



# **EAST AFRICAN JOURNAL OF SCIENCES [EAJS]**

*An international and Multi-disciplinary Journal*

Indexed by African Journals Online and Directory of Open Access Journal  
www.ajol.info and www.DOAJ.com

Editorial Office  
Haramaya University  
P O Box 116, Ethiopia  
Tel: +251-25-553-0045  
Fax: +251-25-553-0325/31

## **East African Journal of Sciences (EAJS)**

**Haramaya University, Ethiopia**

### **Guide for Reviewers**

#### **1. Duties of Reviewers**

Manuscripts submitted to the East African Journal of Sciences (EAJS) undergo a rigorous double-blind peer review process. In this system, both the reviewers and authors remain anonymous to each other, ensuring impartiality and maintaining the confidentiality of the review process. Each manuscript is evaluated by one to three independent experts, per manuscript type, selected based on their subject matter expertise. The final decision on the manuscript is made by the journal's Editorial Board or Editor-in-Chief, considering the reviewers' and editors' comments. The EAJS is committed to upholding the highest standards of ethical conduct in research and publication. The journal adheres to international standards and requires all researchers to conduct their work ethically and responsibly, with integrity and compliance with all relevant international codes required for conducting research and reporting findings.

To support the integrity and quality of the peer review process, reviewers are encouraged to consult the COPE Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers. These guidelines provide comprehensive recommendations on maintaining confidentiality, declaring conflicts of interest, and conducting objective and constructive reviews. Reviewers can access the full guidelines at the Committee on Publication Ethics website: <https://publicationethics.org/resources/guidelines/cope-ethical-guidelines-peer-reviewers>.

#### **1.1. Importance of peer reviewing**

Peer review stands as a cornerstone of scholarly communication, ensuring the integrity, quality, and credibility of academic research. By subjecting manuscripts to critical evaluation by experts in the



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field, peer review serves as a rigorous quality control mechanism, filtering out flawed or unsubstantiated work and enhancing the reliability of published findings. This process not only aids editors in making informed publication decisions but also provides authors with constructive feedback to refine their work, thereby fostering continuous improvement in research quality. Moreover, peer review upholds ethical standards by identifying issues such as plagiarism or conflicts of interest, promoting transparency and accountability in academic publishing. For reviewers, engaging in this process offers professional development opportunities, keeping them abreast of the latest advancements and contributing to the collective advancement of knowledge.

### 1.2. Promptness

Peer reviewers play a critical role in maintaining the integrity and efficiency of scholarly communication. If a reviewer feels unqualified to assess a manuscript or anticipates an inability to complete the review promptly, it is their ethical responsibility to inform the editor immediately and decline the review invitation. Upon accepting a review assignment, reviewers are expected to adhere strictly to the timelines set by the editor or the editorial board of the journal. This approach ensures that the peer review process proceeds without unnecessary delays. Timely reviews not only respect the efforts of authors but also uphold the standards of the academic community by facilitating the swift dissemination of research findings.

### 1.3. Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a fundamental principle of the peer review process, ensuring the integrity and trustworthiness of scholarly evaluation. All materials received for review, including manuscripts and associated data, are considered privileged communications and must be treated with the utmost discretion. Reviewers are obligated to refrain from sharing, discussing, or disclosing any aspect of the manuscript or the review process with individuals not explicitly authorized by the journal's editorial team. If a reviewer believes that consulting a colleague is necessary for a thorough evaluation, prior permission must be obtained from the Editorial Manager or Associate Editor or Editor-in-Chief, and the colleague must also agree to uphold the same standards of confidentiality. Direct communication with the manuscript's authors is not permitted at any stage of the review process. Adhering to these standards, as outlined by organizations such as the Committee on



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Publication Ethics (COPE), is essential for maintaining the credibility and ethical standards of academic publishing.

### 1.4. Standards of objectivity

Peer review must be conducted with unwavering objectivity, focusing solely on the scholarly merit of the work under evaluation. Reviewers are expected to provide fair, evidence-based assessments, articulating their critiques clearly and constructively, supported by relevant arguments and references. Personal criticism of the author is inappropriate so that feedback should address the content, methodology, and scientific rigor of the manuscript. Reviewers should remain vigilant against biases related to nationality, gender, institutional affiliation, or personal beliefs, and must disclose any potential conflicts of interest that could compromise impartiality.

### 1.5. Study ethics

Peer reviewers are encouraged to vigilantly assess submissions for potential ethical concerns, such as unethical research design, inadequate detail on patient consent, or insufficient protection of research subjects, including animals. Reviewers should also be alert to issues like data fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, redundant or duplicate publication, image manipulation, biased reporting, authorship abuse, and undeclared conflicts of interest. This practice helps to maintain the integrity of the scholarly record and ensure that research adheres to established ethical guidelines, and fosters responsible and trustworthy scientific communication.

