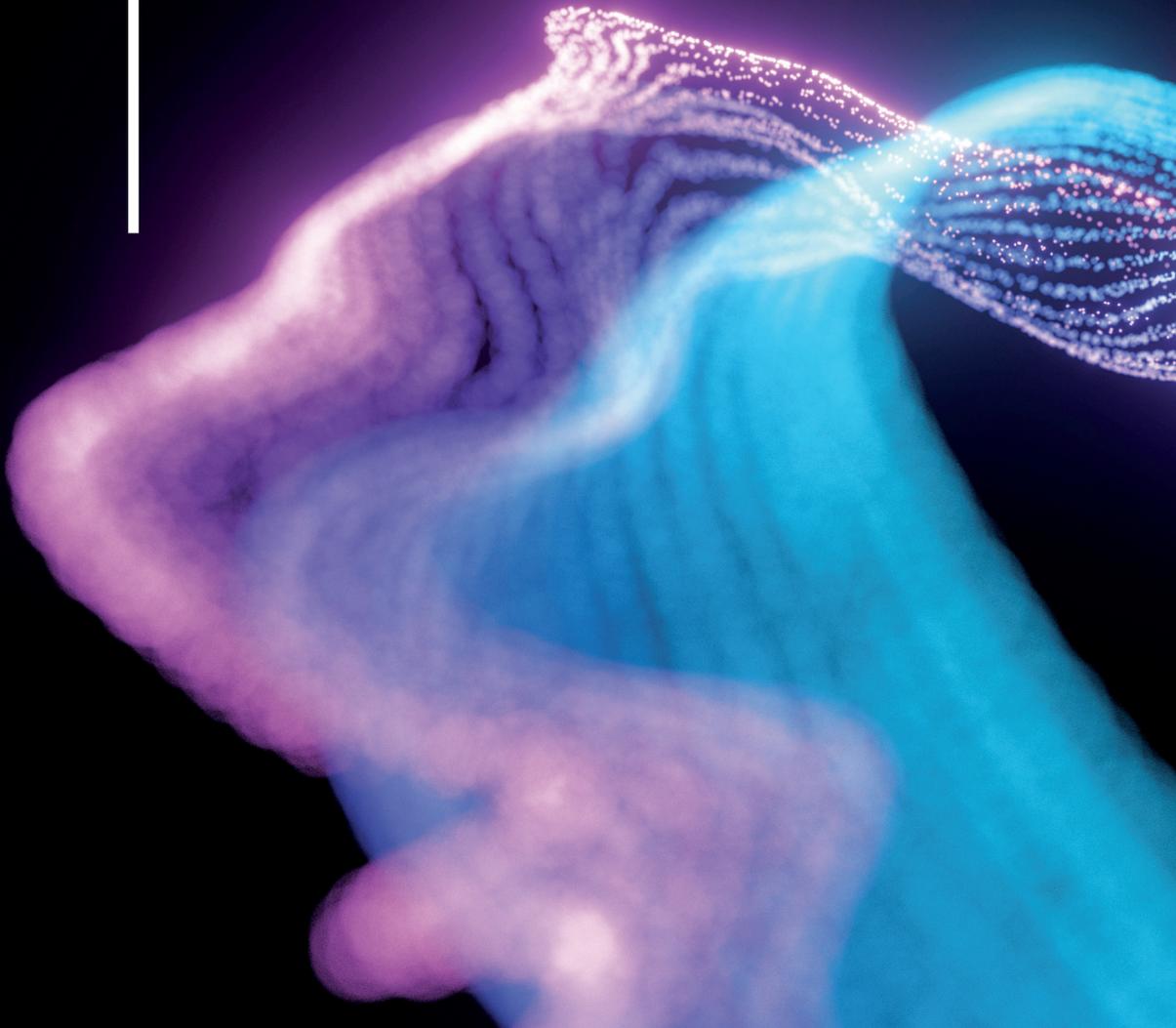


IOP Publishing

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PUBLISHING™**
SCIENCE IS OUR ONLY SHAREHOLDER

REVIEWER GUIDE

This document provides guidance on how to review for IOP Publishing journals. More information can be found on our [Publishing Support](#) webpages for reviewers.



Editorial criteria vary across different IOP Publishing journals, and manuscript acceptance criteria vary. As a reviewer, you will be making a recommendation on whether the manuscript fulfils the requirements of that specific journal.

For journal-specific editorial criteria, see page 4.

You should check this before writing your reviewer report.

PEER REVIEW EXCELLENCE ONLINE COURSE

At IOP Publishing we offer an **online course in Peer Review Excellence**. We recommend this training to early career researchers, but it is freely available to anyone working in the physical sciences. This comprehensive training course is designed to give researchers the tools and confidence to review well. The course covers the fundamentals of peer review, how to write a reviewer report and peer review ethics. Our Peer Review Excellence course takes 1–2 hours to complete.

