstances, at least two reviewers are solicited to evaluate a manuscript. This may be required in situations where review by a statistician is needed. In cases of controversy or strong disagreement regarding the merits of the work, an additional review may also be solicited or one of the journal's editors might give an evaluation. More than three reviewers are sometimes used if reviewers from several fields are needed to obtain a thorough evaluation of a paper. In addition to fairness in judgment and expertise in the field, reviewers have significant responsibilities toward authors, editors, and readers.

#### **Reviewer responsibilities toward authors**

- Providing written, unbiased, constructive feedback in a timely manner on the scholarly merits and the scientific value of the work, together with the documented basis for the reviewer's opinion
- Indicating whether the writing is clear, concise, and relevant and rating the work's composition, scientific accuracy, originality, and interest to the journal's readers
- Avoiding personal comments or criticism
- Maintaining the confidentiality of the review process: not sharing, discussing with third parties, or disclosing information from the reviewed paper

#### **Reviewer responsibilities toward editors**

- Notifying the editor immediately if unable to review in a timely manner and, if able, providing the names of alternative reviewers
- Alerting the editor about any potential personal, financial or perceived conflict of interest and declining to review when a conflict exists
- Complying with the editor's written instructions on the journal's expectations for the scope, content, and quality of the review
- Providing a thoughtful, fair, constructive, and informative critique of the submitted work, which may include supplementary material provided to the journal by the author
- Determining scientific merit, originality, and scope of the work; indicating ways to improve it; and, if requested, recommending acceptance or rejection using whatever rating scale the editor deems most useful
- Noting any ethical concerns, such as any violation of accepted norms of ethical treatment of animal or human subjects or substantial similarity between the reviewed manuscript and any published paper or any manuscript concurrently submitted to another journal that may be known to the reviewer
- Refraining from direct author contact

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### **Reviewer responsibilities toward readers**

- Ensuring that the methods and analysis are adequately detailed to allow the reader to judge the scientific merit of the study design and be able to replicate the study
- Ensuring that the article cites all relevant work by other scientists

### **Reviewer Selection**

Editors, frequently with the assistance of electronic databases of reviewers kept by their journal's offices, choose reviewers whose expertise most closely matches the manuscript's topic and invite them to review the paper. The editors also consider the number of manuscripts sent to a reviewer by their journal so as not to overburden any one expert. Editors are encouraged to consider a diversity when selecting from a pool of potential reviewers. Some journals encourage authors to suggest preferred reviewers and reviewers they would prefer to be excluded. Ideally, the reviewer selection process and the journal's internal policies address the issue of potential bias by excluding reviewers from the same department or institution as that of the author(s) and by asking reviewers to disclose any potential conflict of interest. Reviewers may also be asked to decline the review if they have any personal or professional connection to the author(s) that may be perceived as a conflict of interest, they feel unqualified to do the review, or they cannot review in a timely manner. This "bias screening" at the point of reviewer selection may be incorporated into the forms in an online submission system, the email sent to request the review, or posted on the journal site as a policy.

### **Ethical Responsibilities of Reviewers**

#### *Confidentiality.*

Material under review should not be shared or discussed with anyone outside the review process unless necessary and approved by the editor. Material submitted for peer-review is a privileged communication that should be treated in confidence, taking care to guard the author's identity and work. Reviewers should not retain copies of submitted manuscripts and should not use the knowledge of their content for any purpose unrelated to the peer review process. Although it is expected that the editor and reviewers will have access to the material submitted, authors have a reasonable expectation that the review process will remain strictly confidential. If a reviewer is unsure about the policies for enlisting the help of others in the review process, he or she should ask the editor.

#### *Constructive critique.*

Reviewer comments should acknowledge the positive aspects of the material under review, identify negative aspects constructively, and indicate the improvements needed. Anything less leaves the author with no insight into the deficiencies in the submitted work. A reviewer should explain and support his or her judgment clearly enough that editors and authors can understand the basis of the comments. The reviewer should ensure that an observation or argument that has been previously reported be accompanied by a relevant citation and should immediately alert the editor when he or she becomes aware of duplicate publication. The purpose of peer review is not to demonstrate the reviewer's proficiency in identifying flaws. Reviewers have the responsibility to identify strengths and provide constructive comments to help the author resolve weaknesses in the work. A reviewer should respect the intellectual independence of the author. Although reviews are confidential, all anonymous comments should be courteous and capable of withstanding public scrutiny. Some journals ask reviewers to provide two sets of comments: one for the author and the other for the editor only. The latter can sometimes be more candid and can recommend that the manuscript be accepted or rejected (something that arguably should not be part of comments to the author).