### 1.6. Acknowledgement of sources

Reviewers play a pivotal role in upholding the integrity of scholarly communication by diligently identifying relevant published work that authors may have overlooked. They should ensure that any assertion regarding prior observations, derivations, or arguments is substantiated with appropriate citations. Moreover, reviewers are expected to alert editors to any substantial similarities or overlaps between the manuscript under review and existing publications, which may indicate issues of redundancy or plagiarism. Thus, reviewers contribute significantly to maintaining the ethical standards and credibility of academic publishing through verifying the originality of the content of the manuscript and the proper acknowledgment of sources.



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### **1.7. Disclosure and conflicts of interest**

Reviewers are entrusted with unpublished materials and privileged information, which must not be used for personal gain or incorporated into their own research without the explicit written consent of the authors. Such information should remain confidential and not be exploited for competitive advantage. Reviewers must assess whether any potential conflicts [such as recent collaborations with the authors (typically within the past two years), shared institutional affiliations, close personal or professional relationships (including past or present mentorships and family members), or financial interests related to the manuscript's content] could compromise their impartiality. If any such conflicts exist, reviewers are ethically obligated to decline the review invitation to preserve the fairness and credibility of the peer review process. Adhering to these principles ensures that evaluations are conducted with the highest standards of professionalism and integrity.

### **2. Questions to Guide the Reviewer in Assessment of the Paper**

Reviewers are encouraged to assess manuscripts based on several key criteria to ensure a comprehensive evaluation. These include the clarity and coherence of the writing, the originality and significance of the research question, the appropriateness and rigor of the methodology, the validity and reliability of the results, and the logical consistency of the conclusions drawn. Additionally, reviewers should consider the relevance of the work to the journal's scope and audience, the adequacy of the literature review, and the ethical standards adhered to in the research. Feedback should be constructive and categorized into 'major revisions' for significant issues that must be addressed, 'minor essential revisions' for less critical but necessary improvements, and 'discretionary revisions' for optional enhancements. Reviewers are also encouraged to provide insights beyond these points, drawing on their unique perspectives to aid editors in the decision-making process. Generally, reviewers should consider the following points, which are questions for guidance, and the questions should be addressed with examples beyond 'yes' or 'no' responses in the evaluation format.

#### **2.1. Topic and content**

- Is the topic relevant for the journal?
- Is the content important to the field?
- Is the work original? (If not, please give references)



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### 2.2. Title

- Does the title reflect the contents of the article?

### 2.3. Abstract

- To what extent does the abstract reflect aspects of the study: Background, objectives, methods, results, and conclusions?

### 2.4. Introduction/Background

- Is the study rationale or statement of the problem adequately described?
- Does it describe the accuracy of matters and clearly state the problem being considered?

### 2.5. Objectives

- Are the study objectives clearly stated and well defined?

### 2.6. Methodology

- To what extent is the study design appropriate and adequate for the objectives?
- Is the sample size appropriate and adequately justified?
- Is the sampling technique appropriate and adequately described?
- How well are the methods or procedures or protocols and instruments of data collection described?
- How well are techniques to minimize bias/errors documented?

### 2.7. Ethical consideration

- If there are issues related to ethics, are they adequately described? (For human studies, has ethical approval been obtained?)

### 2.8. Analysis and results

- Are the methods of data analysis adequately described and appropriate?
- Do the results presented match the methods described?
- Do the results answer the research question?
- Are there any results missing?
- Are the results credible?
- Is statistical significance well documented (e.g., as confidence intervals or *P*-value)?
- Are the findings presented logically with appropriate displays and explanations?



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### 2.9. Discussion

- How well are the key findings stated?
- To what extent have differences or similarities with other studies been discussed and reasons for these given?
- Are the findings discussed in the light of previous evidence?
- Are the implications of these findings clearly explained?
- Have the author(s) explained the relevance of what they have done in a wider context?
- Have the author(s) discussed what was already known and what this article adds?
- Is the interpretation warranted by and sufficiently derived from and focused on the data and results?

### 2.10. Conclusion(s)

- Do the results justify the conclusion(s)?
- Have the authors made exaggerated claims that are not supported by their findings?
- Is the interpretation of the article, well balanced and supported by what was done and/or seen?

### 2.11. References

- Are the references appropriate, relevant, and up to date?
- Are there any obvious, important references that should have been included and have not been?
- Do the references follow the recommended style of the journal and error free?

### 2.12. Writing style

- Is the paper clearly written?
- Is the paper structured logically (e.g., correct information in each section, logical flow of arguments)?
- Are there problems with the grammar/spelling/punctuation/language?
- Are figures, schemes, illustrations, and tables appropriate, of sufficient quality and data properly labelled?
- Is the manuscript written in an understandable way for a scientific publication?