



## COLLABORATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

### POLICY ON PEER REVIEW AND HANDLING OF MANUSCRIPTS

Objectivity, reliability, transparency and repeatability of systematic reviews are at the heart of the operational and quality assurance processes of the CEE. Consequently we are committed to high standards of scientific rigour in the systematic review process. To this end the CEE seeks to operate an independent peer review process that is at least the equal of high-quality scientific journals.

The CEE peer review process is intended to be supportive and hence begins at the initiation of the review process. It is not desirable that significant numbers of completed reviews are rejected (unlike the situation with many papers submitted to peer-review journals) and thus we seek to give guidance and feedback at key stages in the review process, decreasing the probability of final rejection by identifying problems early on. Guidelines for undertaking a systematic review can be accessed using the following link

[www.environmentalevidence.org/Authors.htm](http://www.environmentalevidence.org/Authors.htm)

Authors considering undertaking a systematic review are encouraged to contact CEE at an early stage at [info@environmentalevidence.org](mailto:info@environmentalevidence.org)

#### The Peer Review Process

**Protocols.** A key step in the process of undertaking a systematic review is the production of a review protocol. This sets out the details and scope of the review and how it will be conducted. It is important that protocols are not created in isolation and that a consensus is built concerning the appropriateness of the review question, the type and quality of data sought and the scope of the search. Draft protocols received by the CEE are sent out to at least two independent reviewers for comment and are posted on the CEE website for at least one month to enable open review and stakeholder engagement. Comments are passed back to the authors and only when appropriate revisions are made will the protocol be posted on the website as ‘finalised’. Once this is achieved, the review work begins, following the process detailed in the protocol.

**Reviews.** Draft reviews received by CEE are sent out to at least two independent reviewers (these may or may not be the same individuals who reviewed the protocol) for comment and posted on the CEE website for at least one month to enable open review. Comments are passed back to the authors and only when appropriate revisions are made will the systematic review be posted on the website as ‘finalised’. In cases where major revisions are required several rounds of peer review may be needed.

Final decisions on posting protocols and systematic reviews on the CEE website rest with the CEE.

## **Procedure for handling and managing manuscripts with the CEE Library**

### **Protocols:**

When a draft protocol is submitted to CEE we will acknowledge receipt and, if the protocol passes preliminary screening, we will post it and feedback peer review comments within 2 months;

If comments on draft protocols have been returned to the authors it is expected that the protocol will be finalized within 3 months. If 3 months elapses CEE will send a reminder to the authors and ask that they either submit the protocol or provide a reason for extension together with a new expected date of submission. If no response is received within one month the review will be marked as 'discontinued'.

When a finalized protocol is submitted we will check that appropriate changes have been made and, if so, post within 2 weeks of receipt.

### **Reviews:**

Once a finalized protocol has been submitted it is expected that the draft systematic review will be submitted within 6 months. If 6 months elapses, CEE will send a reminder to the authors and ask that they either submit the draft review or provide a reason for extension together with a new expected date of submission. If no response is received within one month the review will be marked as 'discontinued'.

When a draft systematic review is submitted we will acknowledge receipt and, if the review passes preliminary screening, we will post it and feedback peer review comments within 2 months;

If comments on draft systematic review have been returned to the authors it is expected that the revised systematic review will be submitted within 3 months. If 3 months elapses CEE will send a reminder to the authors and ask that they either submit the revised version or provide a reason for extension together with a new expected date of submission. If no response is received within one month the review will be marked as 'discontinued'.

When a finalized systematic review is submitted we will check that appropriate changes have been made and, if so, post within 2 weeks of receipt.