

***Ecozon@* Guidelines for Reviewers**

Reviewing a manuscript written by a fellow academic is a privilege and should be an exciting and enjoyable educational experience. However, it is also a time-consuming responsibility. *Ecozon@* editors, authors, and readers therefore appreciate your willingness to accept this responsibility. We hope that these Guidelines will help make your job easier.

Guidelines overview

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Extended Guidelines

1 Platform Profile

Please check that your profile on the platform is complete and up to date, to include the following: bio statement (degree, position/rank, department, institutional affiliations, major publications); areas of interest for reviewing; working languages. This helps the editors suggest suitable reviewers and avoids wasting your time with manuscripts in a language you don't use or on a topic with which you are not familiar.

2 On receipt of invitation to review: initial steps

On receipt of the invitation to review, please:

- As soon as possible, read the editor's transmittal e-mail, which includes the article abstract, to determine whether the subject is within your area of expertise and whether you can complete the review in the stated time period.
- Check whether or not you have any competing interests. You will not normally know the identity of the author(s), but may be able to guess.

IF YOU CANNOT DO THE REVIEW, PLEASE INDICATE THIS ON THE PLATFORM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE SO WE CAN LOOK FOR ANOTHER REVIEWER.

If you decline the invitation to review

Please indicate why (you lack the necessary subject knowledge; there is a conflict of interest that makes it impossible for you to review the manuscript impartially; you have insufficient time). Please bear in mind that reviewing an article properly is likely to take several hours and that, unless you indicate otherwise, it will be assumed that you are also willing to review a resubmission of the article (if a second round of review is required). We welcome your suggestions for who may be able to review the manuscript. If appropriate, the editor will send an invitation to review to that individual. You may not “transfer” your invitation to review the manuscript to a colleague.

If you accept the invitation to review

You will have access to the full manuscript, so please immediately double-check the title page and the Acknowledgments section to determine whether there is any conflict of interest for you (with the possible authors, their institution, or their funding sources) and whether you can judge the article impartially. Please inform us of any concerns.

If you happen to know the authors, do not discuss the paper with them either during or after the review process. Although it may seem natural and reasonable to discuss points of difficulty or disagreement directly with an author, especially if you are generally in favour of publication and do not mind revealing your identity, this practice is prohibited because the other reviewers and the editor may have different opinions, and the author may be misled by having “cleared things up” with the reviewer who contacted him/her directly.

Please also quickly skim the relevant portions of the manuscript and verify that it fits within the scope of the journal. Again, please inform us of any concerns.

3 Competing Interests

If agreeing to review, please indicate whether or not you have any competing interests. Please say, for instance, if you think you may work in the same department as the author, or have worked with them recently or have had any previous conflicts with them. Where you feel that conflicts of interest render it impossible to judge the article impartially, the invitation should be declined.

4 Timeliness

Please keep to the deadline for submission of your review. An efficient editorial process that results in timely publication provides a valuable service both to authors and to the academic community at large.

5 Editorial Criteria for Publication

To be accepted for publication in *Ecozon@*, research articles must satisfy the following general criteria:

- a. The article presents original research.
- b. The research has not been published elsewhere.

- c. The research meets all applicable standards of ethics and research integrity.
- d. The article is presented in an intelligible fashion and written in a standard form of English, Spanish, French, German or Italian.

To expand on each of these criteria:

- a. Does the manuscript present original research?

The themed and general article sections of *Ecozon@* are designed as a forum for original research. Opinion pieces, review-type articles and essayistic commentaries cannot normally be accepted for publication.

- b. Has the research been published elsewhere?

Ecozon@ does not accept for publication work that has already been published elsewhere (with the exception of the author(s)'s institutional repository and/or personal blog).

- c. Does the research meet all applicable standards with regard to research ethics?

Research published in *Ecozon@* must have been conducted to the highest ethical standards. Reviewers must indicate if they suspect plagiarism, fraud, breach of confidentiality (e.g. in dealing with information gained in interviews), or violation of ethical norms in the treatment of subjects.

- d. Is the article presented in an intelligible fashion and written in a standard form of the language it is submitted in?

Ecozon@ does not have sufficient resources to carry out extensive copyediting of the text of accepted manuscripts. It is therefore important for the work to be intelligible as presented, and for the language to be clear, unambiguous and grammatically correct. If the language of a paper is poor, reviewers should recommend that authors seek independent help before submission of a revision. Poor presentation and language is justifiable reason for rejection.

6 Anonymity and Confidentiality

Ecozon@ uses a double-blind reviewing process. Reviewers are not told the names of the authors of manuscripts, and they themselves remain anonymous. In the Autumn issue, the names of the reviewers who have contributed to the issues in that year are listed, so that their work is recognised.

The review process is strictly confidential and should be treated as such by reviewers. No one who is not directly involved with the manuscript (including colleagues and other experts in the field) should be consulted by the reviewer unless such consultations have first been discussed with the editors. Reviewers must not take any confidential information they have gained in the review process and use it before the paper is published.

7 Undertaking the Review

The principal purpose of the review is to provide the editors with an expert opinion regarding the quality of the manuscript under consideration. A secondary purpose is to supply authors with explicit feedback on how to improve their papers so that they are acceptable for publication in *Ecozon@*.

