

PEER REVIEW / RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE REVIEWERS:

- Reviewers have the responsibility to contribute to the decision-making process, and to assist in improving the quality of the published paper by reviewing the manuscript objectively and in a timely manner.
- Reviewers have to provide an unbiased evaluation of the manuscripts. All Authors should be treated with fairness, courtesy, objectivity, and honesty. Reviewers must not have conflict of interest with respect to articles and/or the authors of them. Such conflicts include, but are not limited to, reviewing papers from present and former students and from colleagues with whom the editor has a close professional relationship. In case of a conflict of interest the reviewer should inform the editor about the situation.
- Reviewers in any of these situations must communicate them to the Editor who will consider if a conflict of interest is taking place: they work at the same institution as any of the authors (or will be joining that institution or are applying for a job there); they are or have been recent (e.g. within the past 3 years) mentors, mentees, close collaborators or joint grant holders; they have a close personal relationship with any of the authors.
- Reviewers can criticize different aspects of the manuscript under revision (e.g. issues with methodology and its application, issues related with the data sets, issues related with the reasoning, issues related with the derived conclusions, redaction, clarity, significance, among many others). These critics should be communicated with respect and with clarity so they can be understood by the Authors and the Editor.
- Reviewers should write their comments to the authors as a series of points that should be divided into minor points (including spelling, clarity of a particular sentence, minor errors in Figures, etc), and major points which are those related with scientific issues, methodological issues, possible errors in interpretation of the results, etc. When writing their comments, reviewers should avoid using general expressions (e.g. “the paper is not well written”) without providing, at least, some examples of which parts or specific characteristics of the paper support that comment. Producing clear and specific comments helps the Authors to improve their manuscript and the Editors to make better decisions, and overall reduces the peer reviewing times.
- Personal criticism, offensive comments and any type of disrespectful form of comments are totally unacceptable. Editors won't take into account any review that includes this kind of expressions. If a review includes unacceptable comments the review will be dismissed and a new Reviewer will be invited.
- Reviews must be as objective and constructive as possible. They should include the main strengths and weaknesses of the reviewed manuscript.

- Reviewers must be aware of the sensitivities surrounding language issues particularly when those arise due to the authors writing in a language that is not their own or due to the use of regional and local expressions. In all these cases phrase the feedback appropriately and with due respect.
- If a Reviewer can not review the manuscript (e.g. due to lack of time or due to lack of knowledge about the topic discussed in the manuscript) he or she has to inform the Editor as soon as possible so another reviewer can be invited.
- Reviewers have to perform the review as soon as possible and within the time required by the Editor. If the review cannot be finished in a timely fashion, the editor has to be informed promptly.
- Accepting to review an article just to gain sight of it with no intention of submitting a review is totally unacceptable.
- The Reviewers should not disclose any information about a manuscript under consideration to anyone. Reviewers can not use nor disclose any material, idea, figure, or dataset discussed in manuscript under review processes unless the Authors provide explicit authorization for that.
- The Reviewers have to alert the Editor to any published or submitted content that is substantially similar to that under review. Reviewers have to alert if they detect plagiarism or self-plagiarism in the manuscript under revision.
- During the revision process, the Reviewers should point out relevant published work which is not yet cited.
- A Reviewer must have a reasonable degree of expertise in the topics cover by at least a significant part of the manuscript. An invited Reviewer must inform the editor if they are not familiar with a significant part of the topics cover by the manuscript under revision and if this may affect the Reviewer's judgment about that part of the manuscript. If a Reviewer can only evaluate part of a manuscript, this part has to be clearly identified in his/her comments to the Editor.
- A Reviewer can not communicate directly with the Authors nor discuss with them any issue related with the manuscript without previous authorization of the Editor that is handling the manuscript under review.
- When suggesting additional work, reviewers must indicate clearly which suggested additional investigations are essential to support claims made in the manuscript under consideration and which will just strengthen or extend the work.

- Reviewers must ensure that their comments and recommendations for the Editor are consistent with their report for the Authors. Most feedback should be put in the report for the Authors.
- Reviewers must not suggest that Authors include citations to their own (or their associates') work merely to increase the reviewer's (or their associates') citation count or to enhance the visibility of their or their associates' work; suggestions must be based on valid academic or technological reasons.
- Reviewers must communicate to the Editor any issue related to the manuscript that may bring unexpected situations which are not contemplated in this document and that can affect the reviewing process.
- Reviewers must contact the journal if anything relevant comes to light after they have submitted their review that might affect their original feedback and recommendations.