# Guidelines for Reviewers

At BJALS, we strive for a constructive and supportive peer review process. We aim to provide useful feedback for authors to enable them to make improvements to their submissions. We ask reviewers to give clear and helpful feedback which is supportive and honest, concise and returned promptly.

## ****1 Some considerations before agreeing to review****

**Before agreeing to review for BJALS, please note the following:**

* Communications sent to persons conducting a peer review are privileged confidential documents and should be dealt with as such.
* If it appears that a conflict of interest exists or may arise, you should make the editor aware of this as soon as possible.

Time limits – these are central to the editorial process. Sometimes it may be possible to agree an extension or to accept a brief report. If it appears that you will have difficulty meeting the deadline, please let the editor know so they can inform the author if there is to be a delay. If you feel unable to submit a timely report, it would assist the editorial team if you could recommend an alternative reviewer or someone whose judgement you trust.

## ****2 Writing a review: important points****

* The main areas on which you should comment as a reviewer are the originality, presentation, relevance, and significance of the paper’s substance to the readership of the journal.
* It is not necessary for you to agree with the author’s opinions, but you should allow them to stand, provided relevant legal and factual assertions are supported by citations to authority.
* Is the paper likely to be cited by other researchers?
* Comments should be suitable for transmission to the author(s); BJALS aims to nurture potential authors and comments should be sensitively phrased so that authors fully understand what actions are required to improve their papers. Reviewers should avoid generalized statements along with any negative comments which are irrelevant or not constructive.

**Specific questions**

* Is the paper **original**?
* Is the research **topical** or does it break **new ground**?
* Does it **add to existing legal thought or knowledge** in this subject area?
* Does it significantly **develop existing work** of the author or others?
* Does the paper fall within the journal’s **remit**?
* Would the paper be more **appropriate** for another journal?
* Should it be **shortened** and reconsidered in another form?
* Would the paper be of **interest** to the readership of the journal?
* Is there an **abstract** as well as a **conclusion**? Is the paper complete?
* Is the submission presented in **American English** and of an **acceptable standard** for publication in BJALS? If the author is not a native English speaker, would the text benefit from revision by a native speaker? Reviewers are not expected to proof read the work but comments on areas of concern are helpful.
* Is any methodological statement and any analysis provided both **accurate** and **appropriate**?
* Is the **significance and impact** **factor** of the paper high or low?
* Are all **relevant** accompanying **data, citations, or references** given by the author?

**3. The recommendation**

Your recommendation should be one of the following:

* **Accept** – if the paper is suitable for publication in its current form.
* **Accept with minor revisions** – if the paper will be ready for publication after slight revisions. You should provide a list of the revisions you recommend the author should make.
* **Accept subject to major revisions** – if the paper would benefit from substantial changes such as providing extensive citations to authority, widening of the literature review, or rewriting sections of the text.
* **Reject** – if the paper is not suitable for publication BJALS or if the required revisions are too substantial for the submission to continue being considered in its current form.

## ****4 Revisions****

Authors are asked to submit a list of their changes and any comments for transmission to the reviewers when responding to reviewer feedback. The revised version will usually be returned to the original reviewer, if possible, for confirmation that revisions have been carried out satisfactorily.

## ****5 Sample comments****

By way of illustration, we offer a few examples of the kind of feedback you might give on an author’s work. These are not intended as boilerplate responses rather your review should, of course, reflect the strengths and weaknesses of the paper under consideration.

### ****Positive comments****

* The paper is well-written and in a lively style that holds the reader’s attention.
* The depth of treatment is appropriate to the target audience for BJALS.
* This subject is currently the focus of extensive academic debate. The author(s) have used this paper to make significant contributions to that debate and offer important new insights.
* This paper is a wide-ranging and masterful summary of recent developments in a complex field. I recommend unreservedly its acceptance for publication after a few Bluebook formatting errors and other minutiae have been dealt with.
* Given the publication constraints, the author(s) have produced an impressively comprehensive literature review which affords a synopsis of current research in the field. The accompanying bibliography is likely to prove an indispensable resource for both researchers and practitioners.
* This is a well-researched piece that identifies an important gap in the literature.

### ****When constructive criticism is required****

* In the third section I would have wished to see more analysis of…
* Overall I do not think that this article contains sufficient citations to authority to support the author(s)’ conclusions made on page N, lines x-y.
* I would strongly advise the author(s) of this paper to rewrite their conclusion to produce a better summary of their findings and the significance of their impact on [X].
* The author(s) research reaches some interesting conclusions about .... However, there is insufficient discussion of the significance of this and what its implications are.
* The discussion of [X] could be expanded profitably to show…
* The authors could strengthen their argument by…
* The paper would be significantly improved with greater attention to providing full citations to authority for all propositions of law and fact…
* The abstract is unnecessarily verbose and goes far beyond simply summarizing the scope and conclusions of the paper. Much of the “abstract” would be better located within the paper’s introductory section.
* If this paper is to be published, the author(s) needs to attend to the following matters...

### ****When linguistic alterations are required****

* This paper would benefit from greater attention to proof reading. It includes numerous grammatical and syntactical solecisms that at times make comprehension difficult. I suspect that the author(s) are not native English speakers and this paper would benefit from professional editorial attention.
* The paper requires stylistic changes in its expression to make a clearer and more cogent argument.
* There are a few sections that require rephrasing for clarity.