A good review would answer the following questions:

- What are the main arguments of the paper?
- Are they properly placed in the context of the previous literature, and is the literature cited properly?
- Are the arguments well organised and original?
- Are they supported (where appropriate) by textual analysis, and are the findings summed up appropriately in the conclusion?
- Who would find this paper of interest? And why?
- Have the instructions to authors regarding style been adhered to?
- Do the title and the English and Spanish abstracts reflect the content of the article adequately?

The review can follow several formats. In all cases, the assessment form should be filled out. However, the reviewer can choose between making more general comments in the box provided or making detailed comments on the article itself, using the Word revision tool and then uploading the revised document in word format. If a reviewer chooses this latter option, it is important to remove any markers indicating who the reviewer is (i.e. your initials in the marginal comments which Word places automatically), and to click that the author can view the uploaded file. *Please do not make a recommendation on publication in this document or in the box.*

8 Making comments to editors and authors

It is important to distinguish between comments made to editors and comments made to authors. *Statements about the acceptability of a paper* should be made to the *EDITORS ONLY*.

- Comments to editors

The confidentiality of comments addressed to the editors will be respected and should be made in an email directly sent to the editor. In addition to any comments you wish to make, please advise the editor of your recommendation by clicking the appropriate button. The available options are as follows:

- **Accept:** no revision is needed and the submission is accepted *as is*.
- **Revisions Required:** some revisions are needed but on the whole the submission is acceptable, subject to revisions. These revisions can be completed within about a month, and do not require a second review.
- **Re-submit for Review:** the submission is of interest but major revisions are needed and will require a new review process by the same reviewers or possible new ones.

- **Reject:** the submission should not be accepted for publication either because the quality is not high enough or the topic/type is not adequate for the journal.

The final decision regarding modification, acceptance, or rejection of a manuscript rests solely with the editor, which is why your recommendation should be stated here, to the editors, and NOT to the author directly (see below).

- Comments to authors

The purpose of this section is to offer remarks that might help to strengthen the paper. *Please DO NOT make comments on recommendation for publication directly to the author – these should be addressed to the editors only.* Suggested revisions should therefore be stated as such and not expressed as conditions of acceptance. Please organize your review so that it a) summarizes the major findings of the article, b) gives your overall impression of the paper, and c) highlights the major shortcomings. You are encouraged to include specific, numbered comments. (The numbering facilitates both the editor's letter to the author and evaluation of the author's rebuttal.) Criticism should be presented dispassionately; offensive remarks are not acceptable.

9 Editing Reviewers' Reports

The editors and *Ecozon@* staff do not edit any comments made by reviewers that are intended to be read by the authors, unless the language is deemed inappropriate for professional communication or the comments contain information considered confidential. Such remarks should be reserved for the comments to editor section of the review, which is confidential and intended to be read by the editors only. In their comments to authors, reviewers are encouraged to be honest and constructive in their language. On the other hand, authors should not confuse frank and perhaps even robust language with unfair criticism.

10 Feedback to Reviewers

We send reviewers' comments along with the editors' decision to the author of the manuscript. Since editorial decisions are based on evaluations derived from several sources, reviewers should not expect the editors to honour every recommendation. Reviewers who may have offered an opinion not in accordance with the final decision should not feel that their recommendation was not duly considered and their service not properly appreciated. Since experts often disagree, it is the job of the editorial team to make a decision. We take reviewers' criticisms seriously. However, where one reviewer alone opposes publication, we may consult the other reviewers as to whether s/he is applying an unduly critical standard. We occasionally bring in additional reviewers to resolve disputes, but we prefer to avoid doing so unless there is a specific issue on which we feel a need for further advice.

11 Points to Consider

- *General approach:* please adopt a positive, impartial, but critical attitude toward the manuscript under review, with the aim of promoting effective, accurate, and relevant communication of research.
- *Style, syntax, and grammar:* you are not required to correct deficiencies, but any help towards clarifying meaning is appreciated. In particular, note the use of jargon and misspellings. N.B. For non-native English speakers (and indeed some native speakers) there may be problems with grammar, spelling and punctuation, all of which play a role in effective presentation of the argument. If the reviewer feels the paper does not reach an acceptable standard, this alone may be justification for rejection. Nevertheless, we do encourage the author to find external help with language issues and can provide some final language editing.
- *Making criticisms and suggestions:* these will be most useful to both editor and author if they are carefully documented. Do not make dogmatic, dismissive statements, particularly about the novelty of the work. Setting out the arguments for and against publication is often more helpful to the editors than a direct recommendation one way or the other.
- *Your recommendation:* very few papers qualify for an immediate, unconditional acceptance. There are many reasons to reject a paper. In general, if the article does not fit the scope of the journal, if there are serious flaws in the argument, obvious gaps in knowledge of the subject, or any organizational or language usage problems that prevent normal reading and understanding of the manuscript, then recommend that the manuscript be rejected. If you feel that the deficiencies can be corrected within a reasonable period of time (1 to 2 months), then recommend modification (*revisions required* or *re-submit for review*).

12 The Purpose of Peer Review

Peer Review serves two key functions:

- Acts as a filter: ensures research is properly verified before being published.
- Improves the quality of the research: rigorous review by other experts helps to hone key points and correct inadvertent errors.

We are continually impressed with peer review's positive impact on the papers we publish. Even papers that are misunderstood by reviewers are usually rewritten and improved before resubmission. Mistakes are made, but peer review, through conscientious effort on the part of referees, helps to promote good practice in academic work and disseminate the best. Thank you for the effort and expertise that you contribute to reviewing, without which it would be impossible to maintain the high standards of peer-reviewed journals.