

PEER REVIEW POLICY

Pollution and Diseases — International Scientific Journal

<https://pollution-diseases.org>

The peer review process at *Pollution and Diseases* is designed to ensure the scientific quality, ethical integrity, and relevance of all published work. The journal follows international best practices and adheres to the principles of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

1. Review Model

The journal uses **double-blind peer review** for all submissions.

- Authors do not know the identity of reviewers.
- Reviewers do not know the identity of authors.
- Review reports remain confidential.

Manuscripts are evaluated by at least **two independent reviewers** with expertise in the relevant field.

2. Editorial Screening

All submitted manuscripts undergo an initial assessment by the Editor-in-Chief or a designated Associate Editor.

At this stage the editor evaluates:

- relevance to the journal's scope;
- originality and scientific value;
- clarity of presentation;
- adherence to ethical standards;
- basic methodological soundness.

Manuscripts may be returned to authors for revision before peer review if essential components are missing.

Submissions that are clearly unsuitable for the journal may be declined without external review.

3. Reviewer Selection

Reviewers are selected based on:

- subject-matter expertise;
- prior reviewing experience;
- absence of conflicts of interest;
- availability and ability to meet review deadlines.

Reviewers may be recruited from the editorial board, the wider scientific community, or through reference checks of published literature.

4. Reviewer Responsibilities

Reviewers are expected to:

- provide an objective, unbiased, and constructive evaluation;
- comment on scientific validity, methodology, clarity, and significance;
- highlight potential ethical concerns;
- recommend improvements;
- identify relevant literature that may have been overlooked;
- disclose any conflicts of interest immediately.

Reviewers should not:

- attempt to identify authors;
- contact authors directly;
- use unpublished information for personal research;
- share or distribute review materials.

5. Evaluation Criteria

Reviewers assess manuscripts according to the following criteria:

- scientific originality and novelty;
- methodological rigor and appropriateness;
- clarity and organization of the manuscript;
- quality and reproducibility of data;
- validity of conclusions;
- relevance to pollution–disease research;
- ethical compliance.

Reviewers recommend one of the following decisions:

- accept without revisions;
- minor revisions;
- major revisions;
- reject.

The final decision rests with the Editor-in-Chief.

6. Revision Process

If revisions are requested, authors must:

- address each reviewer comment individually;
- provide a detailed response letter;
- submit a clean and a marked-up version of the manuscript.

Revised manuscripts may be sent back to reviewers for further evaluation.

Failure to provide satisfactory responses may result in rejection.

7. Confidentiality

All materials submitted to the journal are treated as confidential.

Reviewers must not:

- disclose manuscript content,
- discuss the manuscript with others,
- retain copies of the submission after completing review.

The journal may share de-identified review reports with editorial board members to ensure consistency.

8. Conflicts of Interest

Reviewers must decline invitations if they:

- have collaborated with the authors within the past 3 years;
- are affiliated with the same institution;
- have a personal, financial, or academic conflict that could influence judgment;
- have competing interests related to the research topic.

Editors managing a manuscript must also recuse themselves in case of conflict.

9. Appeals and Complaints

Authors may appeal editorial decisions by submitting a clear, evidence-based justification.

The Editor-in-Chief will:

- review the appeal,
- consult additional editorial board members if necessary,
- may appoint an independent reviewer to reevaluate the manuscript.

Appeals do not guarantee reversal of a decision.

All complaints regarding the review process or editorial conduct are handled according to COPE guidelines.

10. Reviewer Recognition

Reviewers may:

- receive certificates of reviewing upon request;
- be acknowledged annually by the journal (unless anonymity is requested);

- include their review activity in ORCID through appropriate integration.

Reviewer identities remain confidential unless a reviewer voluntarily chooses to reveal their identity.

11. Commitment to Timely Review

Given the journal's mission to support timely scientific communication, review timelines are structured as follows:

- initial editorial screening: within 3–5 days;
- peer review: within 10 working days;
- revision evaluation: within 5–10 working days.

Reviewers are expected to adhere to deadlines or decline the invitation if unable to review promptly.

12. Ethical Oversight

Cases of:

- suspected plagiarism,
- data fabrication or falsification,
- ethical misconduct,
- undisclosed conflicts of interest

are handled in accordance with COPE's flowcharts and may result in rejection, retraction, or notification of relevant institutions.

13. Final Decision

The Editor-in-Chief makes the final decision on all manuscripts.

Decisions are based on:

- reviewer evaluations;
- scientific merit;
- relevance to journal aims;
- ethical considerations;
- overall quality of the submission.