

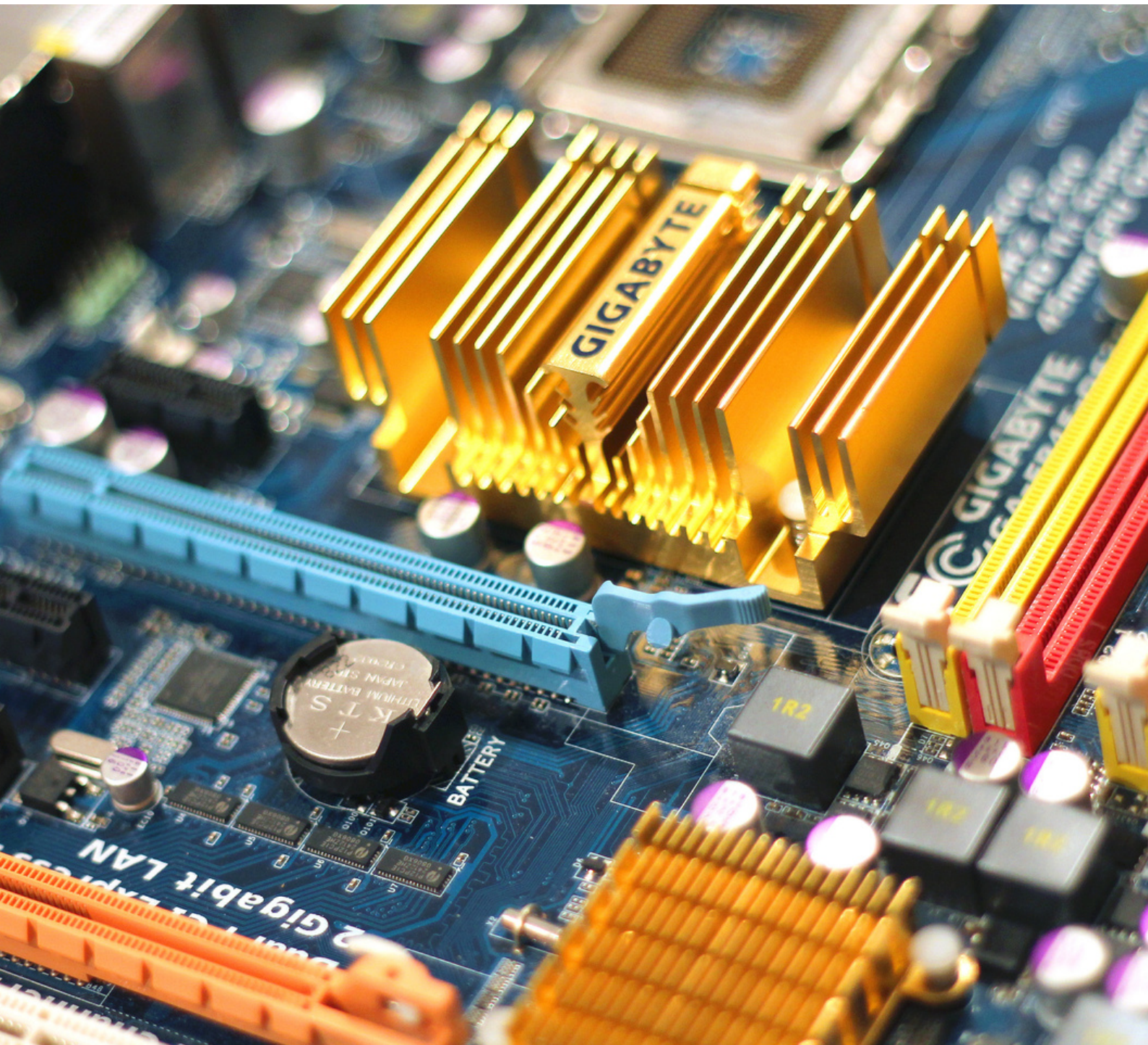
Guidelines for

# Reviewing for NIJOCET

NIJOCET

NIGERIAN JOURNAL OF  
COMPUTING, ENGINEERING &  
TECHNOLOGY

ESTABLISHED 2021



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NIJOCET is a publication of the faculty of computing, Federal University Dutse.

# NIJOCET

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Peer Reviewing for NIJO CET – an overview

Peer review, also known as refereeing, is a collaborative process that allows independent experts in the same field of research to evaluate and comment on manuscript submissions. The outcome of a peer review gives authors feedback to improve their work and, critically, allows the editor to assess the paper's suitability for publication.

