The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning
Publication and double-blind peer-review process

What is this document?
This document explains The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning’s (IJTL) double-blind peer-review and publication process. Every manuscript submitted for consideration undergoes the entire process, provided that the submitted manuscript meets the journal’s required standards. This process is divided into five phases.

How is this document organised?
This document is divided into three sections:
1. The review process in five phases;
2. A diagram of the double-blind peer-review process; and
3. Some questions answered.

In each of these sections, different aspects of the review process are explained, from author submission to acceptance or rejection by the reviewers, and, if applicable, the revision process after post-review responses. This document has been composed to unpack stakeholders and the multiple dimensions involved in this process.

1. The review process in five phases

Phase 1
Main actor: Author
Authors upload manuscripts onto an online submission portal. The IJTL charges no author processing charges (APCs) or page fees. An online journal management system (JMS) is used to store and to track submitted articles. The Editorial Team access and update pertinent information by means of the JMS. Authors are required to sign a Confirmation of Submission for Review which also confirms that their manuscript is not under consideration at any other publication. Authors are furthermore required to submit a fully marked-up similarity report generated by any plagiarism-detection software such as Turnitin, which will be scrutinised for plagiarism. No article that contains plagiarism will be considered for publication in the journal.
Phase 2:  
**Main actor: Editorial Team**  
The Editor-in-Chief and Managing Editor determine whether the manuscript falls within the scope of the publication. If it does not, it is not accepted. If it does but fails to meet the journal’s requirements for submission (a full list of which can be found in the Editorial Policy) or is not sufficiently scientifically rigorous, the article will also not be accepted. Where an article fails to meet the IJTL’s requirements but is deemed to be worth publishing after some improvement, a suitably qualified internal academic is identified to review the manuscript to assist the author to enhance the article before the double-blind peer-review process can begin. Only once an article meets scientific standards will it be sent to suitably qualified external reviewers.

Phase 3:  
**Main actors: Reviewers**  
Each article is reviewed by at least two reviewers who are not remunerated for their services. The Editorial Team coordinates the review, ensuring that there is no obvious conflict of interest. Reviewers are also requested to decline the review if their affiliation or knowledge about the research can in any way affect their impartiality and objectivity. Reviewers determine the manuscript’s suitability for publication. Articles can be:  
- (a) rejected,  
- (b) accepted with minor revisions,  
- (c) accepted with major revisions,  
- (d) accepted without revisions, or  
- (e) sent for an additional review in the case of a discrepancy between reviewers.  
Should the outcome of at least two reviews differ, a third review is used to carry the vote.

Phase 4:  
**Main actors: Editorial Team and Authors**  
After the review process, consolidated, anonymised reviewer reports and, when applicable, marked-up manuscripts with reviewer comments are sent to authors. The Editorial Team coordinates revisions with the author in case of scenario (b) in phase 3. In case of scenario (c) in phase 3, the reviewers re-examine the revised manuscript. The Editor-in-Chief coordinates the revision process with the author. If the Editor-in-Chief deems a second opinion necessary, a reviewer is again recruited for counsel. Articles accepted for publication undergo extensive copy editing and reference-and-citation verification. The Editor-in-Chief works closely with the
author during this phase. Once all the necessary changes are made, and the article is deemed ready for publication, authors are notified that the article is accepted for publication. Prior to publication of an article, the authors are notified of the edition in which the article will appear.

**Phase 5:**

*Main actors: Editorial Team and Publisher*

Accepted articles are typeset and the Editor-in-Chief and the Managing Editor approve the Journal for publication. The IJTL is a fully open access journal that is published online. Often, due to the IJTL’s acceptance rate, which is between 50% and 60%, as well as to the large number of submissions received, the Editorial Team cannot guarantee upfront in which edition the accepted article will be published. After publication, authors are sent a copy of the PDF version of the edition in which their article appears.

2. **A diagram of the double-blind peer-review process**

*NOTE:* Should the review yield that an article can be accepted, with or without changes, the author will be given an opportunity to resubmit the revised manuscript. Should the review yield that an article cannot be accepted for publication the author will not be given another opportunity to resubmit the same article to the IJTL. An author may, however, submit a different article, which will be subject to the same process. Additionally, after step five, an article that has been rejected may be resubmitted for review via the online submission portal, and an article that has been accepted will move on to be published, thereby ending the cycle displayed below.
3. Some questions answered

Do you have to pay to have your article double-blind peer-reviewed and published?
No. You will not have to pay to have your article processed. However, any services specific to your article’s production and revision, such as editing, formatting or formula debugging, are for your pocket.

Can I submit more than one article at a time?
No. The Editorial Team will only consider one submission per author at a time. This rule applies even if a single author is a co-author of more than one article. Should an article be accepted, an author can only submit again three editions after the accepted article has been published. Should an article be rejected, an author may submit the same, but modified, or another article for consideration.

How will the Editorial Team communicate with you?
The Editorial Team will communicate with you by means of email after your article has been submitted through the online submission portal. Further communication will be organised according to the phases elaborated above. This is done to facilitate orientation within the publication and double-blind peer-review process. The subject line in emails will be your guide as to the progress of your review.

How long will you wait for feedback after submitting your article?
Although the Editorial Team of the IJTL strives to get all articles reviewed promptly, it is important to note that, at times, suitably qualified reviewers are not always immediately available. Furthermore, the IJTL receives vast numbers of articles for consideration and the publication process itself is protracted. The Editorial Team, however, does strive to communicate regularly and as openly as the double-blind peer-review process allows.

Should you declare that you received help?
Yes, when appropriate. Should you have been assisted by a supervisor or another researcher, you must disclose this. If your supervisors should not to be considered as authors, but their contributions helped create the academic backbone of the article, their names will be published in the author bio along with the author’s name.

Should you declare through which institution you conducted your research, and should you tell them about your article?
Yes, when appropriate. In cases where your research is affiliated to an institution, for example, if you are a PhD student at a university and you base your article on findings extracted from your thesis, this should be disclosed to the Editorial Team of the IJTL. Furthermore, your supervisors during the thesis-writing process must be
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made aware of the possible publication of the article. Email communication declaring such disclosure will suffice.

**Should you provide your ethical clearance?**
Yes, in some cases. In research papers that document experimentation with or on human beings, the Editorial Team will insist that you provide the appropriate institutionally affiliated ethical clearance certificate.

**Should you respect the privacy rights of your research subjects?**
Absolutely. In every manuscript that documents data collected from human beings, the Editorial Team will require a statement in the manuscript that clearly states that the privacy rights as well as the dignity of these human beings are observed.

**After your article is accepted, should you resubmit a plagiarism report?**
No, you do not have to. A single similarity report from Turnitin or another, similar plagiarism-detection platform will suffice. You must send this along with your submission.

**Will the Editorial Team do the plagiarism check for you?**
No. The Editorial Team will not consider this. You must do this as part of your submission.

**Is The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning accredited?**
Yes. The IJTL is accredited by the South African Department of Higher Education (DHET); it appears on the list of DHET-accredited journals, which can be found online.

**How should you submit your revised article if it is accepted by the reviewers?**
Firstly, you should submit a MSWord version of your article in which you tracked all the changes made in accordance with reviewer feedback. Here, you may respond to every reviewer comment in the text as it is a helpful aid. Secondly, you should submit a separate document, in table format, that documents each reviewer comment in one column and a note on how and where you addressed this in another. You should submit a clean MSWord version of your revised article. You thus need to submit at least three documents. Should you have any other means of recording changes, you are welcome to submit this, too.