UM Library Guidelines & Procedures for Assigning Peer Review Status.

This document aims to support and guide the assignment of peer-review status to items uploaded on the UM's institutional repository, OAR@UM. In particular, it clarifies the criteria for designating works as peer-reviewed, non peer-reviewed or N/A. The purpose of these classifications is to clearly distinguish formal academic outputs from informal contributions to local media and other non-academic materials archived on OAR@UM.

Peer review is a formal process where subject experts evaluate scholarly works, (such as journal articles, conference papers, or academic books) before being published. This structured assessment ensures that the research meets rigorous standards of methodological integrity, originality, and ethical significance. While an editor oversees the publication, editorial review alone does not satisfy the criteria for peer review, which requires the deep technical scrutiny of experts within the same field.

Items that are included on OAR@UM and are given a peer review designation include academic journals and articles, conference proceedings and papers presented at conferences. For the purposes of OAR@UM, books and book chapters published by UM academics and researchers are also assigned a peer review status.

The OAR@UM Team employs a range of methods to determine whether an item has undergone peer reviewing so as to assign the appropriate peer-review status. The following sections outline the methodology applied in this process.

Journal Articles

Verification is conducted through consultation of the journal's official website. When a journal operates under a peer-review process, it is typically indicated in its description. Peer review is widely regarded as a marker of scholarly quality and academic excellence. This would be explicitly stated, with statements such as; "This journal uses a double-blind peer-review process", "All submissions are subject to external peer review", or "Reviewed by at least two independent experts". Articles that have been peer reviewed also usually adhere to a recognised academic structure and generally include the following elements:

- An Abstract
- An Introduction
- A Literature Review and Methods / Methodology
- Results

- A Discussion
- A Conclusion
- References / Works Cited

Additionally, these articles typically present the following characteristics:

- Author affiliations (universities, research institutes, etc.)
- Citations
- Formal and/or Technical Language
- Charts, Tables, Statistics and Data Sets

Reviewing by an editor before going to print does not meet the criteria for peer review. Peer review essentially means that a written work has been evaluated by experts in the field who have verified the contents and sources within that particular work. With journal articles and other forms of academic work, this is a formalised process and journals promote the fact that their articles have gone through this review process. Reviewing solely by an editor does not replace the formal process of peer review.

When it comes to preprints, these are not considered to be peer-reviewed as they are the version of the article that has been submitted to the publisher for peer-reviewing. These can be uploaded to the repository and will be given a non peer-reviewed designation. It is the responsibility of the author to inform the Open Science Department that the article has passed the peer reviewing process so that its status can be updated. If the journal is peer reviewed, postprints (author accepted manuscripts) are considered to be peer reviewed.

Journal pre-proofs are Articles in Press that have been peer reviewed and accepted for publication. They have undergone enhancements after acceptance, such as the addition of a cover page and metadata, and formatting for readability, but are not yet definitive versions of record. Corrected proofs are Articles in Press that contain the author's corrections. Final citation details (e.g., volume and/or issue number, publication year, and page numbers) still need to be added and the text might change before final publication. For OAR@UM purposes these are considered as peer reviewed.

Books

The peer-review process for books varies from that of journal articles. Books are not reviewed in a single, uniform way, and whether they are peer reviewed or not depends largely on the type of book and the publisher. Scholarly or academic books, such as research monographs and edited volumes published by established academic or university presses, are usually subject to the peer-review process. This typically involves external experts in the field evaluating the book proposal and very often, the full manuscript or selected chapters. Their feedback focuses on the scholarly contribution, including scientific research, methodology, coherence of the argument and suitability for the field, with authors normally expected to revise the work before publication. While this process is rigorous, it is often less standardised and less visible than journal peer review.

Other kinds of books such as edited volumes may undergo a combination of peer review and editorial review. Individual chapters are commonly reviewed by the volume editors and, depending on the publisher's policies, may also be assessed by external reviewers. The level of

scrutiny can therefore vary from chapter to chapter, although reputable academic publishers usually apply clear quality controls. Conversely, textbooks are generally not subjected to peer review in the same rigorous academic sense. Such textbooks are reviewed internally by publishers, subject specialists, or instructors, with an emphasis on accuracy, clarity and pedagogical value rather than on original research. Usually they are not published to present original research but rather to aid classroom instruction, therefore for OAR@UM purposes these are not usually considered peer reviewed. Finally, trade books and popular non-fiction titles are not peer reviewed since these are evaluated by professional editors with a focus on readability and appeal to a general audience rather than scholarly validation.