Peer reviewers should:

- respond in a reasonable time-frame, especially if they cannot do the review, and without intentional delay.
- declare if they do not have the subject expertise required to carry out the review or if they are able to assess only part of the manuscript, outlining clearly the areas for which they have the relevant expertise.
- only agree to review a manuscript if they are fairly confident they can return a review within the proposed or mutually agreed time-frame, informing the journal promptly if they require an extension.
- declare any potentially conflicting or competing interests (which may, for example, be it personal, financial, intellectual, professional, political or religious), seeking advice from the journal if they are unsure whether something constitutes a relevant interest.
- review afresh any manuscript they have previously reviewed for another journal as it may have changed between the two submissions and the journals' criteria for evaluation and acceptance may be different.
- ensure suggestions for alternative reviewers are based on suitability and not influenced by personal considerations or made with the intention of the manuscript receiving a specific outcome (either positive or negative).
- not agree to review a manuscript just to gain sight of it with no intention of submitting a review.
- decline to review if they feel unable to provide a fair and unbiased review.
- decline to review if they have been involved with any of the work in the manuscript or its reporting.
- decline to review if asked to review a manuscript that is very similar to one they have in preparation or under consideration at another journal.

## NIJO CET at a glance

NIJO CET will be published through a single-blind peer reviewed process and welcomes submissions of high-quality original research articles and method papers presenting cutting-edge scientific advances as well as review articles on current topics in all areas of computing and engineering.

The journal will particularly invite submission of articles that deal with subjects on the interface of computational sciences and Engineering and thus connect both disciplines.

For additional information and updates, please refer to:

Editor- Dr Salim Ahmad or

Deputy Editor- Dr Aminu Abdullahi

# 2. Step by step guide to reviewing for NIJOCET

When you receive a review request, you should be sent a copy of the paper's abstract to help you decide whether you wish to do the review. Try to respond to invitations promptly - it will prevent delays. It is also important at this stage to declare any potential Conflict of Interest.

“Conflict of interest (COI) exists when there is a divergence between an individual’s private interests (competing interests) and his or her responsibilities to scientific and publishing activities such that a reasonable observer might wonder if the individual’s behavior or judgment was motivated by considerations of his or her competing interests” WAME.

”Reviewers should declare their conflicts of interest and recuse themselves from the peer-review process if a conflict exists”. ICMJE

NIJOCET operates a formal peer-review process which requires reviewers to address specific questions in your review via a questionnaire. You would also rate the manuscript on various attributes using a scorecard.

## REVIEWERS REPORT

## FAIRNESS

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In evaluating a manuscript, reviewers should focus on the following:

- Originality
- Contribution to the field
- Technical quality
- Clarity of presentation
- Depth of research

Reviewers should also:

- Observe that the author(s) have followed the instruction for authors, editorial policies and publication ethics.
- Observe that the appropriate journal’s reporting guidelines is followed
- The report should be accurate, objective, constructive and unambiguous. Comments should be backed by facts and constructive arguments with regards to the content of the manuscript. Reviewers should avoid using “hostile, derogatory and accusatory comments” PIE.
- Reviewers should not rewrite the manuscript; however necessary corrections and suggestions for improvements should be made.

- Reviews should be honest and objective. Reviewers should not be influenced by:
  - The origin of the manuscript
  - Religious, political or cultural viewpoint of the author
  - Gender, race, ethnicity or citizenry of the author

Reviewers’ recommendation should be either:

- Accept
- Requires minor corrections
- Requires moderate revision
- Requires major revision
- Not suitable for the journal. Submit to another publication such as (suggest a journal):
- Reject
- Recommendation should be backed with constructive arguments and facts based on the content of the manuscript.

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## POSITIVE COMMENTS

- The manuscript is well written in an engaging and lively style.
- The level is appropriate to our readership.
- The subject is very important. It’s currently something of a “hot topic”, and is one to which the author has made significant contributions.
- This manuscript ticks all the boxes we have in mind for an X paper. I have no hesitation in recommending that it be accepted for publication after a few typos and other minor details have been attended to.
- Given the complexity involved, the author has produced many positive and welcome outcomes. The literature review offers a useful overview of current research and policy, and the resulting bibliography provides a very useful resource for current practitioners.
- This is a well-written article that identifies an important gap.

## CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

- In the “Discussion” section I would have wished to see more information on...
- I don’t think that this article contains enough robust data to evidence the statement made on page X, lines Y–Z.
- I would strongly advise the author to rewrite their introduction, analysis, and discussion to produce a more contextualized introduction to...
- There is an interesting finding in this research about.... However, there is insufficient discussion of exactly what this finding means and its implications.
- This discussion could be expanded to explain...
- The author could strengthen the paper by...
- The paper would be significantly improved with the addition of more details about...
- The abstract is very lengthy and goes into detailed accounts that are best suited for the article’s main discussion sections. As such, I suggest the author reduces this section to keep only the most important elements.
- To make this paper publishable, the author needs to respond to the following substantive points...

## ALTERATIONS

- This paper would benefit from some closer proofreading. It includes many linguistic errors (e.g. agreement of verbs) that at times make it difficult to follow. It may be useful to engage a professional English language editor following a restructure of the paper.
- The paper would benefit from stylistic changes to the way it has been written for a stronger, clearer, and more compelling argument.
- There are a few sentences that need rephrasing for clarity.

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# 3. Considerations for Reviewers

Try to bear in mind the following questions - they'll help you form your overall impression:

- What is the main question addressed by the research? Is it relevant and interesting?
- How original is the topic? What does it add to the subject area compared with other published material?
- Is the paper well written? Is the text clear and easy to read?
- Are the conclusions consistent with the evidence and arguments presented? Do they address the main question posed?
- If the author is disagreeing significantly with the current academic consensus, do they have a substantial case? If not, what would be required to make their case credible?
- If the paper includes tables or figures, what do they add to the paper? Do they aid understanding or are they superfluous?

## Major flaws in information

If methodology is less of an issue, it's often a good idea to look at the data tables, figures or images first. Especially in science research, it's all about the information gathered. If there are critical flaws in this, it's very likely the manuscript will need to be rejected. Such issues include:

- Insufficient data
- Unclear data tables
- Contradictory data that either are not self-consistent or disagree with the conclusions
- Confirmatory data that adds little, if anything, to current understanding - unless strong arguments for such repetition are made

If you find a major problem, note your reasoning and clear supporting evidence (including citations).

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## Language and structure

Not every submission is well written. Part of your role is to make sure that the text's meaning is clear.

Editors say, "If a manuscript has many English language and editing issues, please do not try and fix it. If it is too bad, note that in your review and it should be up to the authors to have the manuscript edited."

If the article is difficult to understand, you should have rejected it already. However, if the language is poor but you understand the core message, see if you can suggest improvements to fix the problem:

- Are there certain aspects that could be communicated better, such as parts of the discussion?
- Should the authors consider resubmitting to the same journal after language improvements?
- Would you consider looking at the paper again once these issues are dealt with?

## Grammar and Punctuation

Your primary role is judging the research content. Don't spend time polishing grammar or spelling. Editors will make sure that the text is at a high standard before publication. However, if you spot grammatical errors that affect clarity of meaning, then it's important to highlight these. Expect to suggest such amendments - it's rare for a manuscript to pass review with no corrections.

A 2010 study of nursing journals found that 79% of recommendations by reviewers were influenced by grammar and writing style (Shattel, et al., 2010).

## Clarity

If you find yourself looking at a piece of information from which you cannot discern a story, then you should ask for improvements in presentation. This could be an issue with titles, labels, statistical notation or image quality.

Where information is clear, you should check that:

- The results seem plausible, in case there is an error in data gathering
- The trends you can see support the paper's discussion and conclusions
- There are sufficient data. For example, in studies carried out over time are there sufficient data points to support the trends described by the author?

You should also check whether images have been edited or manipulated to emphasize the story they tell. This may be appropriate but only if authors report on how the image has been edited (e.g. by highlighting certain parts of an image). Where you feel that an image has been edited or manipulated without explanation, you should highlight this in a confidential comment to the editor in your report.

A 2010 study of nursing journals found that 79% of recommendations by reviewers were influenced by grammar and writing style (Shattel, et al., 2010).

## Originality

Originality and topicality can only be established in the light of recent authoritative research. For example, it's impossible to argue that there is a conflict in current understanding by referencing articles that are 10 years old.

