

Reviewer Guide

AJEE Ethical Guidance and Recommendations for Peer Reviewers

Introduction

Peer review is a crucial process in academic publishing, ensuring the integrity, quality, and credibility of scholarly research. As a peer reviewer, your role carries significant ethical responsibilities to authors, editors, the research community, and the Journal *AJEE*. The following *AJEE* guidelines outline best practices and ethical standards, drawing from established sources such as the **COPE Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers** (<https://publicationethics.org/resources/guidelines/cope-ethical-guidelines-peer-reviewers>), the **EASE Peer Review Toolkit** (<https://ease.org.uk/communities/peer-review-committee/peer-review-toolkit/>), and insights from **Peer Review Week** (<https://peerreviewweek.wordpress.com/>). We are using A Standard Taxonomy for Peer Review (<https://osf.io/68rnz/>), provided by the STM, the International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers in 2020.

It is mandatory for editors and reviewers to follow these recommendations; in case of any doubts, please contact the Editor-in-Chief at editor@ajee-journal.com.

General Ethical Principles for Peer Reviewers

At *AJEE*, we utilize a **double anonymized** peer review process, where both the reviewers and authors remain anonymous throughout the evaluation. This ensures an unbiased assessment, promoting fairness and objectivity in the review of scholarly submissions. The following ethical principles for peer reviewers must be applied during the peer review process in *AJEE*:

- 1. Confidentiality**
Reviewers must treat the content of the manuscript they are reviewing as confidential. The material should not be discussed with or disclosed to anyone other than the journal's editorial team, except with explicit permission.
- 2. Objectivity**
Reviewers should provide objective and constructive feedback. Personal criticism of the author is inappropriate, and evaluations should focus on the content of the manuscript rather than any subjective biases.
- 3. Transparency**
Conflicts of interest must be disclosed. Reviewers should not accept to review manuscripts where there is a potential conflict, such as personal or financial relationships with the authors or institutions involved. Reviewers must also avoid any situations where their impartiality could be compromised.

4. Timeliness

Reviewers should complete their evaluations within the agreed-upon time frame. If they are unable to meet the deadline, they should inform the editorial team as soon as possible so that alternative arrangements can be made.

5. Acknowledging Limitations

Reviewers must recognize the limits of their expertise. If a manuscript falls outside their area of expertise, they should inform the editor and decline the review. Accepting reviews for which the reviewer is unqualified compromises the quality of the review process.

6. Responsibility and Quality

Reviewers, by voluntarily agreeing to undertake the review, are expected to fulfill their responsibilities with the highest level of diligence and professionalism. They must strictly adhere to the journal's guidelines, ensuring these are fully understood in advance. Reviews should be comprehensive, meet all established standards, and provide constructive, valuable feedback. Reviewers are fully responsible for the content of their reviews, thereby contributing to the integrity and quality of the peer review process.

7. No Misuse of Information

Reviewers must not use any unpublished information from the manuscript for their own research or personal benefit. All details remain confidential and must not be exploited in any way.

8. Integrity and AI

Reviewers are required to disclose any use of artificial intelligence tools in preparing their review. Additionally, while reviewers have the right to involve junior colleagues in writing the review, they are obligated to inform the editor of such involvement and disclose the identity of those colleagues.

Step-by-Step Guide to Peer Reviewing in AJEE

1. Initial Assessment

Before accepting a review request, assess whether the manuscript falls within your area of expertise and check for any potential conflicts of interest. If you have doubts about whether the manuscript aligns with your field of expertise, please provide the necessary justification to the editors. If you wish to suggest alternative peer reviewers, please do so. Ensure you have enough time to complete a thorough review before the deadline.

