

Guidelines for editorial moderation of referee reports

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to increase transparency and safeguard confidence in the selection processes of the Marsden Fund by providing guidelines for editorial moderation of referee reports.

Practice

The Royal Society Te Apārangī, acting as the Executive support for the Marsden Fund Council, expects that referees will conduct their work objectively without personal criticism of the Investigators associated with the proposals. We also expect that referees will declare competing interests and manage them appropriately. It is our view that the comments from referees will be transmitted to the authors in full. On rare occasions, however, we will redact grades that have inadvertently been entered into the body of the report by the referee.

While we agree that ‘criticisms are not necessarily unfair simply because they are expressed in robust language’ (Nature Research journals, https://www.nature.com/authors/policies/peer_review.html), we also acknowledge that applicants may be exposed to feedback that could be seen as unprofessional. Language and tone will be taken into account by the panel when they are considering Referee Reports. If a referee’s comments are considered unprofessional (in line with the Society’s Code of Professional Standards and Ethics, linked below), their report may be discounted by the panel for the current round. The panel may then request that the referee be excluded from reviewing in future rounds. Applicants may also request that specific reviewers are not invited to review their proposals in future funding rounds (see “Referees” section in the [Full Guidelines for applicants](#)).

The staff of the Royal Society Te Apārangī will use editorial practices consistent with those implemented by research publishers and the recommendations of the Committee on Publication Ethics (<https://publicationethics.org/>).

The staff of the Royal Society Te Apārangī are expected to act in a professional manner befitting the image of the Society and comply with Society’s Code of Professional Standards and Ethics in

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carrying out these duties (<https://royalsociety.org.nz/who-we-are/our-rules-and-codes/code-of-professional-standards-and-ethics/>).

History

Policy last reviewed April 2024.