



A GUIDE FOR «COMUNICAR'S» EXTERNAL REVIEWERS

«Comunicar's» **External Review Board** is a collegiate body whose fundamental role is to maintain this scientific journal's high standards of excellence by blind peer review –based exclusively on the quality of the content of the manuscripts and performed by experts whose prestige in the field is internationally recognized –which is the best guarantee for scientific progress and to keep this journal's original and valuable scientific work in the forefront.

The **review of manuscripts** by international experts is the key to selecting those articles that will have the greatest impact on the scientific community. This review process also provides the authors with an objective report on the strong and weak points of their manuscripts once accepted for peer review.

All the reviews carried out for «Comunicar» are based on the **standardized international double blind peer review system** that ensures author and reviewer anonymity. Reviews are audited on the Spanish Foundation for Science and Technology's «RECYT» **open source platform**, which generates an average of five reports per manuscript accepted for review from both national and international reviewers.

«Comunicar's» Review Board consists of a **group of international experts** in various subjects with no professional relation with the journal's editorial board of directors. They can be members of the Scientific, Review or Technical Boards but their independence and anonymity is guaranteed when acting as manuscript referees. Once a year, the journal publishes a full list of its reviewers on its official website (www.revistacomunicar.com / www.comunicarjournal.com).

1. Criteria for accepting / rejecting manuscripts for review

«Comunicar's» editors always select the reviewer they consider the best qualified to review the manuscript. The journal requires reviewers to collaborate in writing reports and providing answers for the authors who have submitted manuscripts; the invitation to review for the journal will be based on:

- a) **Knowledge of and academic experience** in the subject of the manuscript. Invitation to a reviewer necessarily means he / she has a firm grasp of the subject of the article.
- b) **Availability.** Reviewing an article requires dedicating time and thought to evaluating the manuscript.
- c) **Conflict of interest.** The scientific community is small. In the case when a potential reviewer can identify the author of the manuscript, or there is academic proximity or a family connection with the authors, if the reviewer belongs to the same university, department, research group, professional network, research project as the author or has published articles with the author, ...or any type of connection or conflict / professional proximity, the reviewer must decline the offer from the editor to review the article. A conflict of interest can occur as a result of proximity or hostility to the authors if the reviewer identifies the authors even though their names have been removed from the manuscript. The authors can inform the jour-



nal via the platform to say which researchers might have a conflict of interest with their submission; reviewers must do likewise.

- d) **A commitment to confidentiality.** The reviewer must maintain strict confidentiality when assessing a manuscript and must not divulge its content to third parties. If the reviewer wishes to get a second opinion on the article, he / she must consult the editor, whose approval is necessary for the manuscript to be viewed by a second referee. The editors welcome these additional comments provided that strict confidentiality is maintained throughout the entire review process. These additional evaluations and recommendations will help the editors make a final decision on the manuscript.

If the reviewer is unable to proceed with the review for any of these or other reasons, he / she must notify the editor via the RECYT platform (the same channel through which the invitation was made), specifying the reasons for declining to review the manuscript.

2. The task of the reviewer

As a peer reviewer, the **task of the External Reviewer** is to provide a constructive, critical analysis of the manuscript content, to collaborate with the general editors and the subject editors in checking / ratifying whether the work is of high scientific value and complies with this journal's standards of excellence in order to be accepted and edited.

The opinion of the reviewers is vital for detecting content originality and excellence that is presented in a clear and concise way.

The reviewers will provide a general assessment of the «impact priority» remarking on the probability of the article having a strong and lasting influence on the research areas that interest the journal.

3. General criteria for the review of manuscripts

a) Subject

For the central theme of the article to be relevant and of scientific value it must be both specific (detailed in a local context without being parochial) and of broader interest to the international scientific community.

b) Style

The reviewer's report of the critical evaluation of the manuscript must be written in an objective style using quotes directly from the text submitted or citing references of interest in order to support his / her argument.

c) Originality

The originality and suitability of the manuscript is an important factor in deciding whether to select a text for publication. Due to the large number of manuscripts submitted, reviewers must be highly selective in their choice of original and suitable material for the journal.



- Is the article novel and interesting enough to justify publication?
- Does it contribute anything new to the current body of knowledge?
- Is the research objective relevant?

We recommend a quick literature search using tools such as Web of Knowledge, Scopus and Google Scholar to check whether the subject has been covered previously. References to these works are also of great interest to the editors.

d) Structure

All manuscripts must be structured with a summary, introduction, methodology, results, discussion and conclusion.