If you discover a potential conflict of interest that could affect your ability to provide an impartial and objective review, please inform the journal and request guidance on how to proceed

2. Structure and Organization

Use the **EASE Peer Review Toolkit** (<https://ease.org.uk/communities/peer-review-committee/peer-review-toolkit/how-to-write-a-review/>) to guide the structure of your review. Begin with a general summary of the manuscript's key points, followed by detailed evaluations

of the methodology, data analysis, interpretation of results, and conclusions. Please keep in mind that we will provide you with specific services, such as checking sources and generating an originality report. However, reviewers are responsible for

- assessing the adequacy and appropriateness of the research methodology,
- the scientific validity of the study and its results,
- the structure of the manuscript, and
- ensuring that the content of the article accurately reflects the current state of the chosen research field.

Additionally, reviewers must verify:

- the correctness of legal references,
- the accuracy of citations,
- the relevance and reliability of the sources used, and
- the quality of translations from native language sources.

We strive to invite reviewers with a strong background in the authors' native language and knowledge of national legislation, in addition to specific interest and expertise in the relevant field.

3. **Assessing Ethical Considerations**

Ensure that the manuscript adheres to ethical standards in legal scholarship. If the manuscript involves case studies, sensitive legal matters, or data from human subjects (such as interviews or surveys), confirm that appropriate consent and ethical approvals have been obtained. Additionally, review the results of the similarity report provided in Scholastica to check for potential issues of plagiarism or improper attribution. Ethical compliance in areas such as confidentiality, conflicts of interest, and the proper use of legal data should also be verified. If you come across any irregularities or concerns regarding research or publication ethics, please promptly inform the journal and the managing editor.

4. **Provide Constructive Feedback**

Focus on providing helpful, actionable feedback. Highlight both strengths and weaknesses, and offer clear suggestions for improvement. Avoid making dismissive or harsh comments. Instead, aim to encourage and support the author in improving their work.

5. **Recommendation**

Make a recommendation based on your overall assessment. Options typically include:

- Accept as is
- Accept with minor revisions
- Revise and Resubmit: Minor revisions required
- Revise and Resubmit: Major revisions required
- Reject

6. Be specific about why you are making the recommendation and provide a clear rationale for your decision.

7. Follow-Up

If the manuscript is resubmitted after revisions, recheck the sections you initially commented on to see if the author has adequately addressed your concerns.

For further resources, you can refer to:

- COPE Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers: <https://publicationethics.org/sites/default/files/ethical-guidelines-peer-reviewers-cope.pdf>
- Peer Review Week: <https://peerreviewweek.wordpress.com>
- EASE Peer Review Toolkit: <https://ease.org.uk/communities/peer-review-committee/peer-review-toolkit/>

The Importance of Continuous Improvement

As the scholarly publishing landscape evolves, it is crucial for peer reviewers to stay updated on best practices, ethical standards, and new technologies in peer review. Professional training opportunities are available through organizations like **COPE** (<https://publicationethics.org/resources/guidelines/cope-ethical-guidelines-peer-reviewers>) and **EASE** (<https://ease.org.uk/communities/peer-review-committee/peer-review-toolkit/>). Engaging in these resources helps enhance your skills and maintain the high standards of peer review.

The role of the peer reviewer is fundamental to the academic publishing process. By adhering to ethical principles, maintaining transparency, and providing thoughtful and constructive feedback, reviewers contribute to the advancement of scholarly knowledge and uphold the credibility of academic publications.

We encourage **all reviewers to participate in ongoing training and development programs**, as continuous improvement is essential for maintaining the ethical integrity and quality of the peer review process. It is mandatory for reviewers to provide the managing editors with proof of peer reviewer training at least once per year in order to continue serving as a reviewer for AJEE and to enjoy the benefits of cooperation.

