

FAQ: TRANSPARENT PEER REVIEW AT NATURE

What is transparent peer review?

For all original research papers published in *Nature* authors can agree to the publication of a peer review file containing the reviewer comments to the authors and the author rebuttal letters. Authors are given the opportunity to opt out of this scheme at the point of acceptance. Transparent peer review will be offered to authors of newly submitted original research papers submitted on or after 1st February 2020. A similar initiative is currently being offered to authors of new submissions to *Nature Biomedical Engineering*, *Nature Cell Biology*, *Nature Ecology & Evolution*, *Nature Human Behaviour*, *Nature Immunology*, *Nature Microbiology*, *Nature Structural & Molecular Biology* and *Nature Communications*.

Why has *Nature* implemented this scheme?

In our 2014 Author Insights Survey, 67% of authors said that they would like publishers to experiment with alternative peer review models. *Nature Communications* introduced transparent peer review in January 2016 and became an early signatory of the ASAPbio open letter on publishing peer review reports. We are committed to making peer review more transparent and believe that it will facilitate a deeper understanding of the research that we publish. Transparent peer review also creates a useful resource for students and early career researchers looking for information on how the peer review system operates. For our peer reviewers, it has the benefit that if they wish to refer to or share one of their reviews they can do so easily.

Are you the first to do this?

No, this system is already used successfully by a number of other publishers across several research areas.

Can authors opt out?

Yes, we will ask our authors if they would like to opt in/out at the point of acceptance.

Can peer reviewers opt out?

Peer reviewers are informed of this new initiative when invited to review and can decline to review the manuscript if they are not comfortable with their review being published. Acceptance to review is regarded as permission to release the reports.

Are reviewer names published?

No. Unless reviewers sign the comments to the authors with their name, we will respect and maintain their full anonymity under all circumstances. However, reviewers can request that their name be added to their comments at any point, up to and including receipt of a notification that the manuscript has been accepted in principle.

Does this apply to manuscripts that have been peer reviewed elsewhere?

Authors sometimes transfer manuscripts between our journals. If a manuscript is transferred from one Nature Research journal to another, reviewer reports are transferred as well. However, these reports and the author responses to them will not be included in the peer review file as they may have been submitted without consent to potential publication. If the same reviewers subsequently agree to review for the recipient Nature Research journal offering transparent peer review, only their reviewer reports for the recipient journal will be included in the published peer review file. Instances of transferred manuscripts that were previously peer reviewed will be marked up in the peer review file, without naming the other journal.

Can the peer review file be edited pre-publication?

The peer review file will contain the full reviewer reports to authors and the author rebuttal letters. The peer review file will not be edited except to redact confidential information or third party material. Authors will be able to suggest redaction of such material for the editor to review. All redactions when made will be noted in the peer review file, including any requested by the author and agreed by the editor. The journal also reserves the right not to publish peer review reports in special cases, for example, where reports contain a lot of confidential clinical information.

What are the limitations of transparent peer review?

The published peer review file will provide a reader with insight into expert recommendations that informed the editorial decisions. However, the richness and complexity of editorial debate and decisions will not be apparent as correspondence between authors and editors, reviewer comments made confidentially to editors, and internal discussions between editors will remain confidential. A paper might be published against the advice of a reviewer, if for example we receive confidential feedback from other reviewers that favours publication overall. These discussions might not always be fully captured in the peer review file, although we may add editorial explanations to some of the files.

Will you publish your editorial decision letters?

No, *Nature* will not publish the editorial decision letters as part of the peer review file.

How many authors opt in?

We monitor parameters such as author opt-in rates and feedback from authors, reviewers and readers, and have reported these for *Nature Communications* to the community in an editorial ([nature.com/articles/ncomms13626](https://www.nature.com/articles/ncomms13626)).