If you pass the course, you will be fast-tracked towards IOP Trusted Reviewer status and be badged as a training graduate on our reviewer selection system, making it more likely that you will be selected to review.

You can register for free here: [Peer Review Excellence](#).

RECEIVING A REVIEW INVITATION

Should you accept this review invitation?

Ask yourself the following questions:

Am I an expert?

Do you know the field well enough to be able to assess the scientific rigour, novelty, quality and importance of the research? You don't need to be an expert in all aspects of the paper, but be honest about your expertise and if there are aspects of the article that you feel you cannot assess, let the editor know in the "comments to the editor" section of the report form.

Do I have a conflict of interest?

Reject the invitation if you are: in direct competition with the authors; a co-worker, collaborator or have a personal relationship with one of the authors; affiliated with the same institution as one of the authors; in a position to exploit the authors' work (commercially or otherwise) OR in a position which prevents you from giving an objective opinion of the work.

Can I meet the deadline?

You can ask for more time if you need to, but give the journal a realistic timeframe for preparing your report. Do you have time to review the revised version of the paper too?

Can I be objective?

Are you aware of your own biases? Can you remove subjective preferences and focus on the science, providing a constructive and fair report? If not, you should reject the invitation.

Make sure you do the following:

1. Respond to an invitation as soon as possible
2. Be honest about your availability
3. Suggest alternative reviewers if you can't review

Co-review

IOP Publishing is pleased to support co-review across our journals. Co-review allows two people to collaborate on a reviewer report with both receiving recognition. This is a great way to help one of your colleagues, especially more junior ones, gain experience as a reviewer. For more information see our [co-review guidelines](#).

IOP PUBLISHING JOURNAL SCOPES

We recommend that you read the journal's scope before writing your reviewer report. This can help you judge whether the manuscript is suitable for that journal. Select the journal in the table below. For our partner journals, please see the 'About the journal' section on the journal homepage: [IOPscience - Journals](https://iopscience.iop.org/journals).

2D Materials	Journal of Neural Engineering	Nano Express
Biofabrication	Journal of Optics	Nano Futures
Bioinspiration & Biomimetics	Journal of Physics A: Mathematical and Theoretical	Nanotechnology
Biomedical Materials	Journal of Physics B: Atomic, Molecular and Optical Physics	Neuromorphic Computing and Engineering
Biomedical Physics & Engineering Express	Journal of Physics Communications	New Journal of Physics
Classical and Quantum Gravity	Journal of Physics D: Applied Physics	Physica Scripta
Electronic Structure	Journal of Physics Energy	Physical Biology
Engineering Research Express	Journal of Physics G: Nuclear and Particle Physics	Physics in Medicine & Biology
Environmental Research Communications	Journal of Physics Materials	Physiological Measurement
Environmental Research Letters	Journal of Physics Photonics	Plasma Physics and Controlled Fusion
Environmental Research: Climate	Journal of Physics: Complexity	Plasma Sources Science and Technology
Environmental Research: Ecology	Journal of Physics: Condensed Matter	Progress in Biomedical Engineering
Environmental Research: Energy	Machine Learning: Science and Technology	Progress in Energy
Environmental Research: Food Systems	Materials for Quantum Technology	Quantum Science & Technology
Environmental Research: Health	Materials Research Express	Reports on Progress in Physics
Environmental Research: Infrastructure and Sustainability	Measurement Science and Technology	Semiconductor Science and Technology
Flexible and Printed Electronics	Methods and Applications in Fluorescence	Smart Materials and Structures
Inverse Problems	Modelling and Simulation in Materials Science and Engineering	Superconductor Science and Technology
Journal of Breath Research		Surface Topography: Metrology and Properties
Journal of Micromechanics and Microengineering		Sustainability Science and Technology

HOW TO WRITE A REVIEWER REPORT

Quality assessment

We will ask you to score the manuscript using different criteria. These vary depending on which journal you are reviewing for. It is useful to comment on these criteria in the free-text section of the report. You can find more information about each journal on page 4. Criteria you may be asked to score and comment on:

Originality*

A measure of the novelty of the ideas and techniques reported in the manuscript compared to the existing literature.

Scientific rigour

A measure of how well the research has been carried out; whether all necessary details of the method and results are presented in a way that they can be reproduced; and whether the results have been appropriately analysed and discussed. (This includes the testability of any theoretical predictions or modelling.)

Clarity

A measure of the structure and quality of writing within the article, and how well the authors have conveyed the required information.

Significance

A measure of the level of advance and likely impact of the reported results and/or approach within the article's immediate field (and possibly beyond).

