



PROMOTION AND PEER REVIEW MECHANISM IN THE UNIVERSITY

Presented by

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1.0. Protocol:

2.0. Introduction

Promotion exercise is a universal phenomenon in universities across the world. It is an exercise designed for career progression, and its dynamics may vary from one institution to the other. Whatever may be unique to every university, Peer Review is common to evaluation of academics' publications. We can identify 2 broad types – peer review of articles, as well as peer review of publications. With peer review of articles, we have pre-publication review and post-publication review. We also have the academic post-publications review for career placement, advancement or growth. Peer Review thus is a useful tool which assists universities to gauge the quality of academics in terms of writing and publishing.

3.0. Objectives of the presentation

To give this presentation a clear focus, the following objectives are raised:

- i. to discuss the promotion guidelines in ACU;
- ii. to define Peer Review as a process in academic publications evaluation (in a university), and identify its main types;
- iii. to enumerate the various steps involved in Peer Review;
- iv. to identify and discuss the various challenges in the Peer Review process;
- v. to discuss the importance of Peer Review; and
- vi. to present some samples of responses from peer review exercises for workshop discussion.

3.1. Promotion Guidelines in Ajayi Crowther University (ACU) -

Promotion procedure in ACU

- a. Types of Promotions – normal, notational
- b. General Guidelines –
 - It is an annual exercise;
 - It shall be to established positions only;
 - It is applicable only to confirmed staff;
 - It is not applicable to contract officers;
 - There should be no financial disadvantage consequent on promotion;
 - An academic staff spends a minimum of 3 years after a last promotion/appointment before the next one;
 - Promotion takes effect on 1st of October of every year;
- c. Expression of interest;
- d. Submission of application;
- e. Evaluation of candidate(s) along the metrics of scholarship - *publications, peer recognition, current research, and academic linkage*;
- f. Meetings at the Dept., Faculty, and the University's AP&C;

- g. Evaluation of publications – for cases of senior lecturers and professorial grades

Promotion and appointment to Professorial Grades

For promotion to the grade of Associate Professor, the candidate shall be fully assessed on the following criteria:

- a. Possession of a Higher Degree of Ph.D.;
- b. Adequate experience, including, where applicable, relevant professional competence;
- c. Outstanding Research and Publications (external assessment);
- d. Evidence of Postgraduate Supervision (Internal/External);
- e. Adequate teaching ability for a minimum of 3 years as Senior Lecturer

For promotion to the grade of Professor, the candidate shall be fully assessed on the following criteria:

- a. Possession of a Ph.D.;
- b. Adequate experience, including (where applicable) relevant professional competence and registration with professional bodies;
- c. Outstanding research and publications (external assessment);
- d. Exceptional teaching ability (internal assessment);
- e. Evidence of leadership in research and postgraduate supervision (internal/external);
- f. Administrative ability and competence (internal assessment);
- g. A minimum of three (3) years teaching experience, after attaining the rank of Associate Professor (internal assessment); and
- h. Community Service (internal assessment)

On promotion and appointment to professorial grades, the following shall apply:

1. when the Appointments and Promotions Committee is satisfied that there is a prima facie case, it shall seek the advice of three (3) external assessors who are recognized experts in their fields;
2. a candidate shall be appointed or promoted to the professorial grade if there are two positive external assessors' reports regarding the candidate's publications, leadership and competence;
3. a candidate seeking appointment or promotion to the professorial grade must have at least certain percentage of their publications in print; etc.

The total score for scholarship is computed from all the scores from *publications, Peer Recognition, Current Research, and Academic Linkage*.

Acceptable categories of publication for promotion exercise

The following categories of publications with distinctive academic quality, originality, and contribution to knowledge are recognized for assessment:

- a. A Referred Book
- b. Journal Articles
- c. Articles in Referred Conference Proceedings

- d. Monographs
- e. Technical Reports
- f. Patents
- g. Chapters in Books
- h. Edited Books
- i. Creative Works etc.

