Peer Review Guidelines

2025 – 2027

CRCNA
DEVELOPING NORTHERN AUSTRALIA

Australian Government
Department of Industry,
Science and Resources

Cooperative Research
Centres Program

Peer review guidelines

This document provides an overview of the Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia's Peer Review Guidelines. This includes:

- Peer review principles

- Code of Conduct

- Reviewing the document, report or journal: questions for consideration

Peer review ensures the CRCNA's funding is spent on the highest quality research which advances knowledge and benefits the community.

The CRCNA expects all final project reports and executive summaries (outputs), journals articles or book chapters prepared as part of the research activities to have undergone a peer review before being submitted as a final, publish-ready version.

The person/s conducting the peer review must be named within the final report (output) and the onus is on the project/reporting lead to organise a suitable peer reviewer/s. This may include:

- the project's Steering Committee, provided they are not directly benefitting from or are involved in the research project
- peer/s from within the same or from an external tertiary or training facility provided they are not directly benefitting from or are involved in the research project
- any person/s as agreed by the CRCNA

Peer review principles

The CRCNA has agreed on six principles underpinning peer review. These are based on the principles outlined by the Global Research Council and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (NHMR 2018).

1. **Expert assessment:**

   - reviewers should possess knowledge and expertise in the broad context of the research field
   - be able to assess specific methodologies and objectives of an application
   - consider research that challenges, or changes accepted ways of thinking, which may include innovative, interdisciplinary or collaborative research

2. **Transparency of the review process:**

   - the reviewer/s agree to the publication of their name/s within the document being reviewed. For example: "… *comments provided by Dr John Smith, ABC University, Townsville, QLD…*"
   - the publication author/s will receive appropriate feedback from reviewer/s.

3. **Impartiality:**

   - assessments must be free from bias achieved through strict conflict of interest policies, assessor training and rigorous processes
   - maintain professionalism in the tone of their comments, ensuring that peer reviews are as constructive as possible

4. **Confidentiality:**

   - reviewers must keep all material confidential, including intellectual property (IP) and data.

5. **Integrity and ethical considerations:**

   - responsible conduct of research to maintain society's trust in science.

6. **Gender, equality and diversity:**

   - the quality of the review process will be enhanced by incorporating the vast talents and resources offered from underrepresented groups across society.

Peer reviewer code of conduct

The peer review process is a vital component of scholarly publishing, and we really appreciate the time and effort reviewers contribute towards this. To help ensure that peer review is constructive and beneficial to authors, readers and other reviewers, we ask that reviewers:

- **Read the article fully –** please read the full text of the article and view all associated figures, tables and data.

- **Be thorough –** a peer review report should discuss the article in full as well as individual points and should demonstrate your understanding of the article.

- **Be specific –** your comments should contain as much detail as possible, with references where appropriate, so the authors are able to fully address the issue.

- **Be constructive in your criticism –** do not hesitate to include any concerns or criticisms you may have in your review, however, please do so in a constructive and respectful manner.

- **Avoid derogatory comments or tone –** review as you wish to be reviewed and ensure that your comments focus on the scientific content of the article in question rather than the authors themselves.

Reviewing the document, report or article

Here are overall questions to consider when reviewing a document, report or article.

Referencing

- Is the work clearly and accurately presented and does it cite the current literature? References should be relevant, recent and readily retrievable.
- Are enough references cited for providing a background to the research?
- Are there published studies that show similar or dissimilar trends that should be discussed?

Presentation

- Is the paper free of typographical and grammatical errors?

- Are the results interesting and important to researchers in relevant fields?

- Does it provide enough information and in-depth discussion?

- Is there any critical information missing?

- Are important parts of the argument poorly supported?

- Is the work original and does it contain new results that significantly advance the research field, or does it show only incremental advance over prior research results?

- Has the paper already been published or considered for other publication?

- Is the length and format of the paper appropriate?

- Are the figures and tables easily readable, correct and informative?

Methodology

- Are enough details of methods and analysis provided to allow replication by others?

- If applicable, is the statistical analysis and its interpretation appropriate?

- Are all the source data underlying the results available to ensure full reproducibility?

- Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the results?

Recommendations and conclusions

- Is the conclusion logically supported by the obtained results?

- Are the recommendations sounds and generally supported by industry and stakeholders?

Peer review feedback report

Some project teams may find the [CRCNA Peer review feedback form](#) useful if they do not already have a process or report template available. **Note:** while the peer review report is required, you do not need to use this form if your institution or organisation has its own processes in place.

Please ensure a copy of the peer review report is attached to your final research/project output checklist.

Below is intended to be used as a guide on what a peer review feedback report should seek to address.

REPORT SUMMARY - *Begin your review with a concise summary of the essential points of the paper both for the CRCNA's use and to ensure that you have understood the work*

- Briefly summarise what the paper is about and what the findings are
- Try to put the findings of the paper into the context of the existing literature and current knowledge
- Indicate the significance of the work and if it is novel or mainly confirmatory
- Indicate the work's strengths, its quality and completeness
- State any major flaws or weaknesses and note any special considerations. For example, if previously held theories are being overlooked

EVALUATION OF THE REPORT - *Evaluate the quality of the work.*

Major Issues

- Are there any major flaws? State what they are and what the severity of their impact is on the paper
- Has similar work already been published without the authors acknowledging this?
- Are the authors presenting findings that challenge current thinking? Is the evidence they present strong enough to prove their case? Have they cited all the relevant work that would contradict their thinking and addressed it appropriately?
- If major revisions are required, try to indicate clearly what they are
- Are there any major presentational problems? Are figures & tables, language and manuscript structure all clear enough for you to accurately assess the work?
- Are there places where meaning is ambiguous? How can this be corrected?
- Are the correct references cited? If not, which should be cited instead/also? Are citations excessive, limited, or biased?
- Are there any factual, numerical or unit errors? If so, what are they?
- Are all tables and figures appropriate, enough, and correctly labelled? If not, say which are not

EVALUATION OF THE REPORT - *Evaluate the quality of the work.*

Minor Issues

- Are there places where meaning is ambiguous? How can this be corrected?
- Are the correct references cited? If not, which should be cited instead/also? Are citations excessive, limited, or biased?
- Are there any factual, numerical or unit errors? If so, what are they?
- Are all tables and figures appropriate, enough, and correctly labelled? If not, say which are not

Criticisms and confidential comments to the CRCNA

The CRCNA provides reviewers the option to provide some confidential comments to the CRCNA Project Manager. This is where the reviewer can communicate issues like suspected plagiarism, fraud, unattributed work, unethical procedures, duplicate publication, bias or other conflicts of interest.

RECOMMENDATION - *Reviewers are asked to indicate their recommendation (e.g. accept, reject, revise and resubmit, etc.).*

Recommending acceptance

Recommending Revision - please provide feedback on issues which need to be addressed.

Recommending Rejection – please contact the CRCNA Project Manager before providing feedback to the project team or report author.

Useful websites for more information.

https://f1000research.com/for-referees/guidelines#gfr

https://authorservices.wiley.com/Reviewers/journal-reviewers/how-to-perform-a-peer-review/step-by-step-guide-to-reviewing-a-manuscript.html

http://publicationethics.org/files/Peer%20review%20guidelines.pdf