

Reviewers Guide

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1. Peer Review and Editorial Procedure

Peer review is an essential part of the publication process and it ensures that T.C.G. maintains the highest quality standards for its published papers. All manuscripts submitted to our journal are strictly and thoroughly peer-reviewed by experts.

Immediately after submission, the journal's Editing Team will perform an initial check of the manuscript. A suitable academic editor will be notified of the submission and invited to check the manuscript and recommend reviewers. Academic editors can decide to continue with the peer review process, reject a manuscript, or request revisions before peer-review. In the case of continuing the peer review process, the Editing Team will organize the peer review, which is performed by independent experts, and collect at least two review reports per manuscript. We ask authors for sufficient revisions (with a second round of peer review, when necessary) before a final decision is made. The final decision is

made by an academic editor (usually the Editor-in-Chief/Editorial Board Member of the journal or the Guest Editor of a Special Issue). Accepted manuscripts are then copy-edited and English-edited internally.

2. Reviewers' Profile and Responsibilities

The role of the reviewer is vital and bears a great responsibility in ensuring the integrity of the scholarly record. Every reviewer is expected to perform manuscript evaluation in a timely, transparent, and ethical manner, following the COPE guidelines https://publicationethics.org/files/cope-ethical-guidelines-peer-reviewers-v2_0.pdf.

Reviewers should meet the following criteria:

- be an active researcher and PhD holder;
- possess official and recognized affiliation (University or Research Institute) relevant experience and have a proven publication record in the field of the submitted paper (Scopus, ORCID);
- not hold any conflicts of interest with the authors.

T.C.G. strives for a rigorous peer review to ensure a thorough evaluation of each manuscript—this is a fundamental task for our reviewers. Reviewers who accept to review a manuscript are expected to:

- Have the necessary expertise to judge the scientific quality of the manuscript;
- Provide quality review reports and remain responsive throughout the peer review process;
- Maintain standards of professionalism and ethics.

3. Reviewers' Benefits

Reviewing is often an unseen and unrewarded task, despite being crucial. We are striving to recognize the efforts of all our reviewers.

The reviewers receive a personalized reviewer certificate by the Journal Chief Editors.

4. Reviewer Registered Record

The Reviewer Registered Record (RRR) consists of experienced researchers whose main responsibility is to regularly and actively support journal by providing high quality, rigorous, and transparent review reports for submitted manuscripts within their area of expertise. The initial term is for 1 year which can then be renewed or terminated. Membership involves the same responsibilities and benefits as regular reviewers, with the addition of:

- a. RRR Members must review a minimum of 6 manuscripts per year. Should the reviewer be unable to provide a report when invited, they are expected to suggest alternative potential reviewers (the proposed candidates must meet the reviewers' requirements from Section 2).
- b. RRR Members are entitled to receive an RRR certificate.
- c. RRR Members are announced on the journal website.
- d. Active RRR members may be promoted to the Topical Advisory Panel (subject to approval by the Editor-in-Chief).

5. Volunteer Reviewer Registered Record

T.C.G. journal is actively looking for volunteers to join our Volunteer Reviewer Registered Record only.

To become part of this program, you have to fulfill the criteria outlined in Section 2 entitled "Reviewers' Profile and Responsibilities".

To become a member of RRR, please apply. Your application will be reviewed by our Scientific Committee, who will check if your background suits the scope of the journal as well as any potential ethical issues. Should you pass our internal check, your application will be approved.

6. General Guidelines for Reviewers

6.1. Invitation to Review

Manuscripts submitted to T.C.G. journal are reviewed by at least two experts, who can be volunteer reviewers, members of the RRR or reviewers suggested by the academic editor during the preliminary check. Reviewers are asked to evaluate the quality of the manuscript and to provide a recommendation to the

external editor on whether a manuscript should be accepted, requires revisions, or should be rejected.

We ask invited reviewers to:

- accept or decline any invitations as soon as possible (based on the manuscript title and abstract);
- suggest alternative reviewers if an invitation must be declined;
- request a deadline extension as soon as possible in case more time is required to provide a comprehensive report.

