

General Guide to Reviewers

Manuscripts should be critically evaluated for compliance with the following criteria:

- novelty
- Importance to the specific field
- Strong evidence for the conclusions that are drawn

The most useful referee reports are those that set out clear, substantiated arguments and concrete recommendations for the improvements and experiments necessary to achieve suitability for publication.

Upon receiving a manuscript - To avoid unnecessary delays in processing manuscripts, please do the following immediately upon receipt of a manuscript for review:

- ❖ Double-check the deadline to ensure that there have been no misunderstandings regarding timing, and contact the editor – in-chief immediately if you anticipate any difficulties in meeting it.
- ❖ Skim the manuscript and consider whether there might be a conflict of interest for you (with the authors, their institution, and their funding sources) and whether you can judge the article impartially.
- ❖ read the editor's letter carefully and be sure to note any points specific to the manuscript that the editor may have requested your opinion on
- ❖ Confidentiality - Referees should treat the review process as being strictly confidential, and should keep the following guidelines in mind:
 - Manuscripts refereed for the Journal should not be discussed with anyone not directly involved in the review process.
 - If colleagues are consulted, they should be identified to the editors in the appropriate field in the referee submission system.
 - If experts from outside are consulted, referees should check with the editors beforehand to avoid involving anyone who may have been excluded by the editor or the authors.
 - Referees should, as a rule, not disclose their identities to the authors or to other colleagues since they may be asked to comment on the criticisms of other referees and may then find it difficult to be objective. Should they feel strongly about making their identities known to the authors, they should do so via the editor.
- We strongly disapprove of any attempt by authors to determine the identities of referees or to confront them, and encourage referees to neither confirm nor deny any speculation in this regard.
- ❖ **WRITING A REPORT** -As a general guideline, referee evaluations should mainly focus on the significance and conclusiveness of the study at hand, i.e. whether the findings and conclusions at the current stage might be considered sufficiently important in principle, and whether the presented data actually support these conclusions.
 - Referees are prompted to assess these two points directly via a ratings table, in which they can also indicate whether or not they would need to see an eventual revised version before acceptance, and whether a manuscript would be of such particular interest as to warrant highlighting.

- Referees are asked to maintain a positive and impartial, but critical, attitude in evaluating manuscripts. Criticisms should remain dispassionate; offensive language is not acceptable. As far as possible, a negative report should explain to the authors the weaknesses of their manuscript, so that they can understand the basis for a decision to ask for revision or to reject the manuscript.
- Similarly, positive reports should explain the reasons for why a study would be seen as an important advance of wider significance. Please keep in mind that comments to the authors will be included and published in the 'editorial proceedings' supplementary file in case of publication, even if they may have been pertinent only to an initial version of the eventually published manuscript.
- The ideal report should include:
 - ✚ An initial paragraph that summarizes the major findings and the referee's overall impressions, as well as highlighting major shortcomings of the manuscript.
 - ✚ Specific numbered comments, which may be broken down into major and minor criticisms if appropriate (numbering facilitates both the editor's evaluation of the manuscript and the authors' rebuttal to the report).
The report should answer the following questions:
 - What are the major claims and how significant are they?
 - Are the claims novel and convincing?
 - Are the claims appropriately discussed in the context of earlier literature?
 - Is the study of interest to more than a specialized audience?
 - Does the paper stand out in some way from the others in its field?
 - Are there other experiments that would strengthen the paper?

For manuscripts that may merit further consideration, it is also helpful if referees can provide advice on the following points where appropriate:

- How the clarity of the writing might be improved (without necessarily going into specific details of spelling and grammar)?
- How the manuscript might be shortened?
- How to represent earlier literature more fairly?
- How to improve the presentation of methodological detail so that the experiments can be reproduced. To evaluate the manuscript, use the Referee's Evaluation Form (See Appendix C).

Referee's Manuscript Evaluation Form

Title of the manuscript: _____

Reviewer: Reviewer 1/Reviewer 2

Guidelines for reviewing manuscripts

Part A

Introduction/Background (15%)

- Is context of the research clear and relevant?
- Does introduction/background situate the problem in the light of the existing state of knowledge in the area of study and highlight the motivation for the study?
- Is/are the problem/s clearly identified and easily recognisable?
- Is there logical link between or among purpose of study, objectives and hypothesis?
- Are objectives/ questions/ hypothesis clearly delineate and adequately describe what the author seeks to bring about as a result of his writing?

Grade:

Comments:

Suggestions for improvement:

Literature Review (20%)

- Is the literature reviewed relevant and recent?
- Does the literature provide clear support to key theoretical and methodological issues or questions being investigated?
- Does the review identifies areas of controversy in the literature and shows the gap/s in the literature?
- Is the conceptual /theoretical framework clearly articulated and serves as a tool to scaffold research, analyse the data, clearly set the constructs of the study and help to make meaning of subsequent findings?

Grade:

Comments:

Suggestions for improvement _____

Research Methodology and data analysis (25%)

- Is there convincing support from literature provided for the choice of a particular research design?
- Are data collections methods and procedures clearly justified and provided as well as linked to literature review?

- Is the source of data reliable and accurate?
- Are the data collected from primary and secondary sources?
- Are the constructs of the study clear and appropriate?
- Are data interpretations clear? Do they add further insight into the data?
- Are data interpretations logically linked to results, discussions, conclusions and recommendations? Do they have accuracy and consistency?

Grade:

Comments

Suggestions for improvement:

Research Findings , Conclusions and Recommendations (30%)

- Are results clearly and sufficiently discussed and backed by *only* relevant issues in the review?
- Do results duplicate information in the data?
- Do results clearly re-enforce claims made in the discussion?
- Are discussion clearly backed by relevant issues in the review?
- Are conclusions drawn logically from results and discussions and backed by relevant issues in the review?
- Does the conclusion reflect on the objectives, theory and conceptual framework?
- Do recommendations refer back to statement of problem and relate to conclusions?
- Does it bring new/interesting perspective into existing debate or issues?
- Does the paper have originality

Grade:

Comments:

Suggestions for improvement _____

Acknowledgments, presentation and language (10%)

- Are acknowledgements for funding organizations clearly indicated?
- Are acknowledgements for sources used clearly shown in the text *and* in the references?
- Have the various sections of the research been clearly identified and presented?
- Is the paper presentable enough to the reader without any language editing?