Authors may make the case that a topic hasn't been investigated in several years and that new research is required. This point is only valid if researchers can point to recent developments in data gathering techniques or to research in indirectly related fields that suggest the topic needs revisiting. Clearly, authors can only do this by referencing recent literature. Obviously, where older research is seminal or where aspects of the methodology rely upon it, then it is perfectly appropriate for authors to cite some older papers.

Editors say, "Is the report providing new information; is it novel or just confirmatory of well-known outcomes?"

### Aims

It's common for the introduction to end by stating the research aims. By this point you should already have a good impression of them - if the explicit aims come as a surprise, then the introduction needs improvement.

## Materials and Methods

Academic research should be replicable, repeatable and robust - and follow best practice.

### Replicable Research

This makes sufficient use of:

- Control experiments
- Repeated analyses
- Repeated experiments
- Sampling

These are used to make sure observed trends are not due to chance and that the same experiment could be repeated by other researchers - and result in the same outcome. Statistical analyses will not be sound if methods are not replicable. Where research is not replicable, the paper should be recommended for rejection.

## Reproducibility

These give enough detail so that other researchers are able to carry out the same research. For example, equipment used or sampling methods should all be described in detail so that others could follow the same steps. Where methods are not detailed enough, it's usual to ask for the methods section to be revised.

This has enough data points to make sure the data are reliable. If there are insufficient data, it might be appropriate to recommend revision. You should also consider whether there is any in-built bias not nullified by the control experiments.

### Best Practice

During these checks you should keep in mind best practice:

- Standard guidelines were followed (e.g. the CONSORT Statement for reporting randomized trials)
- The health and safety of all participants in the study was not compromised
- Ethical standards were maintained

If the research fails to reach relevant best practice standards, it's usual to recommend rejection. What's more, you don't then need to read any further.

## Results

This section should tell a coherent story - What happened? What was discovered or confirmed?

Certain patterns of good reporting need to be followed by the author:

- They should start by describing in simple terms what the data show
- They should make reference to statistical analyses, such as significance or goodness of fit
- Once described, they should evaluate the trends observed and explain the significance of the results to wider understanding. This can only be done by referencing published research
- The outcome should be a critical analysis of the data collected

Discussion should always, at some point, gather all the information together into a single whole. Authors should describe and discuss the overall story formed. If there are gaps or inconsistencies in the story, they should address these and suggest ways future research might confirm the findings or take the research forward.

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## Referencing and Citation

You will need to check referencing for accuracy, adequacy and balance.

Where a cited article is central to the author's argument, you should check the accuracy and format of the reference - and bear in mind different subject areas may use citations differently. Otherwise, it's the editor's role to exhaustively check the reference section for accuracy and format.

You should consider if the referencing is adequate:

- Are important parts of the argument poorly supported?
- Are there published studies that show similar or dissimilar trends that should be discussed?
- If a manuscript only uses half the citations typical in its field, this may be an indicator that referencing should be improved - but don't be guided solely by quantity
- References should be relevant, recent and readily retrievable

Check for a well-balanced list of references that is:

- Helpful to the reader
- Fair to competing authors
- Not over-reliant on self-citation
- Gives due recognition to the initial discoveries and related work that led to the work under assessment

You should be able to evaluate whether the article meets the criteria for balanced referencing without looking up every reference.

## False Citation

False citation is falsely citing a source or attributing work to a source from which the referenced material was not obtained. A simple example of this would be footnoting a paragraph and citing a work that was never utilized.

The following represent the most common occurrences of false references:

- entries contained in the end notes listing are not cited within the body of the text
- information contained within the reference is fabricated
- the entire reference is fabricated
- citing something that is topically relevant but which just doesn't actually support your point.
- reference to perfectly good science that has little or nothing to do with the point.

Generally, moderate amount of self-citation is often inevitable. But excessive self-citation is considered rather crass and unprofessional.

**NIJOCET stands firmly against all forms of coercive citation.**

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## Plagiarism

If you find - or already knew of - a very similar paper, this may be because the author overlooked it in their own literature search. Or it may be because it is very recent or published in a journal slightly outside their usual field.

You may feel you can advise the author how to emphasize the novel aspects of their own study, so as to better differentiate it from similar research. If so, you may ask the author to discuss their aims and results, or modify their conclusions, in light of the similar article. Of course, the research similarities may be so great that they render the work unoriginal and you have no choice but to recommend rejection.

