

Guidelines for Reviewers of BJREECM Journal

Reviewing a manuscript written by a fellow scientist is a privilege. It is also an exciting and enjoyable educational experience. However, it is also a time-consuming responsibility. BJREECM and its editors, authors, and readers therefore appreciate your willingness to accept this responsibility and your dedication. We hope that these Guidelines will help make your job easier.

Peer review is the system for evaluating the quality, validity, and relevance of scholarly research. The process aims to provide authors with constructive feedback from relevant experts which they can use to make improvements to their work, thus ensuring it is of the highest standard possible. Authors expect reviews to contain an honest and constructive appraisal, which is completed in a timely manner and provides feedback that is both clear and concise.

Confidentiality

This manuscript is a privileged communication. Please do not show it to anyone or discuss it, except to solicit assistance with a technical point. If you feel a colleague is more qualified than you to review the paper, do not pass the manuscript on to that person without first requesting permission to do so. Your review and your recommendation should also be considered confidential.

Conflicts of Interest

If you feel you might have difficulty writing an objective review, please return the paper immediately, unreviewed. If your previous or present connection with the author(s) or an author's institution might be construed as creating a conflict of interest, but no actual conflict exists, please discuss this issue in your confidential comments to the editor. If in doubt, feel free to contact the Subject-matter Editor who requested your review.

Fairness and objectivity

If the research reported in this paper is flawed, criticize the science, not the scientist. Harsh words in a review will cause the reader to doubt your objectivity; as a result, your criticisms will be rejected, even if they are correct! Comments directed to the author should convince the author that (1) you have read the entire paper carefully, (2) your criticisms are objective and correct, are not merely differences of opinion, and are intended to help the author improve his or her paper, and (3) you are qualified to provide an expert opinion about the research reported in this paper. If you fail to win the author's respect and appreciation, much of your effort will have been wasted.

Comments for the Author

Identify the major contributions of the paper. What are its major strengths and weaknesses, and its suitability for publication? Please include both general and specific comments bearing on these questions, and **emphasize your most significant points.**

Writing a review: a step-by-step guide

1. Investigate the journal's content

- Visit the journal homepage (on <https://bjreecm-journals.rtu.lv/>) to get a sense of the journal's published content and house style. This will help you in deciding whether the paper being reviewed is suitable or not.
- Refer to the Instructions for Authors to see if the paper meets the submission criteria of the journal (e.g. length, scope, and presentation).
- Complete the review questions or report form to indicate the relative strengths or weaknesses of the paper.
- A referee may disagree with the author's opinions, but should allow them to stand, provided they are consistent with the available evidence.
- Remember that authors will welcome positive feedback as well as constructive criticism from you.

2. Make an assessment

- Complete the review questions or report form to indicate the relative strengths or weaknesses of the paper.
- A referee may disagree with the author's opinions, but should allow them to stand, provided they are consistent with the available evidence.
- Remember that authors will welcome positive feedback as well as constructive criticism from you.

3. Answer key questions

The main factors you should provide advice on as a reviewer are the originality, presentation, relevance, and significance of the manuscript's subject matter to the readership of the journal.

Try to have the following questions in mind while you are reading the manuscript:

- Is the submission **original**?
- Is the research cutting edge or topical?
- Does it help to expand or further research in this subject area?
- Does it significantly build on (the author's) previous work?
- Does the paper fit the **scope** of the journal?
- Would you recommend that the author reconsider the paper for a related or alternative journal?
- Should it be shortened and reconsidered in another form?
- Would the paper be of **interest** to the readership of the journal?
- Is there an **abstract** or brief summary of the work undertaken as well as a **concluding section**? Is the paper complete?
- Is the submission in **Standard English** to aid the understanding of the reader? For non-native speakers, an English editing service may be useful.
- Is the methodology presented in the manuscript and any analysis provided both **accurate** and properly conducted?
- Do you feel that the **significance and potential impact** of a paper is high or low?
- Are all **relevant** accompanying data, citations, or references given by the author?

Other aspects to consider

Abstract – Has this been provided? Does it adequately summarize the key findings/approach of the paper?

Length – Reviewers are asked to consider whether the content of a paper is of sufficient interest to justify its length. Each paper should be of the shortest length required to contain all useful and relevant information, and no longer.

Originality – Is the work relevant and novel? Does it contain significant additional material to that already published?

Presentation – Is the writing style clear and appropriate to the readership? Are any tables or graphics clear to read and labelled appropriately?

References – Does the paper contain the appropriate referencing to provide adequate context for the present work?

