



Reviewer Guidelines for the Journal of Interdisciplinary of Biomedical and Health Sciences

Preamble

The Journal of Multidisciplinary Biomedical and Health Sciences (JIBHS), published by Madda Walabu University College of Medicine and Health Sciences, serves as a premier platform for researchers, clinicians, academicians, and public health professionals to disseminate high-quality research across the full spectrum of biomedical and health sciences.

As a peer-reviewed, open-access journal, JIBHS upholds rigorous academic standards through a double-blind review process, ensuring impartiality and quality. Reviewers play a critical role in maintaining the journal's commitment to originality, scientific rigor, and ethical integrity by providing constructive, evidence-based feedback. This guideline outlines the expectations and responsibilities of reviewers to support authors in enhancing their work and to assist editors in making informed publication decisions, ultimately contributing to impactful scholarship that addresses global development challenges.

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1. General Information

The Journal of Interdisciplinary Biomedical and Health Sciences (JIBHS), is an international, peer-reviewed journal dedicated to advancing research, policy, and practice in biomedical and health sciences. The journal provides a platform for critical debates, innovative research, and policy dialogue that promote research and innovation across health and biomedical sciences.

JIBHS is owned and published by Madda Walabu University College of Medicine and Health Sciences. The journal publishes original papers that have not been previously published including original research articles, review articles, case studies, case report, case serious policy briefing, and Methodology Papers. The journal particularly values contributions that bridge the gap between scientific evidence and policy/practice.

JIBHS is an open access, does not charge any fees to authors for publication or to readers for accessing content, ensuring equitable dissemination of knowledge. Contributions are submitted in English and the journal welcomes submissions from researchers worldwide, regardless of gender, career stage, or ethnic and religious affiliation. The journal is issued biannually, and will be indexed in Google Scholar, AJOL, EBSCO, EJOL, and Copernicus, providing broad visibility and academic reach. Digital copies of all articles are permanently archived in the Madda Walabu University Institutional Repository and OJS open-access repository. In addition, JIBHS participates in LOCKSS and CLOCKSS digital preservation systems, and each article is assigned a DOI, ensuring long-term accessibility, discoverability, and citation integrity.

2. Peer Review Process

JIBHS employs a double-blind peer review policy, ensuring that the identities of both authors and reviewers remain concealed to maintain fairness and impartiality. The process involves the following steps:

Desk Review: Each submitted manuscript is first reviewed by the Editor-in-Chief or Associate Editor (section editors) to confirm its alignment with JIBHS's scope, formatting standards, and originality requirements.

Reviewer Selection and Assignment: Once a submission passes the desk review, it is considered for external peer review. The Associate Editor assigns each manuscript to at least two independent reviewers with expertise in the relevant subject area.

Reviewers must not be affiliated with the authors' institutions or have recent joint publications with them.

First, an anonymized abstract is shared with potential reviewers to confirm their expertise and willingness to review.

2.1 Reviewer's checklists

Before accepting or declining an invitation to review, reviewers should consider the following questions.

Check expertise matches

Does the manuscript really match your area of expertise? Only accept if you feel that you can provide a high-quality review report.

Declare conflicts of interest

If there is any conflict of interest, please disclose this to the editor when you respond. Potential conflicts of interest may include if you have a strong relationship (both positive and negative feelings) about one of the authors or if you have published papers or co-authored with one of the co-authors, and other relationships.

Confirm time availability

Before you accept the review, first make sure you can meet the deadline. Sending in a review long after the deadline will delay the publication process and frustrate the editor and authors.

Initial Assessment: After agreeing to review, the reviewers receive the full anonymized manuscript with all author details removed, together with a review form outlining the evaluation criteria. The review form and reviewer guideline can be accessible in JIBHS _____ or, when necessary, directly by the Editorial Office/_____.

2.2 Evaluation Criteria:

Reviewers assess manuscripts submitted to JIBHS based on their alignment with the journal's scope and guidelines _____ and the following criteria:

1. Relevance to JIBHS's Scope:
2. The quality and scientific soundness of a manuscript
3. The novelty, significance, and relevance of the research
4. Methodological strengths
5. Validity and accuracy of data analysis and interpretation
6. Compliance with Ethical standards
7. Possibility of improvements to enhance manuscript quality

3. Review Report

Once a reviewer accepts an invitation, they should understand that their review report is critical in assisting the editors to evaluate the manuscript's suitability for publication in JIBHS. The report must directly address the journal's review criteria and standardized forms, enabling editors to make an informed decision on whether the manuscript should be accepted, revised, or rejected. Beyond guiding editorial decisions, the reviewer also supports authors by providing crucial feedback that enhances an author's manuscript

3.1 Elements that a reviewer's report should include:

The review report should consider the following points:

3.1.1. Summary of the Work

A brief overview of the manuscript's main objectives, methodology, and key findings to demonstrate your understanding of the research.

