

ICES JOURNAL OF MARINE SCIENCE

GUIDELINES FOR REVIEWERS

May 2023

Background

[ICES Journal of Marine Science](#) (the *Journal*) is the flagship publication of the [International Council for the Exploration of the Sea](#). The *Journal* seeks to (i) efficiently and promptly publish rigorous, accessible, and entertaining material that will help marine scientists in their daily work, lifelong learning, and career development, (ii) in so doing, strive to publish only articles that are signals in an ever-increasing sea of noise, (iii) be at the forefront of the international debate on all aspects of marine science, (iv) be among the world's most influential and widely read fisheries and marine science journals. Reviewers should keep the *Journal's* mission (particularly point (ii)) foremost in mind when assessing manuscripts for possible publication in our pages.

The *Journal* publishes original articles, opinion essays ("Food for Thought"), visions for the future ("Quo Vadimus"), "Stories from the Front Lines" and critical reviews that contribute to our scientific understanding of marine systems and the impact of human activities on them. Our article types are described [here](#). The *Journal* also serves as a foundation for scientific advice across the broad spectrum of management and conservation issues related to the marine environment. Oceanography (e.g. productivity-determining processes), marine habitats, living resources, and related topics constitute the key elements of papers considered for publication. This includes economic, social, and public administration studies to the extent that they are directly related to management of the seas and are of general interest to marine scientists anywhere in the world. Integrated transdisciplinary studies that bridge gaps between traditional disciplines are particularly welcome. You can read the *Journal's* mission statement [here](#) and our "How to get published" guidelines for authors [here](#).

All works to be published need to demonstrate originality, the significance of their underlying message, be of high quality, and clearly integrate their contribution with existing knowledge.

Peer reviewing for the *Journal*

Quality peer reviews are essential for ensuring a high standard of material in scholarly journals, and your evaluation will, therefore, play a major role in our decision as to whether to accept a manuscript for publication. As a context for your assessment, keep in mind that the ICES JMS seeks to publish only the highest quality articles – our acceptance rate is 30% - 35%; 50% of submissions are not pursued through review.

All manuscripts that are distributed for review have been screened by our editors. Therefore, if you receive a manuscript from us to review you can assume that it is "in scope".

When evaluating a manuscript, you need to satisfy yourself, *inter alia*, that:

- the manuscript presents a substantial piece of work – this means that it is based upon a strong set of data (e.g. a long time-series with above- average spatial and temporal sampling), sampling program, or experiment;
- the paper makes an original contribution to knowledge; e.g. by way of new data, techniques or ideas and is not only confirmatory of previous work;
- the contribution goes beyond being species or region specific;

- the title and abstract clearly reflect the contents of the paper. Note that the Journal strongly prefers titles that are declarative and inform the reader of the content-outcome vs. those that ask an open question;
- the introduction properly places the work in the context of existing knowledge, giving due recognition to previously published work;
- the methodology (including sampling, experimental design, and theory) is presented clearly and thoroughly and is scientifically and technically sound;
- the results are presented clearly and concisely and the text, tables, and figures are mutually consistent, sufficient (but not excessive), and clear;
- consider whether any parts of the manuscript could be presented as supplemental material;
- the interpretations and conclusions follow from the evidence and alternative interpretations are presented in a balanced manner;
- there are specialized parts (e.g. mathematics/statistics) on which someone else needs to comment (if so, please suggest who);
- the references cited are appropriate in terms of number and the precedents selected to support the arguments. If recommending articles that you think that the authors should cite, particularly a large number of those that you have authored, be aware of the Council of Science Editors guidelines about citation manipulation (specifically, coercion) – you will find them [here](#).
- finally, please make a clear overall recommendation to the editor about the suitability of the work for publication in the *Journal*.
 - as it stands or with minor (i.e. cosmetic) revision;
 - only if modified substantially (i.e., additional data; additional or different analysis; modified interpretations or conclusions...) along the lines proposed;
 - as a greatly distilled short research article;
 - as a “Food for Thought”, “Quo Vadimus” or “Stories from the Front Lines” essay rather than a research article (for example, if the hypothesis proposed is reasonable and provocative but not yet well-founded);
 - not at all.

Assessment of the Journal’s non-traditional article types - Food for Thought, Quo Vadimus and Stories from the Front Lines – should recognize that they are not standard research articles. What is presented in these article types can be provocative and contrarian, but must be scholarly, well-founded and novel in some way (e.g. a new «take» on a topic).

A good review is a creative document that provides constructive comments to help authors improve and strengthen their contribution. In addition to identifying shortcomings, a reviews needs to provide constructive guidance to the author for improving the work and its presentation. Comments in such reviews are best formulated in a helpful manner, even if the paper is not deemed suitable for publication. Harshly-worded comments and/or *ad hominem* attacks on the authors are not acceptable. For general guidance on the roles and responsibilities of reviewers, and about how to write a good review, see the Resources section at the end of this document.

Publication style and format should not influence the decision other than as a generic comment, e.g. the grammar of the text needs attention. It is also helpful to both author and editors if the strong points of the paper as well as its weak ones are highlighted. Note that a positive evaluation without a clear and substantive explanation and rationale does not help editors in making a final evaluation of the worthiness of the work for publication.

Some reviewers prefer to return manuscripts in electronic form, with recommendations and comments made in “Track Changes” mode. However, please note that such files

can contain personal information such as your name and organization. To remove this: (i) on the Tools menu, click Options, then click the Security tab; (ii) select the Remove personal information from file properties on save check box, and (iii) Save the document.

The Scholar One manuscript processing software allows reviewers to make general comments as well as detailed comments (both of which are made available to the author, and to the other reviewers (in blind copy). Recommendations and comments to the editor alone are also possible (not passed on to the author). Please make use of this when submitting your review.

Note that unpublished manuscripts are the intellectual property of the authors or their employers, meaning that confidentiality should be respected throughout the review process.

Artificial intelligence should not be used to assist in the review of manuscripts. Under no circumstance should reviewers upload a manuscript, associated files, a description of the manuscript, or your reviewer comments to any Artificial Intelligence tools such as Chat GPT as doing so would violate the confidentiality agreement between the authors and the journal.

The *Journal* applies a peer review process under which the reviewer is anonymous to the authors. Nonetheless, you may append your name to your review if you wish. If you choose to remain anonymous, avoid comments to the authors that might serve as clues to your identity (e.g. suggesting that they cite a long list of your own articles).

We appreciate your willingness to provide your expertise to the authors and the *Journal*. In that regard, and in an attempt to increase the visibility of the quality control process in science, we would be pleased to send a letter to your Department Head, and/or administrator, recognizing your assistance in this essential task. If you would like us to do this, please send your request, including the name and contact information of the person to whom you would like the letter sent, to Lynsey Rowland at the ICES JMS editorial office (ices.editorialoffice@oup.com).

Resources

[European Association of Science Editors list of resources where you can obtain training in peer review](#)

[European Association of Science Editors peer review toolkit](#)

[Committee on Publication Ethics guidelines for peer reviewers](#)

[Council of Science Editors, roles and responsibilities of reviewers](#)