

Guidelines for Reviewers

January 1, 2026: Partially revised

The Editorial Committee of Journal of JSCE

Introduction

The peer review process of the Journal of JSCE is dependent on the professionalism of its volunteer reviewers. All reviewers are experts in the field of research; therefore, they are in the best position to judge the quality and importance of the work submitted to the Journal of JSCE. The names of the reviewers will remain anonymous to the authors, as the Journal of JSCE operates a single-anonymized review throughout the review process.

Purpose of peer review

The purpose of peer review is to objectively evaluate the content of submitted manuscripts (academic papers, technical reports, technical notes, discussions, 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.

I. Peer Review Process

1. The author submits a manuscript, which is given a unique identification number.
2. The Editorial Office checks if the manuscript's formatting and style is in accordance with the Guidelines for Authors.
3. The Editorial Office assigns a Managing Editor.
4. The Managing Editor screens the manuscript and decides whether or not to send it for full peer review. If the decision is not to send the manuscript for review, the Managing Editor will send an e-mail to notify the author of rejection.
5. If the Managing Editor decides to send the manuscript for a full peer review, the Managing Editor assigns an Editor who will be responsible for selecting external reviewers and evaluating the manuscript.
6. The Editor selects, in general, three external reviewers to evaluate the manuscript.
7. Reviewers agree to review the manuscript.
8. Reviewers submit their review comments to the Editor.
9. The Editor reviews the reviewers' reports and makes a final decision.
10. The Editor sends a signed e-mail with the decision to the author.
11. If the author is given the opportunity to revise the paper, he/she revises the paper according to the review comments and resubmits. The paper then goes through the same process above, but the Editor may choose to accept the paper without further review by the reviewers.

The Journal of JSCE expects that peer review be fair, unbiased, and timely. Decisions to accept or reject a manuscript for publication are based on the manuscript's importance to the field, originality and clarity of expression, the study's validity, and its relevance to the Journal of JSCE's aims and scope. The Chair is responsible for all decisions made about the manuscripts, and is in charge of the Editorial Committee.

The Journal of JSCE supports and adheres to guidelines and best practices including the Principles of Transparency

and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing (a joint statement by the Committee on Publication Ethics [COPE], the Directory of Open Access Journals [DOAJ], the World Association for Medical Editors [WAME], and the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association [OASPA]; <https://doaj.org/apply/transparency/>).

The points below provide general guidelines for the peer review process. Please thoroughly read the instructions and required ethics and policy statements, along with the journal instructions. If you have any questions, please contact the Editorial Office of the Journal of JSCE.

E-mail: jjsce@jsce-ml.jp

II. Obligations of Editorial Committee

- The Editorial Committee shall ensure fair management of the peer review process for submitted manuscripts in order to achieve the objectivity mentioned in the Code of Ethics for Civil Engineers.
- The Editorial Committee shall decide on the acceptance/rejection of the submitted papers without regard to the race, religion, ethnicity, gender, age, nationality, occupation, affiliation, or political conviction of the authors.
- A person who has authored or coauthored a manuscript submitted, or is involved in any conflict of interest, shall not be involved in any peer review process of the manuscript.
- The Editorial Committee shall impartially select the most suitable reviewers based on their specialty. People who may have personal bias in favor of or against an author or the subject matter of the submitted manuscript shall not be selected as reviewers.
- The Editorial Committee shall not disclose any information on the peer review process or information about the submitted manuscript and reviewers to others.

III. Ethical Responsibilities of Reviewers

The reviewers' role is to fairly determine whether the submitted manuscript is eligible for publication, in order to maintain the quality of the academic publication, and reviewers shall fulfill the following obligations.

1. Timeliness

Your review comments for new submissions are due in four (4) weeks from the day you agreed to review the manuscript. If you are unable to meet the deadline, please contact the Editorial Office immediately so that the editor can decide whether to extend the deadline or assign an alternate reviewer. Your review comments for revised manuscripts are also due in four (4) weeks from the day they were assigned to you.

2. Conflict of interest for reviewers

Any potential conflicts of interest as a reviewer of a manuscript must be brought to the attention of the Editor before you begin the review process. If you are currently involved or have in the past been involved in any part of the research presented in the manuscripts, including but not limited to financial interests, collaborating with the authors, or you have other relationships or connections, professional or personal, with any of the authors, companies, or institutions related to the manuscript, which might prevent you from providing a fair and unbiased review, you should decline the review task and inform the Editor so that another individual can be invited to review the manuscript.

3. Confidentiality

The review process will remain strictly confidential.

