

**Iowa State University**  
**College of Agriculture and Life Sciences**  
**Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension**  
**Peer-Review Publications Protocol**

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**IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
University Extension

## **Purpose**

The purpose of the peer-review publications protocol is to provide Extension faculty and Professional & Scientific staff with an opportunity to have Extension publications peer-reviewed. Non-Extension Faculty and Professional & Scientific staff may use the protocol to produce peer-reviewed Extension publications in conjunction with their outreach responsibilities.

## **What gets peer reviewed?**

Peer review is required for any educational publication that is published with a PMR reference number. (The PMR designation is based on the standard PM publication identification system used for most ISU Extension publications. The addition of the 'R' designates that the publication has been peer reviewed.) PMR Extension publications are intended for regional or statewide use, and they are available and useful to clientele over a period of time.

Publications assigned a PMR reference number should be directed at the needs of Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) clientele. Publications should be written for a lay and/or professional user audience. As much as possible, they should relate research-based information to practical techniques or concepts that the clientele can use.

One-time or limited-use materials such as newsletters, meeting handouts, or short course materials are not appropriate as PMR publications, nor are public relations materials. Additionally, textbooks intended primarily for academic audiences, conference proceedings, primary reports of research results, and other academic research publications are not appropriate as PMR publications.

## **Policy on PMR authorship**

The majority of authors on PMR publications must be from Iowa State University.

## **Steps of peer review process**

**Step 1.** Prior to writing a PMR publication, the primary author is encouraged to discuss its concept with a workgroup or program-coordinating body (i.e. development and delivery team or special initiative team). It also is recommended that the primary author contact Extension Communications and External Relations staff, to discuss the concept, the marketability, the form it should take, the need for it, and whether funding is available for production. These initial conversations can help focus a manuscript, making it a more viable, useful publication. At that time, there will be a discussion of a reasonable timetable for production of the publication once the peer review process is completed and the final manuscript is submitted to Extension Communications and External Relations.

**Step 2.** When preparing a publication for peer review, the authors must include the manuscript along with all content-related charts, graphs, illustrations, photographs and/or tables. **A list of references is encouraged; however, references are not to be cited in the manuscript text.** A completed copy of FORM 1 must accompany the manuscript submission.

The primary author, or if there are multiple authors from the same department, should submit the review materials to his/her Department Chair to coordinate the review process. If there are multiple

authors from more than one department, the primary author should submit the review materials to the ANR Program Director's office for coordination of the peer-review process.

In the case of publications with multiple authors, it will be the primary author's responsibility to coordinate with his/her co-authors to collect the names and contact information for suggested reviewers.

**Step 3.** The Department Chair or ANR Program Director selects and enlists two reviewers from the four suggested reviewers provided by the primary author on FORM 1. Peer reviewers are asked to review the manuscript and include specific, objective suggestions that would help the author(s) improve the manuscript.

The Department Chair or ANR Program Director has the final say on who will review the manuscript. The Department Chair or ANR Program Director has the discretion to select reviewers not suggested by the primary author.

When possible, the Department Chair or ANR Program Director will contact the selected reviewers before sending the materials to see if they will be able to conduct the review.

**A double blind process will be used to conduct the peer-review and names of reviewers will be held in confidence.**

**Step 4.** Reviewers evaluate the manuscript using the Reviewer Evaluation Form for PMR publications. Reviewers will be given 4 weeks to complete the review.

**Step 5.** Reviews are returned to the Department Chair or ANR Program Director who then summarizes the peer-reviewer comments for the author(s). If desired, the Department Chair or ANR Program Director can add his/her opinion or suggestions in the letter to the primary author. Authors will be reminded that all reviewer comments and queries should be addressed in writing and not to just send a revised manuscript back.

**Step 6.** Primary author responds in writing to all specific comments. This response is returned to the Department Chair or ANR Program Director along with a new manuscript. If the primary author fails to return a revised manuscript within 6 months from the date of formal acceptance, the author(s) will be asked to re-initiate the peer-review process.

Note: If a manuscript does not pass peer review, its primary author may appeal that decision to either his/her Department Chair or the ANR Program Director within 6 months.

**Step 7.** If any pesticide use recommendations are made in the manuscript, the Pest Management and the Environment (PME) group must be consulted. If any manure/water quality issues/regulations are discussed, the Iowa Manure Management Action Group (IMMAG) group must be consulted.