6.2. Potential Conflicts of Interest

We ask reviewers to declare any potential conflicts of interest and email the journal Editing Team if they are unsure if something constitutes a potential conflict of interest. Possible conflicts of interest include (but are not limited to):

- Reviewer is a co-author, collaborator, joint grant holder, or has any other academic link, with any of the authors within the past five years;
- Reviewer has a close personal relationship, rivalry or antipathy to any of the authors;
- Reviewer may in any way gain or lose financially from publication of the paper;
- Reviewer has any other non-financial conflicts of interests (political, personal, religious, ideological, academic, intellectual, commercial or any other) with any of the authors.

Reviewers should disclose any conflicts of interest that may be perceived as bias for or against the paper or authors.

Please kindly note that if reviewers are asked to assess a manuscript they previously reviewed for another journal, this is not considered to be a conflict of interest. In this case, reviewers should feel free to let the Editing Team know if the manuscript has been improved or not compared to the previous version.

Reviewers are also recommended to read the relevant descriptions in the **Ethical Guidelines For Peer Reviewers** by the Committee On Publication Ethics' (COPE).

6.3. Declaration of Confidentiality

T.C.G. journal operates double-blind peer review. Until the article is published, reviewers should keep the content of the manuscript, including the Abstract, confidential. Reviewers should also be careful not to reveal their identity to the authors, either in their comments or in metadata for reports submitted in Microsoft Word or PDF format. Reviewers must inform the Editing Team if they would like a colleague to complete the review on their behalf (reviewers should always meet the criteria reported in Section 2).

T.C.G. journal offers the possibility for authors to publish review reports together with their paper (Open Review) and for reviewers to sign their open review reports once “Open Review” is selected by the authors. However, this will only be done at publication with the reviewer’s permission. In all other cases, review reports are considered confidential and will only be disclosed with the explicit permission of the reviewer.

6.4. Review Reports

We have listed some general instructions regarding the review report for your consideration below.

To begin with, please consider the following guidelines:

- Read the whole article as well as the supplementary material, if there is any, paying close attention to the figures, tables, data, and methods.
- Your report should critically analyze the article as whole but also specific sections and the key concepts presented in the article.
- Please ensure your comments are detailed so that the authors may correctly understand and address the points you raise.
- Reviewers must not recommend citation of work by themselves, close colleagues, another author, or the journal when it is not clearly necessary to improve the quality of the manuscript under review.
- Reviewers must not recommend excessive citation of their work (self-citations), another author’s work (honorary citations) or articles from the journal where the manuscript was submitted as a means of increasing the citations of the reviewer/authors/journal. You can provide references as

needed, but they must clearly improve the quality of the manuscript under review.

- Please maintain a neutral tone and focus on providing constructive criticism that will help the authors improve their work. Derogatory comments will not be tolerated.

For further guidance on writing a critical review, please refer to the following documents:

1. *COPE Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers*. Committee on Publication Ethics. **Available online**.
2. Hames, I. *Peer Review and Manuscript Management in Scientific Journals: Guidelines for Good Practice*. Wiley-Blackwell: Oxford, UK, 2007.
3. *Writing a journal article review*. Australian National University: Canberra, Australia, 2010. **Available online**.
4. Golash-Boza, T. *How to write a peer review for an academic journal: Six steps from start to finish*. **Available online**.

Review reports should contain the following:

- **A brief summary** (one short paragraph) outlining the aim of the paper, its main contributions and strengths.
- **General concept comments**

Article: highlighting areas of weakness, the testability of the hypothesis, methodological inaccuracies, missing controls, etc.

Review: commenting on the completeness of the review topic covered the relevance of the review topic, the gap in knowledge identified, the appropriateness of references, etc.

These comments are focused on the scientific content of the manuscript and should be specific enough for the authors to be able to respond.

- **Specific comments** referring to line numbers, tables or figures that point out inaccuracies within the text or sentences that are unclear. These comments should also focus on the scientific content and not on spelling, formatting or English language problems, as these can be addressed at a later stage by our Editing Team.