- Do not discuss or mention, in any way or to anyone, the contents of the paper before or after the review process.
- The manuscript submitted for peer-review is a privileged document. All materials must be treated in confidence. If additional advice from a colleague or any parties is thought to be helpful, please contact the Editorial Office in advance to obtain permission from the Editor. Do not pass the manuscript on to your colleagues or other third parties without first obtaining the Editor's consent.
- Before publication, the research described in the paper should not be used as a reference in the reviewer's own work. You must refrain from citing or referring to the work before its publication.
- Do not retain any copies of the reviewed manuscripts, and do not use their content or take scientific, financial, personal, or other advantage of material available to you through the peer review process.
- Do not upload the manuscript to software or any AI-assisted tools or technologies.

4. Constructive comments

Provide objective and constructive feedback in your review to encourage the author to improve the paper and their writing. A peer review shall be conducted objectively and logically based on the quality of a manuscript on its own merits and with due respect to the intellectual independence of the authors. When you find negative aspects, suggest concrete means for improvement. Refrain from being hostile or inflammatory and from making derogatory personal comments.

5. Impartiality

Reviewer comments should be based on an impartial consideration of the facts, exclusive of personal or professional bias. All comments should be based solely on the paper's scientific merit, originality, and quality of writing as well as on the relevance to the Journal of JSCE's scope and mission, without regard to race, ethnic origin, sex, religion, or citizenship of the authors. Reviewers shall not criticize the authors personally. If you determine that you have a potential bias during the review of the paper, please notify the Editor immediately.

6. Competence

You should accept an assignment only if you have adequate expertise to provide an authoritative assessment. If you think certain aspects of a manuscript are outside your field of expertise or realize that your expertise is limited, you should notify the Editorial Office so that we can decide whether you should continue and address your areas of expertise only, or Editor should assign an alternate reviewer(s).

7. Manuscripts you have previously handled

If you are invited to assess a manuscript you previously reviewed for another journal, please consider the manuscript as a new submission. In such cases, the authors may have made changes according to the previous review comments, and the Journal of JSCE's criteria for evaluation may differ from those of the other journal.

8. Ethical policies

Please note any suspicious evidence of unethical conduct and bring it to the attention of the Editor immediately. Please see our general publication ethics policies [here](#).

9. Use of artificial intelligence (AI)-assisted tools/technologies

Reviewers are prohibited from uploading the manuscript to software or AI-assisted tools/technologies where confidentiality is not assured. Reviewers must request permission from the journal prior to using AI technology to facilitate their review.

IV. Invitation for Peer Review

1. General process

Reviewer invitations are sent by e-mail from the submission system. Use the links in the e-mail to accept or decline the invitation to review. The invitation includes manuscript details, such as the title, the names of authors, and the abstract, which may help you to determine whether the subject of the manuscript is within your areas of expertise.

If you are unable to agree to review a manuscript, please click the decline link in the e-mail. In such cases, it would be appreciated if you suggested another potential reviewer.

If you click the link to accept the invitation to review a manuscript, you will receive a notification via e-mail about how to log-in to our online system to access the manuscript in PDF format and instructions for submitting your comments through the online system.

2. Revised Manuscripts

The revised version of a manuscript is normally sent back to some or all of the original reviewers for re-review. If you are assigned to review a manuscript you previously reviewed, please ensure that revisions requested in your original review have been addressed in the revised manuscript. Please be careful not to raise additional, or new, issues that were not addressed in the previous review comments, and make sure to limit any new amendments or additions to points that respond to the comments.

V. Your Comments

1. 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 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.
- (4) Remain anonymous as the Journal operates a single-anonymized review process.

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

2.1 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 2.2 and the academic papers, technical reports, technical notes, discussions and committee reports published in the Journal of JSCE 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).

2.2 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.
- **Discussions:** 1) Manuscripts present research or technical results achieved by the discussant that are related to the published academic papers, technical reports, technical notes, or committee reports.
2) Similarly, manuscripts present opinions and questions regarding the published academic papers, technical reports, technical notes, or committee reports.
- **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

2.3 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, technical reports, discussions or committee 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.)

2.4 Confidential comments to the editor

In the Journal of JSCE's peer review management system, there is a section titled "Confidential Comments to the Editor." Your comments in this section will be seen only by the editors, as these will not be sent to the authors. If there are any possible conflicts of interest, ethical issues, or any other comments you do not wish not to share with the authors, please comment regarding them in this section.

2.5 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, discussion, 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.

2.6 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.

3. 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).

4. Decisions on Manuscript Publication

All decisions on the manuscript publication, which include acceptance, revisions or rejection, are made by the editors of the Journal of JSCE after all the reviewer and editor reports are submitted and evaluated.

Supplementary note:

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

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