

IJIFR-PEER REVIEWERS GUIDELINES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Peer review is the essential element in promoting quality and excellence in the papers published in our scientific, educational, and professional journals. Peer review provides authors with the opportunity to improve the quality and clarity of their manuscripts. It also guides the journal's editorial staff in making publication decisions and identifying substandard manuscripts that should not be published. Individuals who participate in the peer review process provide a valuable service to their colleagues and the journal's editorial staff members by improving the results & literature in their discipline. Serving as a manuscript peer reviewer is an important, critical professional activity and responsibility. Reviewers should address the points below:

- Does the manuscript title describe the article appropriately?
- Is the study sample size adequate?
- Does the article support or contradict previous theories? If so provide references.
- Prospective is better than retrospective. Larger sample sizes are better than smaller. Longer follow-up is better than shorter.
- Does the manuscript explain clearly the inclusion and exclusion criteria?
- Authors should declare that they have received ethics approval and/or patient consent for the study, where appropriate.
- Are there other ethical or regulatory issues? Conflict of interest issues?
- If the organisation of the manuscript is illogical please suggest improvements.
- Is data displayed appropriately? If data is given in table format, it need not be reiterated in the text or vice versa.
- If you are aware of any issues that you think have not been adequately addressed, please inform the Editor.
- References should include pertinent material and need not be encyclopedic. Did the authors select the appropriate material to cite?

The basic principles and standards to which all IJIFR peer reviewers should adhere during the peer-review process are as follows:

- only agree to review manuscripts for which they have the subject expertise required to carry out a proper assessment and which they can assess in a timely manner;
- respect the confidentiality of peer review and not reveal any details of a manuscript or its review, during or after the peer-review process, beyond those that are released by the journal ;
- not use information obtained during the peer-review process for their own or any other person's or organization's advantage, or to disadvantage or discredit others;
- declare all potential conflicting interests, seeking advice from the journal if they are unsure whether something constitutes a relevant interest ;
- not allow their reviews to be influenced by the origins of a manuscript, by the nationality, religious or political beliefs, gender or other characteristics of the authors, or by commercial considerations ;
- be objective and constructive in their reviews, refraining from being hostile or inflammatory and from making libelous or derogatory personal comments;
- acknowledge that peer review is largely a reciprocal endeavor and undertake to carry out their fair share of reviewing and in a timely manner;
- provide journals with personal and professional information that is accurate and a true representation of their expertise;
- recognize that impersonation of another individual during the review process is considered serious misconduct;

- notify the journal immediately and seek advice if they discover either a conflicting interest that wasn't apparent when they agreed to the review or anything that might prevent them providing a fair and unbiased review;
- refrain from looking at the manuscript and associated material while awaiting instructions from a journal on issues that might cause the request to review to be rescinded;
- read the manuscript, ancillary material (e.g. reviewer instructions, required ethics and policy statements, supplemental data files) and journal instructions thoroughly, getting back to the journal if anything is not clear and requesting any missing or incomplete items they need to carry out a full review;
- notify the journal as soon as possible if they find they do not have the expertise to assess all aspects of the manuscript; they shouldn't wait until submitting their review as this will unduly delay the review process.

PEER-REVIEWER RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARD AUTHORS

- Providing written, unbiased 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

PEER-REVIEWER RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARD EDITORS

- Notifying the editor immediately if unable to review in a timely manner and providing the names of potential other reviewers
- Alerting the editor about any potential personal or financial conflict of interest and declining to review when a possibility of 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 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 which may be known to the reviewer
- Refraining from direct author contact

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 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.
- **Constructive Comments:** 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.
- **Competence:** Reviewers who realize that their expertise is limited have a responsibility to make their degree of competence clear to the editor. Reviewers need not be expert in every aspect of an article'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 the 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 to resolve the problem.