General questions to help guide your review report for research articles:

- Is the manuscript clear, relevant for the field and presented in a well-structured manner?
- Are the cited references mostly recent publications (within the last 5 years) and relevant? Does it include an excessive number of self-citations?
- Is the manuscript scientifically sound and is the experimental design appropriate to test the hypothesis?
- Are the manuscript's results reproducible based on the details given in the methods section?
- Are the figures/tables/images/schemes appropriate? Do they properly show the data? Are they easy to interpret and understand? Is the data interpreted appropriately and consistently throughout the manuscript? Please include details regarding the statistical analysis or data acquired from specific databases.
- Are the conclusions consistent with the evidence and arguments presented?
- Please evaluate the ethics statements and data availability statements to ensure they are adequate.

General questions to help guide your review report for review articles:

- Is the review clear, comprehensive and of relevance to the field? Is a gap in knowledge identified?
- Was a similar review published recently and, if yes, is this current review still relevant and of interest to the scientific community?
- Are the cited references mostly recent publications (within the last 5 years) and relevant? Are any relevant citations omitted? Does it include an excessive number of self-citations?
- Are the statements and conclusions drawn coherent and supported by the listed citations?
- Are the figures/tables/images/schemes appropriate? Do they properly show the data? Are they easy to interpret and understand?

The content of your review report will be rated by an Academic Editor from a scientific point of view as well as general usefulness to the improvement of the manuscript.

The reviewers are asked to fulfill the template attached and their comments.

6.5. Rating the Manuscript

During the manuscript evaluation, please rate the following aspects:

- *Novelty*: Is the question original and well-defined? Do the results provide an advancement of the current knowledge?
- *Scope*: Does the work fit the journal scope*?
- *Significance*: Are the results interpreted appropriately? Are they significant? Are all conclusions justified and supported by the results? Are hypotheses carefully identified as such?
- *Quality*: Is the article written in an appropriate way? Are the data and analyses presented appropriately? Are the highest standards for presentation of the results used?
- *Scientific Soundness*: Is the study correctly designed and technically sound? Are the analyses performed with the highest technical standards? Is the data robust enough to draw conclusions? Are the methods, tools, software, and reagents described with sufficient details to allow another researcher to reproduce the results? Is the raw data available and correct (where applicable)?
- *Interest to the Readers*: Are the conclusions interesting for the readership of the journal? Will the paper attract a wide readership, or be of interest only to a limited number of people? (Please see the Aims and Scope of the journal.)
- *Overall Merit*: Is there an overall benefit to publishing this work? Does the work advance the current knowledge? Do the authors address an important long-standing question with smart experiments? Do the authors present a negative result of a valid scientific hypothesis?
- *English Level*: Is the English language appropriate and understandable?

Manuscripts submitted to T.C.G. journal should meet the highest standards of publication ethics:

- Manuscripts should only report results that have not been submitted or published before, even in part.
- Manuscripts must be original and should not reuse text from another source without appropriate citation.
- The studies reported should have been carried out in accordance with generally accepted ethical research standards.

If the reviewer becomes aware of any scientific misconduct or fraud, plagiarism or any other unethical behavior related to the manuscript, they should raise these concerns with the in-house editor immediately.

6.6. Overall Recommendation

Please provide an overall recommendation for the next processing stage of the manuscript as follows:

- *Accept in Present Form*: The paper can be accepted without any further changes.
- *Accept after Minor Revisions*: The paper can in principle be accepted after revision based on the reviewer's comments. Authors are given five days for minor revisions.
- *Reconsider after Major Revisions*: The acceptance of the manuscript would depend on the revisions. The author needs to provide a point-by-point response or provide a rebuttal if some of the reviewer's comments cannot be revised. Usually, only one round of major revisions is allowed. Authors will be asked to resubmit the revised paper within ten days and the revised version will be returned to the reviewer for further comments.
- *Reject*: The article has serious flaws, makes no original contribution and the paper may be rejected with no offer of resubmission to the journal.

Note that your recommendation is visible only to journal editors, not to the authors. Decisions on revisions, acceptance, or rejections must always be well justified.