Peer Reviewer Training Programs Recognized by AJEE:

Elsevier Certified Peer Reviewer Course

Offered by Elsevier Researcher Academy

Link: <https://researcheracademy.elsevier.com/navigating-peer-review/certified-peer-reviewer-course>

Clarivate Web of Science Academy – Peer Review Training

Offered by Clarivate

Link: <https://clarivate.com/web-of-science-academy/>

Fundamentals of Peer Review

Offered by Springer Nature

Link: <https://www.springernature.com/gp/editors/editor-courses/fundamentals-of-peer-review>

Wiley Researcher Academy – Become an Effective Peer Reviewer

Offered by Wiley

Link: <https://www.wileyresearcheracademy.com/p/all-you-need-to-know-to-become-an-effective-peer-reviewer>

EASE Webinars for Peer Reviewers

Offered by the European Association of Science Editors (EASE)

Link: <https://ease.org.uk/communities/peer-review-committee/peer-review-toolkit/>

Peer Reviewer Power-Up Course

Offered by ReviewerCredits

Link: <https://www.reviewercredits.com/courses/peer-reviewer-power-up/>

AJEE Webinars for Peer Reviewers

AJEE will host an annual webinar specifically for our peer reviewers, aimed at improving their skills and understanding of the peer review process. After completing the webinar, participants will receive a certification. This will be recognized as part of the annual certification requirement to continue serving as a peer reviewer for AJEE.

Recognition as AJEE Peer Reviewers

We are pleased to support our peer reviewers in receiving recognition for their work through tools such as ORCID and Publons (WoS). Peer reviewers should submit their request through these platforms to have their cooperation with AJEE recognized.

For more information on how to connect your peer review activities to these services, you can visit:

ORCID Peer Review: <https://support.orcid.org/hc/en-us/articles/360006971333-Peer-Reviews>

Publons

Clarivate Reviewer Recognition Service: <https://clarivate.com/products/scientific-and-academic-research/research-publishing-solutions/reviewer-recognition-service/>

Our Template for Peer Review

We kindly ask reviewers to complete the provided form and respond to the questions with their original text. It is important that the responses reflect your own insights and feedback, adhering to the highest standards of professionalism.

1. Initial Suitability and Expertise

Does this manuscript fall within your area of expertise?

Are there any potential conflicts of interest that may impact your impartiality?

Do you have sufficient time to complete the review by the deadline?

If you are not the right fit for this review, can you recommend alternative reviewers?

2. Structure and Organization

Is the manuscript logically structured and easy to follow?

Does the summary accurately reflect the content of the manuscript?

Do the title, abstract, and keywords accurately reflect the manuscript's content and underlying data?

Are the sections (introduction, methods, results, conclusion and others) appropriately organized?

Is the language grammatically correct and clear throughout the manuscript?

3. Methodology and Research Validity

Are the research methods clearly explained and appropriate for the study?

Are the conclusions logically derived from the findings?

Is the literature review thorough and relevant to the manuscript's objectives?

Is the analysis appropriate and supported by the data? (If applicable, are the statistical analyses correctly applied?)

Are there clear explanations of how arguments and findings were derived?

4. Legal and Academic Accuracy

Are the legal references cited in the manuscript correct and relevant?

Are the citations accurate and consistent with the content?

Are the sources reliable and up-to-date?

Is the quality of translation from native language sources accurate and well-integrated into the manuscript?

Has the author cited most of the relevant literature in the field?

Do you need additional help with checking the sources?

5. Ethical Considerations

Does the manuscript adhere to ethical standards in legal scholarship?

If case studies or sensitive data are used, has proper consent or ethical approval been obtained?

Are there any concerns regarding potential plagiarism or improper attribution based on the similarity report?

Is confidentiality maintained, and are conflicts of interest or misuse of legal data addressed appropriately?

6. Feedback and Recommendations

What are the main strengths of this manuscript?

What are the key areas that need improvement?

Are there specific suggestions you would like to offer for improving the manuscript?

Does this manuscript present new ideas or significant contributions to the field?

Is the topic of the manuscript suitable for publication in this journal?

Based on your overall assessment, what is your recommendation?

- Accept as is
- Accept with minor revisions
- Revise&Resubmit: Minor revisions required
- Revise&Resubmit: Major revisions required
- Reject

AJEE Editorial Office

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