3.1.2. Validity

The reviewer should evaluate the soundness and robustness of the research by assessing whether the study demonstrates;

- **A Valid Research Question:** The question is clearly defined, original, and directly addresses the research gap
- **A Transparent Methodology:** The study design, data collection, and procedures are reproducible and clearly detailed.
- **Robust Data Analysis:** The statistical or qualitative methods used are appropriate, rigorously applied, and clearly explained.
- **Ethical Compliance:** The research adheres to standard ethical guidelines, including participant consent, privacy, and institutional review.
- **Sound Conclusions:** The findings are strictly supported by the presented data, logically interpreted, and free of unfounded conjecture.

3.1.3. Data and/or methodology

The methods that authors have employed to address the research question are one of the most important elements used to judge the overall scientific quality/soundness of the research paper.

The assessment of the validity of the approach, the quality of the data, and the quality of presentation is part of the review report. Especially, it is important to clearly identify the strengths and weaknesses of the method described in the manuscript.

Reviewers are asked to assess all the data including in the analysis and provided as a supplementary information. While the methodology is considered sufficiently robust, it is still necessary to critically examine all presented data, including figures, tables, and images. Furthermore, reviewers must evaluate the study design and implementation for potential sources of bias.

Authors may ask to attach supplementary data and information along with their submission to enable research audiences to engage more thoroughly with the research after publication. Therefore, please be aware that links to data might therefore be present along with the main submission files. These items therefore should also receive the attention of reviewers during the peer-review process.

Manuscripts may also contain database identifiers or accession numbers, e.g., DOI; however, if any aspect of the data is outside the scope of the reviewer's expertise, it should be genuinely noted in the review report or in the comments to the editor.

3.1.4. Analytical approach

The assessment of the strength of the analytical approach, e.g., the validity and robustness of any statistical tests, appropriate statistical tools employed, or logical coherence of any arguments developed is critical element in the peer-review process. Therefore, it is important that peer reviewers have a solid understanding of statistics, and to carefully examine the statistical tools and how statistical results are reported in the manuscript text.

However, if any aspect of the analytical approach is outside the scope of reviewers' expertise, it should be carefully noted in the review report or in the comments to the editor.

3.1.5. Contribution of the Manuscript

Please state whether the manuscript contributes to the body of knowledge/literature. One of the most important criteria that JIBHS requires is that a manuscript should report something new, specific, and not simply recurrence of what is already known in the literature. Especially if the manuscript simply brings what is already known, please provide evidence. Therefore, the reviewer should carefully assess the originality (or contribution, addition of knowledge to scientific literature or in the field of the manuscript).

If the submission is review, it is also important to evaluate the importance of the topic/scope of the review, originality of the review, timeliness, the breadth and accuracy of the discussion, indicates the best avenues for future research, and comment whether the author presents the most relevant recent advances in the field and it is critical to see the references.

3.1.6. Suggested improvement

Encouraging suggestions for the improvement of the manuscript, e.g., including experiments, data, additional discussion, and standards of English usage that could help strengthen the manuscript and make it suitable for publication in the journal.

However, comments should be limited to the scope of the manuscript; that is, they should only include what can be reasonably addressed in a revision and avoid giving suggestions that would significantly change the scope of the manuscript. The Editors will assess all the suggestions given by the reviewers and provide additional guidance to the authors.

The reviewers provide an opportunity to provide comments to author and confidential comments to the editor.

3.1.7. Structure of the Review Report

The review report should be structured as follows:

1. Confidential Comments to the Editor

- Provide comments intended only for the editorial team
- Address concerns about methodology, ethics, or serious issues
- Highlight any concerns about plagiarism, data fabrication, or ethical violations
- Discuss any concerns about the research integrity
- Notify of any conflicts of interest
- Provide overall assessment in context

2. Comments to the Authors

- Provide detailed, constructive feedback
- Number your comments for easy reference
- Organize comments by manuscript section
- Include specific suggestions for improvement
- Distinguish between major and minor issues

- Provide positive feedback where appropriate
- Be specific and actionable

3.1.8. Characteristics of Good Reviewer Comments

Do:

- Be specific and cite page and line numbers where applicable
- Provide justification for critiques
- Suggest improvements or alternatives
- Use professional, respectful language
- Focus on science and methodology
- Distinguish major from minor issues
- Provide positive feedback on strengths
- Offer practical, achievable suggestions
- Keep comments clear and concise
- Use "I" statements (e.g., "I found that...")