- The **title, summary and key words** must accurately describe the content of the article. This is essential for helping readers to locate the article on Internet search engines.
- The **review of the literature** must summarize the current state of the question under investigation by placing the work within the international context, and explain which conclusions drawn by other authors, if appropriate, are being questioned or extended. The review must include a general explanation of the study, its main aim and the methodological design followed.
- In research articles, the author must state in the **method description and analysis** how data were compiled and the process and instruments used to test the hypotheses, in other words, all the information necessary so that any other researcher can replicate the study.
- The **results** section must clearly state the findings, which are to be presented in logical sequence. It will be necessary to determine whether the corresponding type of analysis used, be it quantitative, qualitative or a combination of both, contains any errors.
- **Discussion:** this section contains the interpretation of the data obtained from the review of the literature and the data gathering. The authors must state whether their article supports or contradicts previous theories. The **conclusions** will state the advances that the investigation proposes for its specific area of scientific knowledge.
- **Language:** if the article contains serious grammatical errors and is written in a complex, over-elaborate style that makes the manuscript difficult to read, and the clear, simple, accurate and transparent language (in English or Spanish) required of scientific language is absent the reviewer should not attempt to correct the text. The reviewer must inform the editors about the grammatical errors and awkward language of the text; the editors will then return the manuscript to the authors for rewriting and resubmission to the journal, if appropriate.
- The reviewer must also decide if the **figures and tables** are necessary and relevant to the text, and check their accuracy.



- The reviewer must **check the references** thoroughly for omissions. The references cited must be accurate and relevant to the subject, will include the main works on the subject and those documents that most clearly reflect the subject under study, as well as the latest research in the field.

4. Review criteria

«Comunicar's» reviewers must carry out a thorough analysis of the manuscript, contrasting the information presented, checking the scientific literature used to support the document and present a quantitative and qualitative report to the editors on the suitability of the work for publication.

The reviewer's report must be detailed and well-reasoned, and the reviewer will score the manuscript based on a points system that the editors use to compare the value of all works reviewed.

INVESTIGATIONS	
Items to evaluate	P.
01. Title and summary (clarity and structure)	0/5
02. Relevance of subject	0/10
03. Originality of the work	
04. Literature review	
05. Structure, organization of article	0/10
06. Strength of arguments put forward	
07. Writing style	
08. Methodological rigour	0/10
09. Investigation instruments	
10. Results of investigation	0/10
11. Advances	
12. Discussion	
13. Conclusions	
14. Citations (depth and variety)	
15. References	0/5
Total	/50

STUDIES, REPORTS, PROPOSALS, EXPERIENCIES	
Items to evaluate	P.
01. Title and summary (clarity and structure)	0/5
02. Relevance of subject	0/10
03. Literature review	0/10
04. Structure, organization of article	0/10
05. Strength of arguments put forward	
06. Scientific writing	
07. Original contributions	0/10
08. Conclusions	
09. Citations	0/5
10. References	
Total	/50

5. Ethical issues

a) Plagiarism: If the reviewer suspects the author(s) have copied from another article, he / she must inform the editors and name the article and the parts of that document they believe the authors have reproduced. The systems for detecting plagiarism and self-plagiarism (Grammarly, Turnitin...) can be used prescriptively by the reviewers and editors.



b) Fraud: If the reviewer suspects the results presented in the article are false or fraudulent, the editors must be informed immediately.

6. Manuscript review process on the RECYT

When an expert is invited to join the Review Board, an account is opened in his / her name on the RECYT platform to receive invitations to review articles. In this case, the reviewer will receive an e-mail inviting the reviewer to examine an article. This request must be accepted or declined via the platform within 10 days of receiving the e-mail.

To notify the journal of a decision to accept or reject such a request, the reviewer enters the platform using the user name and password given when the account is opened (if the reviewer has forgotten his / her user name or password, a new one can be requested automatically if the user is recognized by the platform) and, when the platform confirms reviewer status, the reviewer can access the list of «Active Submissions».

The reviewer clicks on the designated article and a page appears that contains information on the submission to be reviewed: title, authors, summary, status of the review (dates), the following steps to take to proceed with the review and the journal's rules on reviewing.