It should be noted that each of the listed categories has descriptions, specifications and acceptable criteria to follow.

3.2. Peer review in academic publications

The focus of this section is the pre-publication journal articles. Pre-publication peer review is a process used in academic publishing to ensure the quality and credibility of scholarly work before it is published in a journal or other academic outlet. This type of peer review is a critical component of the academic publishing process that contributes to the integrity and advancement of scholarly communication.

A peer reviewed journal article is an article that has been reviewed and chosen for publication by the author's professional peers. These peers are scholars in the field, who sit on the editorial board of a journal which is usually published by a professional organization or a university press.

When a source has been peer-reviewed it has undergone the review and scrutiny of a review board of colleagues in the author's field. They evaluate this source as part of the body of research for a particular discipline, and make recommendations regarding its publication in a journal. Peer reviewed articles can also be known as scholarly or refereed articles.

The journey from research to journal publication is not a simple one. The first step is completing a study/research, and writing a report. It is good practice to send the paper to a colleague to check for **sense-making** and thereafter for **language editing** before submitting it to a journal editor. Each journal has its own specific set of guidelines, which must be strictly painstakingly followed.

If the article gets accepted for review, the journal editor will send it to a number of peer reviewers for a **blind review**. The peers will each advise the editor to either recommend to **approve the article** (this normally does not happen on the first review), **send it back for revision**, or **reject it**. If revisions are recommended, the process continues until a final decision can be made on whether or not to publish the article.

Types of Peer Review

- **Single-blind:** Reviewers know the authors' identities, but authors do not know the reviewers.
- **Double-blind:** Both authors and reviewers are unaware of each other's identities.
- **Open:** Both parties know each other's identities, thus promoting transparency.

3.3. Steps in the Peer Review Process

- a. **Submission:** An author submits a manuscript to a journal editor for consideration.
- b. **Initial Evaluation:** The journal's editorial team evaluates the submission for relevance and quality, and decides whether to send it for peer review or not.
- c. **Reviewer Selection:** The editor selects experts in the field (peers) to review the manuscript. Typically, this involves two or more independent reviewers.
- d. **Review Process:**
 - Reviewers assess the manuscript for *originality, methodology, significance, and clarity*.
 - They provide feedback, suggest revisions, and may recommend *acceptance, rejection, or a request for revision*.
- e. **Decision:** The editor makes a decision based on the reviewers' feedback. The possible outcomes include:
 - Accepting the manuscript;
 - Requesting for revisions (minor or major) before considering it for publication; or
 - Outright rejection of the manuscript.
- f. **Revisions:** If revisions are requested, the author will revise the manuscript accordingly, and resubmit it for further review.
- g. **Publication:** Once the manuscript meets the journal's acceptable standards, it is accepted and published.

3.4. Main challenges in the Peer Review process

The peer review process, while essential for maintaining quality in academic publishing, faces several challenges. Some of them are:

a. Bias related issues

- **Reviewer Bias:** Personal or professional biases may affect reviewers' assessments.
- **Institutional Bias:** Favouring work from particular prestigious institutions can skew reviews.

b. Lack of Qualified Reviewers

- Finding experts who have the necessary expertise and are willing to participate can be difficult, thus leading to delays.

c. Time Consumption

- The peer review process can be slow, causing long wait times for authors and journal houses. Such often cause delay in dissemination of research results and findings. Some processes can take between 6 months and 18 months.

d. Quality of Reviews

- Variability in the thoroughness and quality of reviews can affect outcomes. Some reviewers may provide inadequate feedback, based on a number of factors.

e. Conflicts of Interest

- Reviewers may have conflicts of interest (e.g., personal relationships with authors/cultural, religious, political or social beliefs) that can compromise objectivity.

f. Ethical Issues

- Instances of plagiarism, data fabrication, or other ethical violations may go unnoticed during peer review.

g. Overload of Review Requests

- Experienced researchers often receive numerous requests to review, leading to burnout and reduced quality in reviews.

h. Open vs. Closed Review

- The debate over the merits of open versus closed peer review can introduce tensions about accountability and transparency.

i. Pace of Publication

- The pressure to publish can lead to rushed or superficial reviews, thus impacting the thoroughness of evaluation.

j. Accessibility

- Researchers from underrepresented groups or developing countries may face barriers in participating as reviewers; a situation that can limit diverse perspectives.

