



Peer review handbook

The *Australasian Journal of Plastic Surgery* is a peer-reviewed, online-only journal of the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons, the Australasian Foundation for Plastic Surgery and the New Zealand Association of Plastic Surgeons.

The journal aims to: serve as a platform for research and review in the fields of plastic and reconstructive surgery; to be a credible and legitimate source of information; and to support an environment that encourages and fosters ongoing research.

Double-blind peer review

All material submitted to the *Australasian Journal of Plastic Surgery* is reviewed. Original articles, review articles, including those conducted by journal editors, and case reports undergo a double-blind peer review process. In this type of review, all identifying information is removed from submissions and reviews so that authors and reviewers remain anonymous to each other. This includes summaries of review feedback sent to authors after a recommendation has been made as well as summaries sent to reviewers at the conclusion of the review process.

Editorials, letters to the editor, media reviews, perspectives, how to guides, practical non-clinical skills for surgeons, video content and features written by the journal's own editorial staff do not undergo double-blind peer review.

The role of reviewers

The *Australasian Journal of Plastic Surgery* relies on reviewers to determine the suitability of manuscripts for publication. We ask reviewers to help us ensure that any studies published in the journal are properly conducted, scientifically credible, adhere to appropriate guidelines for clinical trials, and are ethical.

The journal follows the [International Committee of Medical Journal Editors' "Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals: Writing and Editing for Biomedical Publication"](#). The uniform requirements state the ethical principles in the conduct and reporting of research and provide recommendations relating to specific elements of editing and writing. Reviewers should be aware of the content of this document.

In addition, the journal requires authors to comply with ["Best Practice Guidelines on Publication Ethics: A Publisher's Perspective"](#). When reporting experiments on either human subjects or animals, authors must provide evidence that the research was in accordance with appropriate ethical standards. Reviewers should notify the Managing Editor (journal@plasticsurgery.org.au) if they have concerns about the ethical standards of a manuscript.

Confidentiality

Reviewers are responsible for maintaining the integrity and confidentiality of the authors' work while it is being evaluated for publication. Manuscripts sent for review are privileged communications and are the private property of the authors. Information gained through working with manuscripts must not be used for private gain in any way.

Conflicts of interest

Reviewers must disclose all relationships that could be viewed as presenting a potential financial or other conflict of interest between you, your work, and any of the products or manufacturers of the drugs or devices mentioned in the submission.

Evaluating manuscripts

It is the responsibility of reviewers to critically evaluate manuscripts. Nevertheless, it is important that reviewers adopt a positive and impartial attitude toward the manuscript under review, with the aim of enhancing the quality of the manuscript. Reviewers are in a privileged position and must avoid using language that is either emotive or derogatory.

We appreciate that, while reviewing manuscripts has its own intrinsic rewards, it is an onerous task. No reviewer should be asked to comment on more than 10 manuscripts a year. At the end of each year, we express our gratitude by publishing a list of the reviewers for that year.

Being invited to review a manuscript is an honour as it reflects your eminence in a particular aspect of surgery. We are indebted to you for ensuring that we continue to improve the standard of articles that appear in the *Australasian Journal of Plastic Surgery*.

Checklist

Reviewers complete a checklist to evaluate how well author(s) have addressed the following criteria:

- Statement of purpose
- Relevance to the journal
- Importance to archival principles and practices
- Contribution to the literature
- Organisation of ideas and supporting points
- Quality of research methodology
- Development of major points, relevance of evidence and quality of reasoning
- Conclusion with justification from evidence presented
- Errors in usage, spelling, punctuation, and reference formatting.

This is followed by a comments section address specific issues such as whether the manuscript's:

- title accurately represents the information presented
- abstract is succinct and contains hard data
- statistics need to be reviewed by a biostatistician and if so, why
- tables/figures are all essential
- has been plagiarised, or any significant part of it
- topic would be of interest to the AJOPS readership.

The form concludes with space for additional comments on the manuscript's strengths and weaknesses.

Some tips for providing a detailed review

What are your impressions of the overall quality of the manuscript? Consider the manuscript's:

- length – does it conform to the guidelines for manuscript type set out in the author guidelines?
- language - is the text clear, logical and concise?
- purpose – are the authors' objectives clearly stated?
- methods – is there sufficient detail for an interested reader to replicate the study? Do the statistics need to be reviewed by a biostatistician?
- results – are the results concise? Do they contain appropriate statistical analysis?
- figures and tables – are the illustrations and tables necessary? Are they good quality? Is the data duplicated in the text? Would additional illustrations add clarity to the text?
- discussion – does the discussion start with an overall comment about the findings and then critically evaluate the main issues raised by the study (for original and research articles)? Does each paragraph discuss one point? Does the discussion flow clearly from one paragraph to another? Does the discussion end with conclusions that are relevant and consistent with the data presented? Manuscripts that end with vague comments such as “further research is needed in this area” are not acceptable.
- references – are the references relevant and appropriate in number? Have the author(s) included citations to similar work?

Please note: Reviewers should not submit corrections for spelling and grammatical errors; instead they should encourage authors of poorly-worded manuscripts to seek assistance. If a manuscript is poorly written but contains important information, reviewers should suggest referral to a professional editing service (at the author's).

Recommendations

Reviewers are asked to make a recommendation about the suitability of a manuscript for publication (very few submissions qualify for an immediate unconditional acceptance). Reviewers may:

- **ACCEPT.** *The submission is acceptable for publication. Minor corrections may need to be made.*
- **REVISE and RESUBMIT.** *The submission is not acceptable as submitted. Encourage the author to revise and resubmit.*
- **DECLINE.** *The submission does not meet standards for publication.*

Revisions

Your willingness to review revised manuscripts is greatly appreciated but not required. You will be asked whether you are available or willing to do so. Suggested revisions should be stated as such and not expressed as conditions of acceptance.

Submitting your form

Timeliness is important. Reviews should be completed within 14 days. If this is not possible, or the submission is not in your area of expertise, please notify the Managing Editor so alternative arrangements can be made. You will be notified of the outcome of the editorial process when a final decision is made.

You may submit your form online or via email or fax. For assistance, please contact the Managing Editor, Jacqueline Spedding. Please note: Jacqueline works Tuesday to Thursday and can be contacted in the office on Thursdays on +61 2 9437 3041 or by email: journal@plasticsurgery.org.au. Documents can faxed to the office on + 61 2 9437 9210.

Thank you for contributing your time, enthusiasm and expertise to being a reviewer for the *Australasian Journal of Plastic Surgery*.

Prof Mark Ashton MBBS MD FRACS

Dr Mark Lee MBBS FRACS

Editors in chief

Australasian Journal of Plastic Surgery