4. Make a recommendation

Once you've read the paper and have assessed its quality, you need to make a recommendation to the editor regarding publication. The specific decision types used by a journal may vary but the key decisions are:

- **Accept** – if the paper is suitable for publication in its current form.
- **Minor revision** – if the paper will be ready for publication after light revisions. Please list the revisions you would recommend the author makes.
- **Major revision** – if the paper would benefit from substantial changes such as expanded data analysis, widening of the literature review, or rewriting sections of the text.
- **Reject** – if the paper is not suitable for publication with this journal or if the revisions that would need to be undertaken are too fundamental for the submission to continue being considered in its current form.

5. Provide detailed comments

- These should be suitable for transmission to the authors: use the comment to the author as an opportunity to seek clarification on any unclear points and for further elaboration.
- If you have time, make suggestions as to how the author can improve clarity, succinctness, and the overall quality of presentation.
- Confirm whether you feel the subject of the paper is sufficiently interesting to justify its length; if you recommend shortening, it is useful to the author(s) if you can indicate specific areas where you think that shortening is required.
- It is not the job of the reviewer to edit the paper for English, but it is helpful if you correct the English where the technical meaning is unclear.

Think about the following when compiling your feedback:

- Does the paper make a significant contribution to contemporary [subject]?
- Is the research likely to have an impact on [subject] practice or debate?
- Does the paper present or expand upon novel or interesting ideas?
- Is the paper likely to be of sufficient interest to be cited by other researchers?
- Are the methods, analysis, and conclusions robust and to a high standard?
- Is the paper well integrated and up to date with the existing body of literature?
- Being critical whilst remaining sensitive to the author isn't always easy and comments should be carefully constructed so that the author fully understands what actions they need to take to improve their paper. For example, generalized or vague statements should be avoided along with any negative comments which aren't relevant or constructive.

Sample comments

Please note that these are just examples of how you might provide feedback on an author's work. Your review should, of course, always be tailored to the paper in question and the specific requirements of the journal and the editor.

Positive comments

- *The manuscript is well-written in an engaging and lively style.*
- *The level is appropriate to our readership.*
- *The subject is very important. It is currently something of a “hot topic,” and it is one to which the author(s) have made significant contributions.*
- *This manuscript ticks all the boxes we normally have in mind for an X paper, and I have no hesitation in recommending that it be accepted for publication after a few typos and other minor details have been attended to.*
- *Given the complexity involved, the author has produced a number of positive and welcome outcomes including the literature review which offers a useful overview of current research and policy and the resulting bibliography which provides a very useful resource for current practitioners.*
- *This is a well-written article that does identify an important gap.*

When constructive criticism is required

- *In the “Discussion” section I would have wished to see more information on...*
- *Overall I do not think that this article contains enough robust data to evidence the statement made on page X, lines Y–Z.*
- *I would strongly advise the author(s) of this paper to rewrite their introduction, analysis, and discussion to produce a more contextualized introduction to...*
- *There is an interesting finding in this research about However, there is insufficient discussion of exactly what this finding means and what its implications are.*
- *This discussion could be enlarged to explain...*
- *The authors could strengthen the paper by...*
- *The paper would be significantly improved with the addition of more details about...*
- *The abstract is very lengthy and goes into detailed accounts that are best suited for the article’s main discussion sections. As such, it is suggested the section is reduced in size and that only the most important elements remain.*
- *To make this paper publishable the author needs to respond to the following substantive points...*

When linguistic alterations are required

- *This paper would benefit from some closer proof reading. It includes numerous linguistic errors (e.g. agreement of verbs) that at times make it difficult to follow. I would suggest that it may be useful to engage a professional English language editor following a restructure of the paper.*
- *The paper is to benefit from making stylistic changes in the way it has been written to make a stronger, clearer, and more compelling argumentative case.*
- *There are a few sentences that require rephrasing for clarity.*

Revised papers

When authors make revisions to their article in response to reviewer comments, they are asked to submit a list of changes and any comments for transmission to the reviewers. The revised version is usually returned to the original reviewer if possible, who is then asked to affirm whether the revisions have been carried out satisfactorily.

What if you are unable to review?

Sometimes you will be asked to review a paper when you do not have sufficient time available. In this situation, you should make the editorial office aware that you are unavailable as soon as possible. It is very helpful if you are able to recommend an alternative expert or someone whose opinion you trust.

If you are unable to complete your report on a paper in the agreed time-frame required by the journal, please inform the editorial office as soon as possible so that the refereeing procedure is not delayed.

Make the editors aware of any potential conflicts of interest that may affect the paper under review.