

Reviewer Guidelines

The number of scientific articles published each year continues to grow, hence the peer-review process, together with the merit of the editorial board, is cited as the primary influence on a journal's reputation, impact factor, and standing in the field. Reviewers do this difficult job without honorarium as they are good citizens of scientific community. The *Indian Journal of Extension Education* relies on expert and objective review by knowledgeable researchers to ensure the quality of the papers it publishes.

1. The refereeing system

- i. A referee's duties are to assist the editor in maintaining the quality of the papers appearing in his journal and to help the authors by constructive criticism of their efforts.
- ii. Referees are selected in recognition of authoritative scientific work in the fields covered by Indian Journal of Extension Education.
- iii. Each paper submitted for Indian Journal of Extension Education is reviewed by two independent referees. If their reports disagree with regard to the suitability of the paper for publication, advice of a third referee is sought.
- iv. Referees are expected to respond to the editor's request for advice within a limited period of time. Its length (7 days) is clearly stated by the editor. If a referee finds himself unable to attend to a manuscript within this period, he is asked to return the script immediately without comments in order to allow the editor to select another referee without further delay.
- v. A referee's report is meant to guide the editor, who usually transmits it to the author in order to help him improve his paper or understand the reasons for rejection.
- vi. Although the editor in most cases transmits the comments of a referee verbatim to the author, yet he ensures that the referee remains anonymous.
- vii. Although the refereeing system helps to maintain and improve the quality of a journal, there are certain pitfalls, which an editor is always aware hence never uses the referees' comments blindly.
- viii. Authors are asked to follow the suggestions made by the referees, or otherwise state to the editor their reasons for not doing so.

2. Identifying and selecting appropriate reviewers

- i. Editor strives to establish and maintain a database of suitably qualified peer reviewers. The qualities of a good reviewer are:
 - a. Expertise in one or more areas of paper
 - b. Objectivity
 - c. No conflicts of interest
 - d. Good judgment
 - e. Able to think clearly and logically
 - f. Able to write a good critique
 - g. Accurate
 - h. Readable
 - i. Helpful to editors and authors
 - j. Reliable in returning reviews
 - k. Able to do the review in the allotted time-frame
- ii. A database of suitably qualified peer reviewers has been established and being maintained.
- iii. Editor objectively monitors the performance of peer reviewers and records the quality and timeliness of their reviews. Peer reviewers who repeatedly produce poor quality, tardy, abusive or unconstructive reviews are not used again.
- iv. Editor encourages peer reviewers to identify if they have a conflict of interest with the material they are being asked to review, and asks that peer reviewers decline invitations requesting peer review where any circumstances might prevent them producing fair peer review.
- v. If authors request that an individual (or individuals) does not peer review their paper objectively, editors uses this information while selecting the peer reviewer.
- vi. Editor may choose to use peer reviewers suggested by authors, but authors' suggestions are not binding.

- vii. Editor requests the peer reviewers who delegate peer review to members of their staff to inform the editor when this occurs.

3. Fair peer-review process is aimed to minimize bias.

- i. The peer-review system that best suits this cross-discipline journal has been selected.
- ii. Peer review system is blinded and multiple reviewers. Research articles and review articles are always peer reviewed.
- iii. Consistent standards are applied in peer-review processes.
- iv. If discussions between an author, editor, and peer reviewer have taken place in confidence it remains in confidence unless explicit consent has been given by all parties or there are exceptional circumstances (for example, when they might help substantiate claims of intellectual property theft during peer review).
- v. Editors or board members are never involved in editorial decisions about their own work. Journal does not accept original research papers and reviews from editors or employees of the journal.
- vi. Journal editors, members of editorial boards and other editorial staff are requested to withdraw from discussions about submissions where any circumstances might prevent them offering unbiased editorial decisions.

4. Authors have a right to appeal editorial decisions.

- i. Authors may appeal peer review decisions.
- ii. Editor mediates all exchanges between authors and peer reviewers during the peer-review process (i.e. prior to publication).
- iii. If agreement cannot be reached, editor invites comments from additional peer reviewer(s).
- iv. The editor's decision in consultation with the editorial board chairman/member (subject matter specialist) following such an appeal is final.

5. Editorial independence

Editorial independence is respected. Decision by editors about whether to publish individual items submitted to a journal is final.

Checklists for reviewers

- The reviewer must consider the scientific focus, readership, standards and policies of the journal as he/she reviews the paper. The journal needs the scientific expertise, not the editorial assistance. Journal relies on its reviewers to evaluate the quality, importance, and novelty of the science presented in the manuscript.
- Reviewers' comments that focus completely on minor editorial problems (typographical errors, misspellings) and do not comment on the science in the paper, have limited value as they do not advise the editor on the importance and validity of the science and do not help the editor to make an informed decision concerning publication.
- Reviewer is the representative of the journal, and not the friend of the author. The reviewer must remember that it is unethical to allow a badly flawed paper to pass unchallenged into the peer reviewed literature, where it will be a trap to the unsophisticated reader who will read the manuscript (or perhaps only the abstract) superficially and will simply accept the flawed conclusions at face value. The peer review process is viewed by scientists and the public as providing a scientific stamp of approval to the paper and its contents. The reviewer therefore has an ethical obligation to support work of high quality while appropriately challenging flawed papers.
- Following questions should be taken into account while reviewing articles for *Indian Journal of Extension Education*.
 - Is the work important and novel?