*Please note – some of our journals do not ask for the assessment of a manuscript's novelty. In these circumstances, we instead welcome manuscripts that demonstrate scientific validity and a strong methodology. In doing so, we aim to be more inclusive of the types of research we publish, including null and negative results, or replication studies.



You can read a full classification of how to score these criteria in the [Quality Assessment Breakdown](#).

Language

Reviewers are not expected to correct spelling, grammar or use-of-English mistakes, as most journals have copy editors who can correct minor problems with language. However, if the paper is written so poorly that you cannot clearly understand what the authors mean, or there are so many errors that reading the paper becomes very difficult, then that should be reported back to the journal.

Making a recommendation

The exact recommendations available to you will vary by journal, but in most cases you should be able to choose from the following four options:

Accept

It is very unusual for a paper to be accepted without needing any revisions. If you recommend acceptance, provide detail justifying why this is the case, rather than a short remark such as “this paper is perfect, I recommend that it be accepted”.

Minor revisions

A recommendation of minor revisions suggests that the manuscript will be ready for publication if the authors make small changes and clarifications to the text. Minor revisions include things such as referencing queries, clarifying parts of the manuscript that might not be clear, adding in extra details and amending the abstract.

Major revisions

A recommendation of major revisions should be made if you do not think that the manuscript is publishable in its current form, but you believe that if the authors make substantial changes to the way they report their research, then it could be publishable. Major revisions include substantial re-writes, re-doing analyses or doing extra analysis, adding extra tables and figures, and substantially editing the text for language.

Reject

Based on the scope and requirements of the journal, and your assessment of the quality of the manuscript, you do not believe that the manuscript should be published in this journal. It is important that your review justifies the rejection recommendation. Let the editor know if you think the paper could be suitable for transfer to another journal.

It is important that your comments to the editors/authors reflect your recommendation. If you are recommending that the editor reject a manuscript, be clear in your comments to the authors about why you believe it should be rejected in relation to the editorial standards of that journal.

The structure of an excellent reviewer report

Reviewers are not required to give a detailed summary of the manuscript. However, your reviewer report should be substantial and thorough. You should explain your thinking and give the author(s) and editor(s) enough reasoning to support your recommendation. If you are asking the author to revise the manuscript, be clear about what is needed to bring the manuscript up to the required quality standards for publication.

Comments to the editor/s

These comments will not be shared with the authors. Use this section if there is anything you want to say that would not be appropriate to tell the authors. If you suspect any form of author misconduct, mention it here.

Comments to the author/s

The following is a good way to structure your reviewer report:

Summary

Open your review with a summary of the manuscript and its findings. This shows the authors and editors of the journal that you have read and understood the work.

Comments on the manuscript

- Familiarise yourself with the editorial standards of the journal and comment on whether the manuscript meets those standards. Details for each journal can be found using page 4.
- Comment on the qualities you scored in the quality assessment section of the reviewer report form e.g. scientific rigour and clarity.
- Make sure that your recommendations are specific enough for the authors to follow.
- Compare the manuscript to existing literature. Check that the authors have cited the most relevant and recent appropriate work.
- Organise your comments into 'Major points' and 'Minor points' where applicable.
- It is helpful to number your points. This can make it easier for the authors to respond to your comments and when checking the revised manuscript.

Recommendation

At the end of your review, make a recommendation to the editor. Clearly state and justify your recommendation. This means explaining why you have chosen the reject/revise/accept option.

PEER REVIEW RECOGNITION

How we rate reviewer reports

Our editors rate all of the reviewer reports we receive on a scale of 1–5, with 5 representing a report of outstanding quality. This link will take you to a full breakdown of the [Reviewer report ratings](#). These are the criteria to have a report rated 5 out of 5:

Criteria	Level to be rated 5 out of 5
Thoroughness	Detailed and very thorough: comments on essentially all sections of the manuscript.
Assessment of significance	Comments on the significance of the work within the context of the field.
Literature comparison	Includes a comprehensive comparison with existing literature.
Feedback quality	Constructive feedback that enables the author(s) to improve the article.
Recommendation	Recommendation is clearly justified and consistent with the journal's editorial standards.
Timeliness	Submitted in the agreed timeframe.

IOP Trusted Reviewer status

Any reviewer who submits a report rated 5 will achieve IOP Trusted Reviewer status and become eligible for our annual [Outstanding Reviewer Awards](#). If you gain IOP Trusted Reviewer status or have highly rated reviews, you will be more likely to be selected to review again.