"It's very helpful when a reviewer can point out recent similar publications on the same topic by other groups, or that the authors have already published some data elsewhere." (Editor feedback)

### Suspected Concern

If you suspect plagiarism, including self-plagiarism, but cannot recall or locate exactly what is being plagiarized, notify the editor of your suspicion and ask for guidance.

Most editors have access to software that can check for plagiarism.

Editors are not out to police every paper, but when plagiarism is discovered during peer review it can be properly addressed ahead of publication. If plagiarism is discovered only after publication, the consequences are worse for both authors and readers, because a retraction may be necessary.

For detailed guidelines see COPE's Ethical guidelines for reviewers and Wiley's Best Practice Guidelines on Publishing Ethics.

### 8. Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

After the detailed read-through, you will be in a position to advise whether the title, abstract and key words are optimized for search purposes. In order to be effective, good SEO terms will reflect the aims of the research.

A clear title and abstract will improve the paper's search engine rankings and will influence whether the user finds and then decides to navigate to the main article. The title should contain the relevant SEO terms early on. This has a major effect on the impact of a paper, since it helps it appear in search results. A poor abstract can then lose the reader's interest and undo the benefit of an effective title - whilst the paper's abstract may appear in search results, the potential reader may go no further.

So ask yourself, while the abstract may have seemed adequate during earlier checks, does it:

- Do justice to the manuscript in this context?
- Highlight important findings sufficiently?
- Present the most interesting data?

Editors say, "Does the Abstract highlight the important findings of the study?"

# 4. Citation Trading

NIJOCET rejects unethical citation practices such as citation trading and coercive citation.

As a reviewer, your recommendations can include warnings of suspected citation trading and or other unethical citation practices.

Citation cartels are defined as groups of authors that cite each other disproportionately more than they do other groups of authors that work on the same subject.

Reviewers can detect citation trading using the following:

- High citation from a small number, often just two or three, journals.
- High citation from a few authors
- Overlap of editors in the journals and the cited authors

Coercive citation is primarily targeted at younger researchers with less senior academic ranks and at papers with a smaller number of authors in order to have the greatest effect on the impact factor.

NIJOCET rejects the use of honorary authorship.

An honorary authorship specifically refers to the inclusion of individuals as authors on manuscripts, or grant proposals, even though they did not contribute to the research effort.

NIJOCET encourages reviewers to report suspected cases of citation stacking which refers to anomalous citation activity that sees a disproportionate number of citations being exchanged between two or more journals.

in stacking, there is typically a 'donor' journal (the title giving the citations) and a recipient journal (the title receiving the citations). Such patterns can be evidence of a 'citation cartel', whereby groups of journals attempt to inflate their metrics through donating and receiving citations without inflating their self-citation rate.

# 5. Reporting Review

Your review should ultimately help the author improve their article. So be polite, honest and clear. You should also try to be objective and constructive, not subjective and destructive.

You should also:

- Write clearly and so you can be understood by people whose first language is not English
- Avoid complex or unusual words, especially ones that would even confuse native speakers
- Number your points and refer to page and line numbers in the manuscript when making specific comments
- If you have been asked to only comment on specific parts or aspects of the manuscript, you should indicate clearly which these are
- Treat the author's work the way you would like your own to be treated

## Criticism and comments

NIJOCET gives reviewers the option to provide some confidential comments to editors.

This is where editors will want reviewers to state their recommendation - see the next section - but otherwise this area is best reserved for communicating malpractice such as suspected plagiarism, fraud, unattributed work, unethical procedures, duplicate publication, bias or other conflicts of interest.

However, this doesn't give reviewers permission to 'backstab' the author. Authors can't see this feedback and are unable to give their side of the story unless the editor asks them to. So in the spirit of fairness, write comments to editors as though authors might read them too.

Reviewers should bear in mind that NIJOCET discourages recommendations included in any comments to authors, as this can cause editors difficulty later.

As a reviewer you are to indicate your recommendation (e.g. accept, reject, revise and resubmit, etc.) from a fixed-choice list and then to enter your comments into a separate text box.

### Recommending Acceptance

If you're recommending acceptance, give details outlining why, and if there are any areas that could be improved. Don't just give a short, cursory remark such as 'great, accept'. See [Improving the Manuscript](#)

### Recommending Revision

Where improvements are needed, a recommendation for major or minor revision is typical. You are choose to state whether you opt in or out of the post-revision review too. If recommending revision, state specific changes you feel need to be made. The author can then reply to each point in turn. NIJOCET offers the option to recommend rejection with the possibility of resubmission – this is most relevant where substantial, major revision is necessary.