- Does the title reflect the content appropriately?
- Does the abstract describe the content accurately?
- Are the objectives clearly stated?
- Are materials, methods and experimental model systems appropriate?
- Check the rigor of the experimental design (including the inclusion of appropriate controls).
- Check the quality of the data.
- Check the appropriateness of the statistical analyses.
- Is the argument expressed clearly, strongly and convincingly?
- Is the article well structured?
- Are there any irrelevant sections?
- Is the field adequately covered? Are there any relevant areas that should have been included?
- Is the article well-supported with bibliographic and other authoritative sources?
- Is the information, or the interpretation of the information, new?
- Is the interpretation of result made on scientific reasoning?
- Are conclusions drawn in the paper validity?
- Is the information factually correct?
- Are the conclusions supported by the discussion?
- Are the supporting illustrations/graphs/other media well chosen?
- Do they add impact to the article? Does the article contribute significantly to knowledge and/or understanding of wells as living springs, foci of the community etc as discussed in *the Indian Journal of Extension Education*?
- The reviewer should also comment on
 - The length of the paper
 - The writing quality
 - The clarity, accuracy, and completeness of the figures and tables
 - The accuracy and adequacy of the introduction which frames the area of the research, of the discussions of prior and related work, and of the citations to the literature.
- Some editorial comments are appropriate
 - should identify sentences or paragraphs where the wording is sufficiently erroneous or ambiguous that the science is unclear.
 - should also point out language errors that result in scientific misstatements.
 - should point out errors in referencing.
 - A note that a manuscript requires major editorial assistance or a warning that a manuscript is so carelessly prepared that the science cannot be rigorously reviewed is always very important.
 - Reviewers should not waste inordinate amounts of time correcting minor problems with spelling, grammar, or punctuation; instead suggest to correct them.

Writing the comments

- These must be clear, concise, and accurate.
- Although their primary purpose is to advise the editor, comments to the author frequently are of value in guiding revision of the paper for the same or a different journal and in suggesting ways to improve the project by the inclusion of additional data or experiments.
- Comments to the author may be very brief, especially in the case of an excellent, well prepared paper.
- They may be extensive if the reviewer feels the paper has valuable elements but requires extensive revisions to present the findings effectively.
- Comments and recommendations should be clear and should be supported with citations to specific areas in the text of the paper.
- When the reviewer's criticisms rely on or are supported by data in the literature, the reviewer should provide citations to the relevant papers.
- A good review should help the authors to think more clearly about their work and its design, execution, presentation, and significance.
- Some reviewers submit critiques that are so rude, snide, sarcastic, argumentative, or even obscene that they must be censored before being sent to the authors.

- Some are not transmitted, depriving the author of any beneficial insights the reviewer might have had.
- Rudeness, personal criticism and locker room humor are never appropriate.
- Even the most serious scientific criticisms can be worded and presented in such a way as to be constructive and collegial.
- Reviewers should write critiques using a style and tone that they would want to see in the reviews that they or their trainees receive.
- Reviewers should remember that they are setting the standards of behavior and collegiality for their field, as well as the standards of science.
- The reviewer should always work to provide reviews that meet high standards of ethics as well as high standards of science.

Sanctity of Manuscript -- Points to remember

- Manuscripts under review are confidential documents.
- These are unpublished data and ideas, which must be kept confidential.
- Reviewer cannot share the paper or its contents with his colleagues.
- Manuscript should be kept in a secure place, where it is not readily accessible to the curious or unscrupulous. Reviewer cannot use the information in the paper in his own research or cite it in his publications. This can raise serious ethical issues if the work is used to benefit reviewer's research.
- The outcome and content of the review as well as the paper are confidential.
- Lapses in the confidentiality undermine the review process, betray the trust of the authors and the editors, and can create serious problems for everyone involved in the review process.
- Can the paper be passed on to someone else to review? For permission, the editor should be contacted in advance.
- The reviewer initially contacted should always let the editor know that the manuscript has been given to another reviewer because it is:
 - a. Important for the records of the journal
 - b. The information may be required to configure web portal for the new reviewer
 - c. Actual reviewer receives credit for his/her efforts
 - d. Adds the new reviewers to the journal's database, facilitating future invitations to review papers
 - e. Increases reviewers' visibility - journal lists and thanks reviewers in journal

Reviewer should avoid

- 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 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 criticism of the author(s).
- failing to disclose a conflict of interest that would have excluded the reviewer from the process.

Review form

- The review form complete in all respect is expected to be uploaded along with reviewed manuscript in track change mode.

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