- a) The reviewer selects the option to accept or reject the review request.
- b) If the reviewer agrees to review the manuscript, he / she must agree to submit a report.
- c) After sending the e-mail accepting the offer to review the manuscript, the reviewer downloads the article and saves it on his / her computer.
- d) After completing the review of the article, the reviewer must complete the Review Form.
- e) To upload the Review Form, the reviewer clicks on «Examine» to search for the document among the files on his / her computer and then clicks on «Upload».

There will appear on the reviewer's computer screen a command to enable him / her to send an e-mail to the editor informing that the review has been completed. This is done by clicking on «Send Review to Editor». This is essential for the editor to know that the review has been completed.

This e-mail completes the task of reviewing the article. The review will be assessed by the Subject Editors and other editors, who will decide whether to proceed to publication based on the review and the criteria of editors and experts. One possible outcome is to initiate a new round of reviews (the second round) in which the editors might call on the services of the same reviewer, who would then follow the same steps for reviewing the article as previously mentioned.

Further information on the review process is available in **RECYT Manual for Reviewers:**
www.revistacomunicar.com/evaluadores/reviewers-manual.pdf

Authors can consult the **Manual on Submitting Manuscripts:**
www.revistacomunicar.com/normas/00-manual-sending-recyt.pdf



7. Report to the Editors

The report must contain the key points of the review mentioned in the previous section.

The reviewer's comments must be respectful, constructive and not be of a personal nature; neither must they include any personal data. The comments must contain information clearly and forcefully stated in relation to the article's deficiencies. The reviewer must explain and support his / her assessment of the text so that editors and authors can follow the reasoning behind the comments. The reviewer must state whether the comments are personal opinions or are based on specified criteria.

The reports can be sent directly to the authors in their original form, so, it is important that they are presented in line with the formal review criteria (organization and clarity in the writing style and correct spelling). Please bear in mind that the reports often include assessments and requests for modifications in terms of the formal aspects of the text, making it essential that the article is written to the same high standards required of the authors.

Great care is needed when reviewing a manuscript in terms of language use that could be deemed offensive by the authors. It is vital to combine a rigorous and even harsh evaluation of a text while maintaining the utmost respect for the authors' work. On no account should the reviewer use expressions such as: "This is not a serious..."; "Only total ignorance of the subject matter would lead the authors to state that..." or similar statements.

Evaluations relative to aspects of content and formal aspects will consider the following review criteria:

Content aspects

- Degree of interest and topicality of the subject.
- Relevance and how up-to-date the sources are.
- Clear and interesting theoretical proposition.
- Clarity in the presentation of the work's objectives.
- Adequacy of the methodological design in relation to the work's objectives.
- Relevance and correction of data analysis procedures (if appropriate).
- Interesting empirical data provided (if appropriate).
- Interesting and relevant discussion, results and conclusions.
- Interesting and relevant from a professional didactic viewpoint

Formal aspectos

- Organization and structure.
- Well-balanced extension of sections appropriate to the content.
- Writing and style.
- Presentation of tables and / or graphs.
- Bibliographical references (APA norms apply, with citations in the text matching the reference in the list at the end of the text).

The only criteria considered will be those the reviewer chooses for formulating his / her comments and suggestions regarding the text.



The categories that «Comunicar» uses to classify a reviewed manuscript are:

- a) Rejection:** due to deficiencies in the text indicated by the reviewer and justified quantitatively and qualitatively in a reasoned explanation. The report must be more thorough if the authors score less than 40 out of a possible top score of 50.
- b) Acceptance with no further revision necessary.**
- c) Acceptance conditional** on further revision (extensive or minor). In this case, the type of revision required must be clearly stated, with comments specifying which pages and paragraphs need to be changed.

8. External reviewer protocols for reviewing manuscripts

The external reviewers are obliged to familiarize themselves with the journal's rules regarding publication www.revistacomunicar.com/normas/00-guidelines-authors.pdf to see how reviewed manuscripts adapt to these norms and show examples of irregularities.

The reviewers must follow the External Reviewer Protocol for Reviewing Manuscripts (Investigations, Studies, Reports, Experiences and Proposals:

- www.revistacomunicar.com/normas/01-reviews-protocol-studies.pdf
- www.revistacomunicar.com/normas/01-reviews-protocol-research.pdf

Reviewers should examine each of the review criteria and assess the scientific and technical merit of the manuscript, scoring each category separately. An article need not top score in all categories for the reviewer to determine that it has quality and scientific impact.