

Vernon Press Guidelines for Reviewers

Be objective and balanced. Separate your own preferences/opinion from what might be reasonably inferred by examining available evidence. Do not make suggestions that may reveal your identity or that advance a particular strand of thought at the expense of others. Your goodwill should never come into doubt. Remember that you are both a 'gatekeeper' to publication (in helping us reach a decision) and a friendly advisor to the author (in helping them produce a better book). Both are important.

Be critical and probing but always remain courteous. Academics appreciate penetrating observations and generally welcome criticism. If something appears to have been overlooked, ask authors about it, but also give them the benefit of the doubt. A scholar's motivation is a scarce and sometimes delicate resource. Few things can do as much damage to it as a hastily worded or intemperate criticism. Authors should feel motivated to improve their work, develop their skills and channel effort into writing better books.

Be specific and persuasive. Avoid broad-brush statements and mention specific passages, pages, paragraphs and line numbers. Provide full references to literature and specific pointers to methods, data and tools. The Author does not know who you are or from what kind vantage point you write. Your arguments will have to be convincing in their own right. For this reason it would be important to provide extended reasoning for your assessment (e.g. explain in concrete terms how the book would improve if the author follows your recommendations), including references to literature where appropriate.

Be supportive and helpful. In all cases please highlight the book's strong points (Is it well-written? Is it logically structured? Does it fill an important gap in literature?). Even when a book is deficient on several grounds, there are usually parts that are salvageable and may, with renewed effort, lead to a publishable contribution. Please suggest as many(optional) avenues for improvement as possible but be very selective with what you decide should be obligatory revisions.

Be mindful of readers' expectations. Guide the author to write more about aspects that you expect will be interesting to readers in your subject area and less about those that will not. Do make it known if you feel the author has neglected an important constituency in your subject area.

How should I structure my report?

We do not have a set format for the review report, as the needs can vary considerably across subjects. While we do not expect reviewers to follow a specific structure in their report, we reserve the right to reject reviews that do not follow the spirit of our guidelines and do not offer rigorous, specific and constructive feedback.

To help guide you, you may include in your report answers to the following indicative questions:

Originality

- Does the manuscript draw from the right strands of literature?
- Does the author appropriately acknowledge prior academic literature?
- Is the literature review comprehensive or (at least) balanced? Feel free to suggest specific additions to literature, as long as they make a clear contribution to the main thesis of the book.
- Does the manuscript claim to be an original contribution? How justified is such a claim?
- Does the manuscript have other scholarly value e.g. as a synthesis of existing knowledge?

Rigor

- Is the study sufficiently focused? Does the manuscript read like a cohesive whole?
- Does it draw from appropriate forms of evidence?
- Is the method used appropriate for the objectives of the study?
- Is the method applied well? You could for instance suggest alternative interpretations of the results, robustness checks or alternative methods.
- Are any limitations of the study adequately documented?

Impact

- Is it ambitious? What disciplines or strands of literature are likely to appreciate/welcome the proposed book's contribution? Does it hold potential for classroom adoption?
- Does the work carry significance for audiences beyond academia (such as professional, public policy)?
- Is this a work of social relevance?

Other aspects to consider

- Is it logically structured? Is it well written? Does it include appropriate and sufficient visual aids (figures/charts/tables)?
- Does it contain factual errors? Could parts of it be considered libelous, defamatory or provoke considerable offense?