Conference Papers

Conference papers differ from journal articles and books. Conference papers and conference proceedings can be peer reviewed but the level, timing and rigor of review vary depending on the discipline, the conference and the publisher. In many fields, especially STEM, conferences function as dynamic forums for presenting preliminary findings and original research in progress. In disciplines such as the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, conferences typically serve as avenues for completed research. Both are considered part of the peer-review process.

At most established academic conferences, submitted papers or abstracts are reviewed by a programme committee or external reviewers with expertise in the topic. This review usually takes place before the conference and determines whether the paper is accepted for presentation. Reviewers typically assess relevance to the conference theme, originality, methodological soundness and clarity. Based on these reviews, submissions may be accepted, rejected or accepted with revisions. However, the review is often faster and shorter than journal peer review and reviewers may have limited time to provide detailed feedback.

Conference proceedings, meaning the published collection of conference papers, generally inherit the peer review status of the conference itself. If a conference uses a formal peer review process for submissions, then its proceedings are usually considered peer-reviewed. This is common for conference proceedings published by recognised academic publishers such as IEEE, ACM, SpringerNature or Elsevier. In these cases, the proceedings are often indexed in major databases and clearly described as “refereed” or “peer-reviewed.” Nevertheless, the review applied to proceedings papers is usually lighter than journal peer review with fewer reviewers and less opportunity for multiple rounds of revision.

There are also conferences where only abstracts are peer-reviewed while the full papers included in the proceedings undergo minimal editorial checks. In such cases, the proceedings are sometimes described as “reviewed” rather than fully peer-reviewed and their scholarly weight is typically lower. At the other end of the spectrum, some workshops and symposia apply editorial or community review only, or no formal review at all thus, focusing on networking, dissemination or emerging ideas.

Different academic fields treat conference papers differently. In computer science and engineering, top-tier conferences are highly selective and their proceedings are often treated as equivalent to journal articles. However, in humanities and social sciences, conference papers are usually seen as preliminary outputs, with the expectation that the work will later be developed into a journal article or monograph.

In summary, conference papers or conference proceedings vary in the extent of the peer-review process they employ. This ranges from rigorous evaluation to minimal or no review at all. Accordingly, the critical consideration is not whether a work is labelled a “conference paper,” but rather how the conference structures, implements and documents its review process.

When it comes to OAR@UM, Library staff will review submitted conference proceedings. These will be assigned the peer-reviewed designation if said proceedings have been officially published.

Reports

In general, most reports are not subject to formal academic peer review; however, some may undergo such review depending on the nature of the report and the issuing organisation. Annual reports, strategic plans, departmental reports or policy briefs are typically subject to internal or editorial review rather than independent external peer review. These are checked for accuracy, clarity, consistency and alignment with institutional objectives. To this effect, reports are generally classified as grey literature in research contexts. When it comes to OAR@UM, reports are labelled as administrative or research reports and are not given the designation of peer review.

Governmental and intergovernmental reports can differ significantly in their level of scrutiny. Some major international scientific assessments, such as those produced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and other UN cross-government reports, undergo extensive multi-stage expert and governmental review processes. Sometimes, this process can be as rigorous as, or even more complex than, traditional journal peer review. However, many other government or policy reports are reviewed internally, assessed by named experts, or opened to public consultation without following a formal anonymous peer-review model.

Technical reports, working papers and commissioned research reports also vary in their review procedures. They are often used to disseminate early findings or fulfil contractual obligations and may be reviewed by the commissioning body or by selected subject experts. While this can involve substantive expert evaluation, it is typically not conducted as anonymous, independent peer review. Consequently, in research evaluation systems, reports are generally regarded as non peer-reviewed outputs unless the issuing organisation explicitly documents a formal peer review process.

In cases where the peer review status of any item is in dispute, the Open Science Department will follow the methodology outlined in the SOP ZRC-001-04. In cases related to new age media or where peer-review status is not as clear cut, the Open Science Department will make a decision based on the information available and following best practices/standards in the field.

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