Don't:

- Be vague or general
- State opinions without evidence
- Only criticize without solutions
- Use hostile or sarcastic language
- Make personal attacks
- Treat all issues equally
- Ignore the context of the research
- Make impossible demands
- Use insulting or demeaning language

3.1.8. The review process timeline

Stage	Duration	Cumulative
Reviewer Assignment	3-7 days	3-7 days
First Review	14-21 days	17-28 days
Editorial Decision	3-5 days	20-33 days
Author Revision	21-28 days	41-61 days
Re-review	7-14 days	48-75 days
Final Decision	3-5 days	51-80 days
Publication	7-14 days	58-94 days

4. REVIEWER RESPONSIBILITIES AND ETHICS

4.1. REVIEWER RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1. 1. Role and Responsibilities

A **peer reviewer** is an impartial expert in the specific field of focus with a mandate to:

1. Evaluate the quality and scientific soundness of a manuscript
2. Assess the novelty, significance, and relevance of the research
3. Identify methodological strengths and weaknesses
4. Verify the validity and accuracy of data analysis and interpretation
5. Assess compliance with ethical standards
6. Suggest improvements to enhance manuscript quality
7. Recommend publication or rejection with clear justification
8. Maintain confidentiality throughout the review process.

4.1.2. Expected Reviewer Competencies

Competency	Indicators	Self-Assessment Criteria
Subject Matter Expertise	Advanced knowledge of the field; Published research in related areas; Understanding of current literature; Recognized as expert by peers	Can I identify current debates and key studies in this area? Can I evaluate the significance of the findings?
Methodological Knowledge	Familiarity with appropriate study designs; Understanding of statistical methods; Knowledge of research ethics; Ability to assess methodological rigor	Do I understand the strengths and limitations of the study design? Can I identify methodological flaws?
Critical Appraisal Skills	Ability to assess study validity; Capacity to identify biases; Skill in evaluating evidence quality; Ability to assess reproducibility	Can I evaluate the internal and external validity of the study? Can I identify sources of bias?
Communication Skills	Clear, precise writing; Constructive criticism; Professional tone; Ability to provide specific, actionable feedback	Are my comments clear and specific? Do I provide solutions, not just criticisms?
Time Management	Ability to meet deadlines; Efficient review processes; Responsive communication	Can I commit to the required timeframe? Can I complete the review efficiently?
Ethical Awareness	Understanding of publication ethics; Knowledge of research integrity; Familiarity with COPE guidelines	Can I identify ethical concerns? Do I understand my ethical obligations?

4.2. Ethical Guidelines

Reviewers shall adhere to the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers.

4.2.1. Confidentiality

Requirement: Reviewers must treat all manuscript content as confidential.

Required Actions:

- Do not share the manuscript with anyone without permission from the editor
- Do not discuss the manuscript with colleagues, students, or others
- Do not use the manuscript content for any personal or professional benefit
- Do not use unpublished information in your own research
- Destroy all manuscript materials after completing the review
- Report any breaches of confidentiality immediately to the editor

Exceptions:

- May discuss with co-reviewers if invited by the editor
- May involve research assistants with prior permission; they must also maintain confidentiality
- Must disclose if legally required to do so (e.g., court order)

4.2.2. Objectivity and Impartiality

Requirement: Reviewers must evaluate manuscripts without bias.

Required Actions:

- Base evaluation on scientific merit, not personal characteristics of authors
- Assess the work itself, not the authors' identity, institution, or nationality
- Do not let personal opinions influence judgment
- Be open to new or controversial ideas that challenge existing paradigms
- Focus on evidence, not assumptions
- Consider the manuscript's strengths and weaknesses equally

4.2.3. Professional Conduct

Requirement: Reviewers must maintain professional standards.

Required Actions:

- Use respectful and constructive language throughout
- Avoid personal attacks or hostile criticism
- Provide specific, evidence-based comments
- Acknowledge when you are outside your expertise
- Do not make derogatory remarks about authors or their work
- Suggest improvements, not just identify problems
- Frame criticism as constructive feedback

Prohibited Conduct:

- Personal attacks or ad hominem criticism
- Derogatory language about authors, institutions, or countries
- Sarcastic or demeaning comments
- Attempts to leverage review for personal benefit
- Unsubstantiated allegations
- Hostile or threatening language

4.2.4. Integrity and Honesty

Requirement: Reviewers must be honest about their qualifications.

