

# Guidelines for Reviewers

The Editorial Committee on Journal of JSCE

## 1. Purpose of peer review

The purpose of peer review is to objectively evaluate the content of submitted manuscripts (academic papers, technical reports, technical notes, and committee reports) and to provide material for determining whether they are appropriate for publication in the Journal of JSCE. For this reason, please describe any problems or errors found during the peer review process that you would like to see revised.

## 2. Points for the reviewer to note

- (1) The reviewer must be mindful that the manuscript is pre-publication research or technical results, or a report, etc. and must maintain the confidentiality of the contents of the manuscript and fully protect the rights of the author. Therefore, reviewers are to conduct the review individually, and are not allowed to show the manuscript to others or discuss the contents of the manuscript with others to ask their opinions.
- (2) In order to publish the submitted research or technical results to JSCE members as soon as possible, reviewers should, in principle, reply to the Editorial Committee within four weeks after the request is made.
- (3) The purpose of peer review is to provide materials for determining whether or not a manuscript is acceptable for publication and it is not intended to improve the manuscript. The responsibility for the content of a manuscript should fundamentally be borne by the authors, and the worth of that content should be determined by the readers at large. Reviewers must be careful not to impose their subjective opinions and preferences on authors, or to expect manuscripts to be perfect in format and writing style, and thus miss out on manuscripts that show great promise for future development or are actually useful.

## 3. Peer review methods (How to fill out the peer review report)

### 3.1 Decision about eligibility for publication

Please evaluate the manuscript as eligible for publication, needs minor revision, needs major revision, or not acceptable for publication by referring to the evaluation of each item in 3.2 and the academic papers, technical reports, technical notes, and committee reports published in the Journal of JSCE and Proceedings of the Japan Society of Civil Engineers to date. The Editorial Committee members in charge of the manuscript may request that the manuscript is reviewed again if they deem it necessary. This decision about eligibility for publication will not be made known to the author(s).

### 3.2 Evaluation

The reviewers will evaluate the submitted manuscript in light of the following points: how it is positioned within its field, whether it includes content that is created from a novel perspective, the extent of the contribution made by the research or technical results achieved.

**Manuscript categories:** In principle, submitted manuscripts should be unpublished, and the categories

and contents are as follows:

- **Academic papers:** Manuscripts present theoretical or empirical research or technical results, or show integrated findings into these results, be original, and have a complete structure as an academic paper.
- **Technical reports:** Manuscripts present investigations, planning, design, construction, site measurement and related subjects covering useful technological and engineering achievements.
- **Technical notes:** 1) Manuscripts cover new research or technical results and are not necessarily written in an organized structure such as an academic paper or technical report.  
2) Manuscripts raise issues or present tentative studies, or give opinions on these assumptions.  
3) Manuscripts complement or give corrections to already published academic papers or technical reports.  
4) Manuscripts present test or measurement data or new tables or figures that can be used for reference in research or technological matters.
- **Committee reports:** Manuscripts present the investigative or research activities and their results of the permanent committees on investigations and research and the committees established for temporary purposes, as defined by the JSCE Rules and the JSCE Committee Regulations, to systematize research or technology in the field and to present future issues and new prospects. Manuscripts should be submitted under the name of the committee.

- (1) **Novelty:** The content of the work must not be easily derived from the public domain, already published, or known.

The following items will be evaluated as novelty.

- a) Shows originality in subject matter, content, and methodology.
- b) Raises important issues for academia and society.
- c) Contributes significantly to the elucidation of the phenomenon.
- d) Makes new contributions to the education of engineers and the development of human resources.
- e) Presents valuable technical investigations and experience in planning, designing, construction, etc., that are full of originality and ingenuity.
- f) Contains valuable results of difficult research or technical investigations.
- g) Comprehensively organizes and presents new findings and perspectives on timely subjects.
- h) Other

- (2) **Usefulness:** The contents must be valuable in some academic, engineering, or other practical sense.

The following items are considered as usefulness.

- a) The subject matter and content are timely and useful, or raise useful issues.
- b) The applicability, usefulness, and developmental potential of the research or technical results are significant.
- c) The research or technical results give useful information.

- d) It provides an excellent systematization of research or technology in the field, and gives an outlook for the future.
- e) The research or technical results have value that could be incorporated into practice.
- f) It is worth incorporating into future experiments, investigations, planning, design, construction, and so on.
- g) It is useful as a presentation of an issue, a tentative study, or an opinion on it.
- h) Data from experiments and actual measurements contribute as a reference for research, construction and so on.
- i) New tables or figures are useful for application.
- j) It includes useful results for educational planning and human resource development efforts.
- k) Other

- (3) **Completeness:** The content should be written in a concise, clear, and plain manner so that readers can understand it.