*Competence.*

Reviewers who realize that their expertise on the subject of the manuscript is limited have a responsibility to make their degree of competence clear to the editor. Reviewers need not be expert in every aspect of a manuscript's content, but they should accept an assignment only if they have adequate expertise to provide an authoritative assessment. A reviewer without the requisite expertise is at risk of recommending acceptance of a submission with substantial deficiencies or rejection of a meritorious paper. In such cases, the reviewer should decline the review.

*Impartiality and integrity.*

Reviewer comments and conclusions should be based on an objective and impartial consideration of the facts, exclusive of personal or professional bias. All comments by reviewers should be based solely on the paper's scientific merit, originality, and quality of writing as well as on the relevance to the journal's scope and mission, without regard to race, ethnic origin, sex, religion, or citizenship of the authors. A reviewer should not take scientific, financial, personal, or other advantage of material available through the privileged communication of peer review, and every effort should be made to avoid even the appearance of taking advantage of information obtained through the review process. Potential reviewers who are concerned that they have a substantial conflict of interest should decline the request to review and/or discuss their concerns with the editor.

*Disclosure of conflict of interest.*

To the extent possible, the review system should be designed to minimize actual or perceived bias on the reviewer's part. If reviewers have any interest that might interfere with an objective review, they should either decline the role of reviewer or disclose their conflict of interest to the editor and ask how best to address it. Some journals require reviewers to sign disclosure forms that are similar to those signed by authors.

*Timeliness and responsiveness.*

Reviewers are responsible for acting promptly, adhering to the instructions for completing a review, and submitting it in a timely manner. Failure to do so undermines the review process. Every effort should be made to complete the review within the time requested. If it is not possible to meet the deadline for the review, then the reviewer should promptly decline to perform the review or should inquire whether some accommodation can be made with respect to the deadline.

**Reviewer Impropriety**

- Misrepresenting facts in a review
- Unreasonably delaying the review process
- Unfairly criticizing a competitor's work
- Breaching the confidentiality of the review
- Proposing changes that appear to merely support the reviewer's own work or hypotheses
- Making use of confidential information to achieve personal or professional gain
- Using ideas or text from a manuscript under review
- Including personal or ad hominem criticism of the author(s)
- Failing to disclose a conflict of interest that would have excluded the reviewer from the process

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## **Recommendation of New Reviewer**

### **Selection Criteria**

It is always a challenge for Pacific International journals to have good reviewers. One of the ways is to invite peers with expertise in the subject areas related to the journal. The other is to invite authors who have published in the journal. Invited reviewers should be mindful of the total time spent on the review and giving prompt feedback to the editors. They should also communicate with editors regularly so that they can quickly provide feedback when any difficulties are encountered. Additionally, editor may have a **Call for Reviewers** notice placed on the journal website, so that potential reviewers can contact the journal for further information.

### **Contact between the Editor and the panel of reviewers**

It is responsibility of editor to contact its panel of reviewers. This is to ensure that reviewers are made aware of changes to the journal, or they may be invited to comment on a new policy or direction for the journal that the Editorial Board is proposing. PIJ, because of large numbers of reviewers on their Panel of Reviewers keep them up to date through regular newsletters, every 3-6 month, which can inform them about new editorial members, editorial updates and other similar issues.

There is a new scheme whereby the best review of the issue chosen by as Editor, are awarded a certificate to show this excellent contribution and reviewer name will appear on the web site to illustrate their award.

### **Expectation of a member of the peer review panel**

The panel of peer reviewers should all abide by a Code of Ethics regarding honesty, detecting examples of plagiarism, salami slicing or unethical research practice and giving constructive feedback to both the authors and editors.

It is expected that they offer constructive feedback to the author and any confidential comments for the editor. PIJ will have specific author guidelines for reviewers to use to guide the actual review and reviewer and enables them to give feedback in a more structured way.

### **Guidelines for reviewers for their role as reviewers?**

All reviewers can use the guidelines as outlined by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) as well as refer to the Publishing Ethics Resource Kit (PERK) for reference. PERK provides an overview of standards of expected ethical behaviour for all parties involved in the act of publishing: the author, the journal editor, the peer reviewer, the publisher, and the society of society-owned or sponsored journals.

The duties of reviewers as outlined in PERK include Contribution to editorial decision, Promptness, Confidentiality, Standards of Objectivity, Acknowledgement of Source as well as Disclosure and Conflicts of interest.

Regardless of where the journal is in its stage of development, it is always good practice to agree and adhere to guidelines as mentioned above.

### **Thanking reviewers for their hard work**

Reviewers play an important part in ensuring the quality of a journal as well as contributing to the scholarship of the articles they review and need to be thanked for this key role. PIJ acknowledge their reviewers and thank them for their role in a published list at the end of every year, either on the web site or in the final issue of the journal for the year. Additionally, also offer access to journal resources to reviewers to help them with their reviewing role and also professional one and provide them wavier in their publication.