Required Actions:

- Accept only reviews within your expertise
- Declare all potential conflicts of interest
- Inform the editor immediately if you cannot complete the review
- Do not offer to review to please the editor
- Do not agree to review without sufficient time
- Be truthful in your assessment
- Report any concerns about potential fraud or misconduct

When to Decline:

- Outside your expertise
- Insufficient time to complete review

- Significant conflict of interest
- Unable to meet confidentiality requirements
- Previously reviewed for another journal

4.2.5. Timeliness and Responsiveness

Requirement: Reviewers must respect deadlines and communicate promptly.

Required Actions:

- Respond to invitations within 48 hours
- Complete reviews within the agreed timeframe
- Communicate delays immediately
- Suggest alternative reviewers if unable to review
- Do not accept if you cannot meet the deadline
- Check your email regularly for communications from the journal

4.2.6. Accountability

Requirement: Reviewers must take responsibility for their reviews.

Required Actions:

- Ensure all comments are accurate and justified
- Provide evidence to support criticisms
- Acknowledge any limitations in your own knowledge
- Correct any errors identified after submission
- Respond to requests for clarification from the editor

5. Overall review evaluation format

Check in the boxes which, in your opinion, best describe the manuscript.

Review criteria	Poor (1)	Marginal (2)	Acceptable (3)	Good (4)	Excellent (5)
Formulation of the problem / Clarity of Objectives					
Quality of literature review					
Robustness of research methodology (sampling, data quality, and tools employed)					
Data analysis (scientific procedures and appropriate statistical tools employed)					
Significance of findings or discussion					
Clarity of recommendations or implications					
Conclusion (extension of results)					
Contribution to knowledge, literature and/or Practice					
Standard use of language, e.g., grammar, spelling, readability, clarity...)					
Appropriate referencing and citation					

6. Reviewers' recommendation

At the end of the review process, reviewers for JIBHS are required to make a clear recommendation regarding the manuscript's suitability for publication. This recommendation guides the editors in their final decision and must be supported with detailed comments in the review report.

Factors in Recommendation

Accept If:

- Research question is novel and important
- Methods are rigorous and appropriate for the research question
- Results are clearly presented and support conclusions
- Discussion is comprehensive and balanced
- Manuscript is well-written and organized
- Ethical standards are met
- Findings are significant and make a contribution

Minor Revision If:

- Manuscript is essentially sound but needs small corrections
- Minor methodological details need clarification
- Additional analysis would strengthen findings
- Presentation needs improvement
- Minor errors need correction
- Additional references would strengthen discussion
- Minor clarifications needed

Major Revision If:

- Methodological concerns need substantial addressing
- Additional analysis is required
- Data presentation needs significant improvement
- Discussion is inadequate
- Structure needs reorganization
- Authors need to address significant concerns
- Need for additional data or experiments

Reject If:

- Significant methodological flaws that cannot be fixed
- Results do not support conclusions
- Novelty or significance is insufficient
- Ethical issues are identified
- Plagiarism or data fabrication is suspected
- Manuscript is outside the journal's scope
- Issues cannot be addressed through revision

7. Reviewers' Recognition

As a token of appreciation, we would like to provide you a review recognition certificate from the Editorial Office

Appendix: Reviewer Form

I. Recommendation Form

MANUSCRIPT ID: _____

REVIEWER NAME: _____

RECOMMENDATION:

☐ Accept

☐ Minor Revision

☐ Major Revision

☐ Reject

JUSTIFICATION:

II. Manuscript Evaluation Report

Manuscript section	Detail comment	comments given for authors
Abstract		
Introduction		
Relevant and updated literature		
Methodology		
Results and Discussion		
Conclusions and recommendations		
References		
Additional comments		

III. Overall review evaluation format

Check in the boxes which, in your opinion, best describe the manuscript.

Review criteria	Poor (1)	Marginal (2)	Acceptable (3)	Good (4)	Excellent (5)
Formulation of the problem / Clarity of Objectives					
Quality of literature review					
Robustness of research methodology (sampling, data quality, and tools employed)					
Data analysis (scientific procedures and appropriate statistical tools employed)					
Significance of findings or discussion					
Clarity of recommendations or implications					
Conclusion (extension of results)					
Contribution to knowledge, literature and/or Practice					
Standard use of language, e.g., grammar, spelling, readability, clarity...)					
Appropriate referencing and citation					