These challenges can hinder the effectiveness of the peer review process, thus prompting ongoing discussions about improving and reforming the system to enhance research quality and integrity.

For this presentation, I have decided to address the **challenge of bias** in peer review.

How to effectively mitigate reviewer bias

Mitigating reviewer bias in the peer review process is essential to ensure fair and objective evaluation of scholarly work. Here are some strategies that journal editors can employ for addressing this issue of bias:

a. Engage in Double-Blind Review

- **Engage in anonymous submissions** - where both authors and reviewers are unaware of each other's identities. Such will reduce biases related to reputation or affiliation.

b. Have a diverse reviewers pool

- **Broadening of selection criteria** - by engaging a diverse group of reviewers from various backgrounds can help minimize biases based on culture, institution, or field.

c. Providing clear guidelines for reviewers through standardized criteria

- **Provision of detailed guidelines and checklists** – will help reviewers focus on specific metrics, thereby promoting consistency and fairness in evaluations.

d. Engaging in training of reviewers

- **Bias awareness training** - will provide education on common cognitive biases that can help reviewers recognize and purge their own biases.

e. Focus on encouraging constructive feedback

- Reviewers should be advised to focus on evidence and specific examples from the manuscript as basis for their evaluations, rather than personal opinions.

f. Conflict of interest disclosure should be encouraged

- Requiring reviewers to mandatorily declare any potential conflicts of interest can help editors make informed decisions about reviewer selection.

g. Multi-Reviewer systems

- **Using multiple reviewers should be encouraged.** This is relying on multiple independent reviewers to help balance out individual biases, thus leading to a more rounded objective evaluation.

h. Editorial Oversight through editor intervention

- Editors should actively monitor reviewer comments for bias, and may seek additional opinions if biases are suspected.

i. Transparency in the process can be enhanced through open review system

- Implementing open peer review, where reviews are published alongside the article, encourages accountability, and reduces biases.

j. Feedback on Reviews through reviewer performance assessment (RPA):

- Providing feedback on the quality and fairness of reviews can promote improvements in future evaluations.

By implementing these strategies, the academic community can work to minimize reviewer bias, and ensure a more equitable and effective peer review process that enhances the quality of published research results and findings.

3.5. Importance of Peer Review

In an accredited journal, every article is verified as scientifically reliable and valid through a peer review process. The process that the researchers have followed, their claims and conceptualisation must be underpinned by verifiable principles.

The peer review process serves as a quality control mechanism. Peer review means that a board of reviewers, who are experts in the field, review the articles submitted by researchers for relevance, quality and adherence to scientific standards and the editorial standards of a journal before the articles can be accepted for publication. Peer review is done blind (i.e. without the reviewer knowing who the author is) to help eliminate bias. The peer review process is usually organised by the editor of a journal to achieve:

- **Quality Assurance:** It helps maintain high standards in academic publishing.
- **Credibility:** Peer-reviewed articles are generally seen as more reliable and valid.
- **Constructive Feedback:** Authors receive valuable insights to improve their current and future academic work.

3.6. Some sample documents for discussion

Here, some samples of reviewer's comments are presented for discussion

- a. Peer review examples;
- b. Peer response sample (author's response to peer reviewer's comments);
- c. Editorial response to reviewers' comment; and
- d. Samples of Recommendations on promotion/appointment to professorial cadre

4.0. Conclusion

In this presentation, we have been able to look at the key issues surrounding promotion dynamics in ACU, with particular focus on fundamental metrics of peer review of academic publications. We have also looked at some examples of documents relating to peer review, and promotion exercise. The take home from this presentation is that a good mastery of the guidelines of a particular university is a necessity for adequate career growth, placement and advancement.

Thank you.