Reviewer feedback

At IOP Publishing, we have implemented a system to offer reviewers feedback on their reports. There is now an option to opt in and receive an evaluation of your reviewer report. The evaluation will be based on the structure, constructiveness, and usefulness of the report, not the scientific content. Please note that reports are not evaluated until a decision is made on the manuscript, so there may be a delay between you submitting your report and receiving your evaluation. We will not provide evaluations for Editorial Board Member or Guest Editor reports.

PEER REVIEW ETHICS

For more information, see our current [ethical guidance for peer reviewers](#).

Anonymity

All IOP Publishing journals use either single- or double-anonymous peer review, or both. This means the authors should not know the identity of the people reviewing their paper. Please keep your review anonymous.

Self-citations

Reviewers are expected to point out relevant work that has not been cited, and use citations to explain where elements of the work have been previously reported. When writing a report, reviewers should justify any literature references suggested for inclusion in the work. Citations should add value, and should not be unfairly biased towards an individual, group or organisation. Please note that the editor reserves the right to challenge excessive citation suggestions, especially to the reviewer's own work. The practice of including superfluous references, including to the reviewer's own work, to promote and inflate citation scores is unethical. The editor reserves the right to exclude citation suggestions from reports if these are considered to be potential acts of citation manipulation, and/or to protect reviewers' anonymity.

Generative AI (including ChatGPT)

IOP Publishing does not accept or condone the use of generative AI, including large language models and AI chatbots such as ChatGPT, to write peer review reports, either fully or partially. By accepting a review invitation, a reviewer agrees to adhere to the ethical standards of IOP Publishing, including reporting any conflicts of interest, ensuring the manuscript under review remains confidential, and retaining their anonymity as a reviewer. Generative AI models are not subject experts as they lack the ability or comprehension to assume responsibility for work, they have helped create and are therefore unable to adhere to the ethical standards set out by IOP Publishing. Furthermore, generative AI models do not have the legal personality to sign publishing agreements or licences. Please note that uploading any part of a submitted manuscript to a generative AI model may breach the authors' rights to confidentiality. If a manuscript contains personally identifiable information, it may also breach data protection rights.

Suspected author misconduct

Reviewers should report any suspicions of misconduct to the journal staff for investigation. This includes, but is not limited to, suspicions of:

- Plagiarism
- Duplicate publication
- Parallel submission
- Data fabrication falsification
- Image manipulation
- Incorrect authorship
- Author conflict of interest
- Unethical research practices
- Content that could be considered offensive

We follow the [COPE guidelines on responding to whistleblowers](#), which includes protecting their anonymity.

FAQs

Where can I find more information about reviewing for IOP Publishing?

You can find information here: [Reviewers - IOPscience - Publishing Support](#).

How long will I have to submit my reviewer report?

You will be told the deadline to submit your report by the journal, but at IOP Publishing it is normally 2 weeks. This is a compromise between giving reviewers enough time to review and ensuring an efficient peer review process for our authors. If you need more time to submit your report, please ask for an extension. If there is a change of circumstances and you are unable to review, please let us know as soon as possible so we can reduce delays for the authors.

What should be the length of my reviewer report?

This depends on the manuscript being reviewed. It is not necessary to write pages and pages of analysis, but make sure you have included enough information to show us that you have understood the manuscript, given detailed constructive feedback and justified your recommendation. Outstanding reviewer reports (rated 5 out of 5) tend to be at least one page of A4 in length.

How many people will review a manuscript?

Normally, two people will review a manuscript, but these reports might be supplemented by editorial board members or other experts.

What happens if the reviewers disagree on the outcome of a manuscript?

If the reviewers do not agree, the journal may consult an adjudicator. An adjudicator is a senior reviewer or editorial board member. They are asked to provide an opinion on both the manuscript and the reviewer reports. If an editorial board member is consulted, they may be told the names of the reviewers to help them make their decision, but the authors will still only see anonymous reports. The adjudicator may agree or disagree with your assessment of the article. If an adjudicator has been consulted, you may receive the adjudicator's comments with any revised version of the manuscript that you are asked to review. You should consider all reports during your assessment of the revised version.

What are revised manuscripts?

When authors receive major or minor revisions they will amend their manuscript based on the reviewers' comments and then send it back to the editor for reconsideration. This is called a revised manuscript. The revised document will be sent back to one or all of the original reviewers.

If you agree to peer review a revised manuscript, the recommendation options will be more limited (accept, minor revisions, or unsatisfactory revisions). At this point it is highly unusual for the reviewer to suggest completely new revisions. Instead, you are assessing whether the author has sufficiently amended the manuscript based on the reviews they received.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

You should contact the journal inbox, which can be found on each journal webpage, if you have any questions about reviewing the manuscript. Alternatively, you can reply to the email invitation.

More general questions about peer review at IOP Publishing can be directed to the Peer Review Engagement team, peerreview@iopublishing.org.

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