**Step 8.** When the Department Chair or ANR Program Director is satisfied with the primary author's response and revision, he/she and the primary author, complete and sign FORM 2. One copy is maintained in the Department or Program Office, a copy is given to all authors, and a copy, along with the approved materials, is sent to Extension Communications and External Relations.

**Step 9.** Extension Communications and External Relations assigns a PMR number and produces the publication. **In the section listing the author(s), the publication will carry the following statement “This publication was peer-reviewed by two independent reviewers using a double-blind process.”**

## PMR Publication Reviewer Selection Guidelines

The purpose of peer review is to bring the same intellectual rigor to PMR publications as is expected of peer-reviewed journal articles. Obviously, PMR publications are not necessarily original research. Nevertheless, the commitment by authors, reviewers, and administrators to the rigorous, anonymous, and qualified review of publications developed for users of PMR educational materials should be no less than that brought to academic journals articles.

To support this goal, a number of considerations for peer-reviewer selection include:

- Review of materials should be anonymous.
- Reviewers should be fluent in the subject matter of the publication and familiar with the characteristics of the intended audience.
- Inaccurate or incorrect (PMR) publications have the potential to do harm. Reviewers should be selected to provide the best possible assurance that publications of ISU ANR Extension are of the best possible quality.
- Where possible, an ISU campus-based specialist or faculty member should be included as a reviewer.
- Where possible, a qualified reviewer from outside the ISU system is encouraged.
- Where possible, it is strongly encouraged that an appropriate ISU Extension field specialist or representative of the intended audience should be included as a reviewer.
- When questions concerning appropriate reviewers or subject matter expertise arise, Department Chairs or the ANR Program Directors are encouraged to discuss and consult with other Department Chairs or Program Directors in other subject matter areas as necessary.
- Thought should be given to the independence of a given reviewer's perspective. While close academic or organizational affiliation should not automatically exclude an otherwise qualified reviewer, these factors should be considered.
- **A double blind review is to be conducted by withholding the author's name from reviewers and vice versa.**
- Reviewers should be qualified to assess the appropriateness of a publication to its intended audience and use.
- Review standards and reviewer selection and guidance should be consistent between Department Chairs.
- The Department Chair or ANR Program Director has the final say on the selection of reviewers.
- Reviewers will be given 4 weeks to complete the review.

## Sample Letter to Reviewers of New Manuscripts

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Manuscript title: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return review by: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Colleague:

The enclosed manuscript has been submitted to \_\_\_\_\_ Department or Program for publication. We would appreciate your review of the manuscript for technical merit, peer acceptance, informational value, and appropriateness as a (PMR) publication. It is intended for a \_\_\_\_\_ audience.

We would like to have your review by (DATE). If you are unable to review and return the material by that date, please return the materials as soon as possible, so they can be reassigned.

Reviewers' identities will be kept confidential in all cases, but portions of the comments may be reproduced verbatim for the authors. Therefore, please be as specific as possible in recording your comments and suggestions for revision and improvement.

Reviewing manuscripts is an important part of the promotion process; be sure to list this work in your merit and promotion package, if appropriate. We will provide you with a copy of the finished work when it is published.

Please make a specific recommendation on this manuscript regarding whether or not it merits publication and return the manuscript and Reviewer Evaluation Form along with your written comments to me. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Title

## Reviewer Evaluation Form for PMR Publications

Reviewer Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewer Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form and the manuscript by \_\_\_\_\_ to: [Department Chair's or Program Directors name]

Date Sent: \_\_\_\_\_

[Address] \_\_\_\_\_

[Phone, fax] \_\_\_\_\_

Author(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please comment on the following points in your review. If you want the author to address or correct specific points, please list and number these points separately. Concrete suggestions that help the author improve his/her manuscript also are welcomed.**

1. The title accurately represents the manuscript's contents.
2. The manuscript is technically sound. It is accurate and reflects good science.
3. The manuscript is up-to-date.
4. The proposed tables, charts, photos, and illustrations are suitable.
5. The writing style and organization is clear, concise, and unambiguous.
6. The content is appropriate for its audience and is in a user-friendly presentation.
7. There is a need for this publication.
8. Are you aware of other publications that adequately cover this material?  
If so, what publication(s)? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Is this publication needed in another language? What? Does content or context need to be changed for this audience?