What can reviewers do to help? "Be clear in their comments to the author (or editor) which points are absolutely critical if the paper is given an opportunity for revision.

### Recommending Rejection

If recommending rejection or major revision, state this clearly in your review.

## Rejection Guidelines

If a reviewer suggests a rejection, but her/his comments are not detailed or helpful, it does not help the editor in making a decision.

In your recommendations for the author, you should:

- Give constructive feedback describing ways that they could improve the research
- Keep the focus on the research and not the author. This is an extremely important part of your job as a reviewer
- Avoid making critical confidential comments to the editor while being polite and encouraging to the author - the latter may not understand why their manuscript has been rejected. Also, they won't get feedback on how to improve their research and it could trigger an appeal

Remember to give constructive criticism even if recommending rejection. This helps developing researchers improve their work and explains to the editor why you felt the manuscript should not be published.

When the comments seem really positive, but the recommendation is rejection.

It puts the editor in a tough position of having to reject a paper when the comments make it sound like a great paper.

# Your Review Checklist

## Title

- Does it express clearly what the manuscript is about?
- Does it highlight the importance of the study?
- Does it contain any unnecessary description?

## Abstract

- Is it a short and clear summary of the aims, key methods, important findings and conclusions?
- Does it include enough information to stand alone?
- Does it contain unnecessary information?

## Introduction

- Does it clearly summarize the current state of the topic?
- Does it address the limitations of current knowledge in this field?
- Does it clearly explain why the study was necessary?
- Does it clearly define the aim of the study and is this consistent with the rest of the manuscript?
- Is the research question clear and appropriate?

## Methodology

- Are the study design and methods appropriate for the research question?
- Is there enough detail to repeat the experiments?
- Is it clear how samples were collected or how participants were recruited?
- Is there any potential bias in the sample or in the recruitment of participants?
- Are the correct controls/ validation included?
- Are any potential confounding factors considered?
- Has any randomization been done correctly?
- Is the time-frame of the study sufficient to see outcomes?
- Is there sufficient power and appropriate statistics?
- Do you have any ethical concerns?

## Method Articles?

- Is the new method clearly described?
- Is it possible to replicate the new method?
- Is there a rationale for why the new method is needed?
- Is the new method compared to existing approaches?
- Usually there should not be any experimental results, other than to demonstrate the utility of the methods.

## Review Articles?

- Is there any content which has been previously presented in a review?
- Does it focus on recent advances in research?
- Is it a balanced and unbiased overview of current understanding?
- Are any recent or important references missing?
- Is it too focused on the author's own research?
- Is the interpretation and presentation of results of previous studies accurate and precise?
- Has it a valuable contribution to the research field?
- Is it understandable for non-expert readers?

## Results

- Are the results presented clearly and accurately?
- Do the results presented match the methods?
- Have all the relevant data been included?
- Is there any risk of patients or participants being identified?
- Is the data described in the text consistent with the data in the figures and tables?

## Discussion

- Do the authors logically explain the findings?
- Do the authors compare the findings with current findings in the research field?
- Are the implications of the findings for future research and potential applications discussed?
- Are the conclusions supported by the data presented?
- Are any limitations of the study discussed?
- Are any contradictory data discussed?

## Tables and Figures

- Are data presented in a clear and appropriate manner?
- Is the presentation of tables and figures consistent with the description in text?
- Do the figure legends and table headings clearly explain what is shown?
- Do the figures and tables include measures of uncertainty, such as standard error or confidence intervals, where required as well as the sample size?
- Do you have any concerns about the manipulation of data?

## References

- Are there any key references missing?
- Do the authors cite the initial discoveries where suitable?
- Are there places where the authors cite a review but should cite the original paper?
- Do the cited studies represent current knowledge?

# Conclusion

This guide is designed to provide an overview for NIJO CET reviewers.

As NIJO CET is constantly improving, so would our editorial policies.

Reviewers can contact NIJO CET's editorial committee for any clarification.

Dr Salim Ahmad  
Editor  
NIJO CET

Dr Aminu Abdullahi  
Deputy Editor  
NIJO CET



# NIJOCET

NIJOCET is a publication of the Faculty of  
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Federal University Dutse

## NIJOCET OFFICES

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