GUIDELINES FOR REVIEWERS

Reviewing of publication
The purpose of peer-review is to improve the quality of the manuscript submitted for publication. The conscientious and impartial peer-review is a time-consuming task that is essential to ensuring the quality of scientific articles. *Geologica Balcanica* is very grateful to reviewers for the time and efforts invested in the review process. The main goal of the peer-review is to ensure a fair, professional and timely evaluation of the material that will eventually be published. The manuscripts submitted to *Geologica Balcanica* are peer-reviewed by at least two referees. We use various sources to identify potential reviewers, including the Editorial Board and the Editorial Advisory Board, as well as personal contacts and scientific bibliographic databases. Authors may, however, provide the contact details of four potential reviewers for their paper. Independent experts outside the institution of the authors are highly preferred. Decisions concerning acceptance or rejection of a paper are based on the importance, originality and clarity of the manuscript, as well as the credibility and reliability of the study and its relevance to the competence of our journal. Reviewers’ evaluations are essential to our decision as to whether to accept or decline a manuscript for publication. The thorough and honest feedback from the reviewers is greatly appreciated. We ask our reviewers for adequate revisions (if necessary with a second round of peer-reviews) before a final decision is made. The final decision for publication of a manuscript is made by the Editorial Board, usually in consultation with the members of the Editorial Advisory Board. Accepted articles are copy-edited and English-edited.

Responsibility of reviewers
The reviewers are responsible for the critical reading and evaluation of a manuscript in their field. The reviews should be conducted fairly and objectively. Personal criticism of the author(s) is unacceptable; it can lead to ignoring valuable comments, which will not benefit either the journal or the authors. Criticism should be fair, but not based on differences of opinion, and should aim to help authors improve their work. Professional style should be used in the preparation of comments. Neglecting comments, *ad hominem* remarks and offensive exclamations should also be avoided. Reviewers should be consistent, not to write promising comments and then filling negatively the Reviewer’s Checklist (or vice versa). Even if a manuscript is deemed seriously flawed, the reviewer should try to give the author(s) suggestions on how it can be improved.

Reviewers should decline to review manuscripts, in which they have conflicts of interest from competitive, collaborative or other relationships with any of the authors or institutions related to the papers. In case of a previous or current relationship with both the author(s) and the authors’
institutions that may be construed as creating a conflict of interest, but no actual conflict exists, the reviewers should include this issue in their confidential comments to the Chief Editor. Cases of manuscripts previously reviewed by reviewers for another journal are not considered a conflict of interest. In these cases, reviewers should notify the editor whether or not the manuscripts have been improved, compared to previous versions.

Reviewers must respect the confidentiality of manuscripts they received. Reviews and recommendations should also be considered confidential. Unpublished manuscripts should not be discussed with a third party. Information in manuscripts under review should not be used in the work of reviewers. Manuscripts may not be submitted to a colleague, who is better qualified to review the paper, without the permission of the Chief Editor. Direct contact with the authors is not allowed during the review process. If a manuscript is received on a topic that does not sufficiently correspond to the reviewer’s area of expertise, the reviewer should notify the Chief Editor as soon as possible and may recommend an alternative reviewer. If reviewers choose to remain anonymous, they should avoid comments that may serve as clues to their identity.

If a manuscript is suspected to be a substantial copy of another published or unpublished scientific work, the reviewer should notify the Chief Editor, citing this work in as much detail as possible. Usually, it is very difficult to find a fraudster, but if there are reasonable assumptions that the results in the manuscript are incorrect or deliberately manipulated, the reviewer is obliged to discuss this with the editor. In any other case of unethical behaviour related to the manuscripts, the reviewers should raise these concerns with the Chief Editor.

All published contributions in Geologica Balcanica are in English. The Editorial Board often receives manuscripts that are written by non-native English-speakers. In these cases, reviewers should not forget to distinguish the best possible between the quality of writing and the quality of ideas. Writing problems could be fixed either during the revision or by partnering with a co-author who is fluent in English.

Editorial procedure

Reviewer’s Comments to the Editor and to the Author should be submitted to the Chief Editor and/or Editorial Secretary of the journal only. These should also include any possible conflicts of interest. Comments and constructive criticism of the manuscript should be filled in the Reviewer’s Checklist. Any review should include both general and specific comments, which, whether positive or negative, must be substantiated with specific evidence. Reviewers’ comments should be constructive and designed to improve the manuscript. These should be made as complete and detailed as possible, with clear views, enough supportive arguments and references as necessary. Comments should also clearly opine on the strengths, weaknesses, relevance, originality and contributions of the manuscript. Reviewers’ comments should contain clear and reasoned recommendations for the publication of the manuscript. If reviewers feel unqualified to address certain aspects of the manuscript, they are kindly asked to include a statement to identify those areas.

Points to be considered by reviewers:

- Is the manuscript’s subject suitable for publication in our journal?
- Is the research ethical and have the relevant approvals been obtained?
- Are the title, abstract and keywords informative, relevant, and do they clearly reflect the major point(s) of the manuscript?
• Does the introduction summarize the fundamentals, give a critical evaluation of the previous research on the topic, and state comprehensively the objectives?
• Is the description of the methods and/or experimental work adequate?
• Do the authors accurately explain how the data was collected? Does the manuscript clarify what type of data is recorded? Are the authors accurate in describing the measurements?
• Does the paper contain unpublished data, new interpretations and/or hypotheses?
• Does the length of the manuscript correspond to the content and should any parts of it be expanded, condensed, combined or removed?
• Is the content well-structured and concise? Is the text clearly and lucidly written?
• Are the results and interpretations supported by data? Are they easily verifiable by examining tables and figures?
• Are the number and quality of the illustrations and tables suitable?
• Are all illustrations and tables correctly referred to in the text?
• Is information in the tables and figures redundant? Is it repeated in the text?
• Do the references cover both the most recent and the past activities in the field? Are any key citations missing? Are some citations superfluous?
• Do the conclusions sound convincing?
• Does the manuscript comply with the Guide for Authors?

**Technical details in the review**

All manuscripts sent for publication in *Geologica Balcanica*, including research papers, short communications reflecting interesting results, regional syntheses, review articles, book reviews, short contributions and abstracts from recent workshops, symposia and congresses, are peer-reviewed. The Chief Editor of the journal performs an initial check of the suitability of the manuscript upon receipt. Timelines in reviewing is essential. Upon agreement to participate in the review process, reviewers are expected to fulfill their commitments not later than a month since receiving the materials. If reviewers consider that they cannot complete the review within this time frame, they should notify the Chief Editor and, if possible, suggest an alternative reviewer. If reviewers have agreed to evaluate a manuscript but will no longer be able to complete the work before the deadline, they should contact the editor as soon as possible. Reviewers’ comments are usually made directly on the manuscript in PDF-format, using the Note Tool. If desired, these can also be made in a conventional way, either on paper or in a text-file format. In the latter case, each comment should be consecutively numbered. This makes it much easier for editors and authors to discuss specific issues in the manuscript. Editing the manuscript is not expected, but any help will be highly appreciated. Each annotation of the manuscript should include a summary of the comments made. Additional documents, such as supporting data and useful literature, may also be sent. Reviewers should never hesitate to contact the Editorial Office with any questions or concerns they may have.