In this case, a sophisticated writing style is not required. The following points should be considered in the evaluation.

- a) The overall structure is appropriate.
  - b) The objectives and results are clear.
  - c) The relevance to previous research or technology is clear.
  - d) The style of written expression is appropriate.
  - e) Figures and tables are designed to be easily understood.
  - f) It is not verbose overall.
  - g) The number of figures and tables, etc., is appropriate.
  - h) Other
- (4) **Credibility:** The content should be free of serious errors and credible from the reader's point of view. The evaluation of credibility does not require the reviewer to go through the calculation process step-by-step, etc. The following points should be considered for objective evaluation.
- a) Are important works cited without omission and fairly evaluated?
  - b) Have the results been evaluated and compared with existing technologies and research results, and have appropriate conclusions been drawn?
  - c) Are the conditions for experimentation, analysis, or planning and design clearly described?
  - d) Other

### 3.3 Reasons for the decision

If the decision is “not acceptable for publication,” be sure to select a reason from the Reasons section and provide specific details in a clear and concise manner in the “Reason for the decision” section.

Even in cases other than “not acceptable for publication,” if there are reasons for the decision that are difficult to write in the “Comments to the author” section that will be sent directly to the author(s), please write them in the “Reasons for the decision” section. Please note that the reasons for this decision will not be made known directly to the author(s).

### **For academic papers or technical reports**

#### **I. Errors**

- a) The paper or report has objective and intrinsic error(s) in the theory or thought process.
- b) The paper or report has errors in calculation or data organization.
- c) The paper or report is composed by applying a clearly inappropriate theory in analyzing the phenomenon.
- d) The paper or report is composed of statements that are clearly not impartial, using only the data and works that are advantageous to the paper or report.
- e) The paper or report contains too many fundamental inadequacies that are pointed out and need revision.

#### **II. A work that has already been published elsewhere**

- f) The paper or report has clearly been published before.
- g) The paper or report is composed in serial form and cannot be recognized as an independent paper or report.
- h) The basis of the paper or report is composed by describing the research or technical results of others as if they were the author's own results.

#### **III. Low level**

- i) Commonly accepted theory is merely stated, and there is no new findings at all.
- j) It contains some useful material, but even so, it is not worth publishing as a paper or a report at all.
- k) The research or technical investigations have clearly not yet reached the stage for preparation of a paper or report.
- l) The idea is poorly conceived and only inevitable results are obtained.
- m) The research or technical content is simply an imitation of methods used in other fields and has no significance at all.

#### **IV. Overall content and policy**

- n) Policy or promotional intentions are very strong.
- o) The entire manuscript is written dogmatically with highly biased preconceptions.
- p) It is not a theoretical or empirical paper or a factual report, but merely a statement of subjective opinion.
- q) The work is too strongly colored by personal interests and has too many problems to be published in the Journal of JSCE.
- r) It is not in line with the original policy and purpose of JSCE.

### **For technical notes**

- a) There is a serious error or errors in the basis of the manuscript.
- b) There are no new findings at all.
- c) It is a completely dogmatic article and is not considered to be beneficial to the JSCE members or readers.
- d) The policy or promotional intent is obvious.

- e) It contains too many fundamental inadequacies that are pointed out and need revision.
- f) Other (Also refer to the case of papers and reports.)

### **3.4 Comments to the author**

In the “Comments to the author” section, please describe your general opinion, including any outstanding points, problematic points, or points for revision of the paper as an academic paper, technical report, technical note, or committee report. It is natural that the content will overlap with the reasons for the decision for publication or otherwise, and such overlap is acceptable. Please note that these comments will be directly conveyed to the author.

### **3.5 Recommendation for revision**

Please keep in mind that the authors are solely responsible for the content of their manuscripts and note the following points in describing the recommendation for revision. Please note that the recommendation for revision will be directly conveyed to the author.

- (a) Avoid requiring the author to add new calculations or experiments as much as possible.
- (b) Do not insist on your subjective opinions and preferences as the reviewer and require substantial changes in the structure of the manuscript, or require revisions on points where the author disagrees with the reviewer. (In the latter case, please discuss this on a discussion paper after publication of the relevant paper.)
- (c) It should be noted that reviewers are not in a position to provide research guidance to authors. However, if it is clear that the reviewer’s opinions and suggestions would improve the content of the manuscript, you may state such points.

## **4. Scope of peer review**

Reviewers do not need to consider the following items.

- (1) Problem of exceeding the specified number of pages.
- (2) Equations and calculations that are not easily understood
- (3) Whether the materials used are good or bad.
- (4) Correction of individual typographical errors (but please point out any you may notice).

Supplementary note: Applicable to peer review reports on and after January 1, 2017.