**I recommend that this manuscript be:**

- Accepted as submitted without revision
- Accepted, contingent on major revision (subject to reviewer's verification)
- Accepted with minor revision (not subject to reviewer's verification)
- Rejected, but recommended for resubmission
- Rejected outright

Reviewer's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**The space below is for comments directed to the Department Chair or ANR Program Director only. Please use an additional blank page for your review and any specific comments intended for the author.**

## Sample Reminder Letter to Slow Reviewers

Date

Dear [reviewer's name],

I am inquiring as to the status of the manuscript [title here], which you are reviewing for possible publication by the Iowa State University Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources Program. I sent this manuscript to you on [date], and I have not yet received the reviewed copy. We would like to act on the manuscript, and yours is the last review we need. Please return it by

\_\_\_\_\_.

Many thanks for your help.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Title

## Sample Letter to an Author Whose Manuscript was Accepted by Peer Review

Date

Dear [author's name],

Your manuscript [title here] has gone through the PMR peer-review process, and I am pleased to inform you that reviewers have recommended it be accepted as a PMR publication. [Reviewers did have some minor comments and queries that must be addressed, however.]

Enclosed are the reviewers' comments. Please sign FORM 2 and return it to me along with your revised manuscript and a cover letter explaining how you dealt with reviewers' suggestions. If you disagree with their suggestions, I need to know why. We can discuss this or you may simply explain in your letter.

Please return the final manuscript to me within six months of this letter. If extenuating circumstances will prevent you from completing this within six months, please notify me. After that time, the manuscript will require a new peer review or it will be considered withdrawn.

In preparing your final manuscript, please be sure to include all tables, graphs, figures, illustrations, or photographs as separate files.

If you have any questions about the peer review, please contact me. Questions about manuscript preparation or publication production should be addressed to \_\_\_\_\_.

Thank you.

Your Name

Title

## Sample Letter to an Author Whose Manuscript was Rejected by Peer Review

Date

Dear [author's name],

Thank you for your patience while your manuscript [manuscript title] went through our peer-review process. Having a manuscript reviewed by people who are knowledgeable in your field not only helps assure us that the manuscripts we publish make the strongest possible contribution to the field, it also helps you, the author, get an impartial idea of the quality of the manuscript judged against the standards set by other published work.

Based on the results of peer review, Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) Extension cannot accept [manuscript title] for publication in its present form. The reviewers found, in particular, that [summarize comments or findings of reviewers]. If you disagree with this decision, you may appeal it to \_\_\_\_\_ within six months.

(Optional paragraph:)

The reviewers did find that your manuscript had definite strengths, including [summarize any positive comments from reviewers]. I encourage you to keep working on [topic of manuscript,] and I hope ANR Extension will be able to publish your work in the future.

If you have any questions or comments about this review process, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Your Name  
Title

## Sample Letter to an Author who is Slow to Respond to Peer Reviewers' Comments

Date

Dear [author's name],

I am inquiring as to the status of your manuscript [title here], which was peer reviewed and returned to you on [date]. We are eager to publish this material. However, I have not yet received your revised manuscript. Can I answer any questions or help you in some way to respond to the changes suggested by the peer reviewers?

If I don't receive it within \_\_\_\_ days, it must be resubmitted for peer review or will be considered withdrawn.

Sincerely,

Your Name  
Title

## **Sample Thank You Letter to Reviewers After Review has been Received**

Date

Dear [reviewer's name],

Thank you for your review of [manuscript title]. Your review was helpful in evaluating the manuscript. Be sure to note that you reviewed this (PMR) publication as evidence of your university service or professional development in your merit and promotion package, if appropriate. When this manuscript is published, you will receive a copy of the finished product.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Title

**Manuscript Submission FORM 1 for PMR Publication Peer Review**

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Suggested Reviewers:** List 4 people – not all may be asked to review. Provide contact information: name, institution, email, and phone number.

1. _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	3. _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
2. _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	4. _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

**Author comments, special circumstances:**

**Checklist:**

Have you –

- \_\_\_ 1. Used page numbered, double spaced text format?
- \_\_\_ 2. Included all figures and tables in separate electronic files from text?
- \_\_\_ 3. Checked the references cited with reference list?
- \_\_\_ 4. Checked for spelling and typographical errors?
- \_\_\_ 5. Obtained feedback/reviews from all coauthors?

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Author Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Co-author Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Co-author Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Co-author Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## PMR Publication Record FORM 2

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed by two independent reviewers using a double-blind process. Their suggestions have been incorporated or considered when preparing the final manuscript. The manuscript may proceed to be published as an ISU Extension PMR peer-reviewed publication.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Primary Author Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Department Chair or Program Leader Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

List of co-authors:

\_\_\_\_\_  
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FORM 2 July 9, 2008