

The “**Retos**” **External Review Board** is an independent professional association that seeks to guarantee the excellence of this scientific journal, considering that blind review—based exclusively on the quality of the content of the manuscripts, and performed by internationally recognized experts in the subject matter – is the best guarantee, and undoubtedly, the best way to support scientific progress and to preserve original and valuable scientific content.

To do so, the **External Review Board** is made up of a wide variety of international scholars and scientists who are experts in **Development** issues; these people are key to selecting the articles with the greatest impact and most interest for the international scientific community. It also makes it possible that all selected articles that are published in **Retos** have a scholarly guarantee and objective reports to back up the original work.

Of course, all of the reviews for “**Retos**” use the internationally standardized “double blind” peer evaluation system, which guarantees the anonymity of both the manuscripts and the persons reviewing them. As evidence of our transparency, the complete list of all reviewers is made public on the journal’s website ([www.http://retos.ups.edu.ec/](http://retos.ups.edu.ec/)).

1. Criteria for Acceptance/Rejection of Manuscripts

From a list of reviewers, the “**Retos**” editorial team selects the persons that it believes are most qualified in the manuscript’s subject matter. Although the publication requests the very best collaboration from each reviewer, in order to facilitate the evaluations and reports on each original paper, acceptance of the review is necessarily based on:

- a) **Expertise.** Acceptance is necessarily related to being competent in the specific issue of the article to be evaluated.
- b) **Availability.** Reviewing original work requires time and thorough reflection.
- c) **Conflict of interest.** If the author of a manuscript is identified (despite anonymity), a conflict of interest shall be established if there are excessive scholarly connections or familiarity with the authors, if the reviewer and the author are part of the same University, Department, Research Group, Thematic Network, Research Project, or have published together with other authors...or any other type of professional connection, conflict or proximity. In this case, the reviewer should reject the editor’s invitation to perform the review.

- d) **Confidentiality undertaking.** Once a reviewer has received a manuscript for evaluation, he or she makes an express undertaking of confidentiality, and therefore, during the entire process, it may not be revealed to any third parties.

If the reviewer is unable to perform the review for one of these reasons or for other justifiable reasons, he or she shall notify the editor, using the same methods in which the invitation was made, specifying the reasons for rejecting the review opportunity.

2. General criteria for evaluating manuscripts

a) Theme

The theme proposed in the original work, in addition to being valuable and relevant to the scientific community, must be limited and specialized in terms of time and space, without being excessively localized.

b) Composition

The critical evaluation in the review report is to be composed objectively, providing content, quotes, or references of interest to argue the reviewer's point of view.

c) Originality

As a fundamental quality criteria, the article must be original, unpublished and appropriate. To this effect, the reviewers shall respond to the following three questions in the evaluation:

- Is the article sufficiently innovative and interesting to justify its publication?
- Does it contribute anything to the canon of knowledge?
- Has a relevant research question been posed?

A quick search of literature using directories such as Web of Knowledge, Scopus, and Google Scholar can be useful in verifying whether the research has been previously covered.

d) Structure

The manuscripts sent to “**Retos**” must follow IMRyD structure, except for those that constitute reviews of literature or specific studies. To this effect, the original papers must include an abstract, introduction, methods, results, discussion and conclusion.

- The **title, abstract, and key words** must exactly describe the article's content.
- The **review of literature** must summarize the status research that is recent and appropriate in relation to the work presented. Special evaluation shall be made in terms of eligibility criteria, and whether the references include high impact works, especially in WoS, Scopus, Scielo, etc. A general explanation of the study should also be included, establishing its central objective and the design method followed.
- For research, in the section on **materials and methods**, the author is required to specify how the data was compiled, the process and instruments used to prove the hypothesis, the validation system, and all information needed to replicate the study.
- The **results** must clearly specify the findings in a logical sequence. It is important to review whether the tables included are necessary or redundant in terms of information already included in the text.
- The **discussion** should interpret the data obtained and take into account the literature reviewed. This is the section for the authors to include whether their article supports or contradicts previous theories. The **conclusions** exist to summarize progress that the research promotes in the area of scientific knowledge, future research areas, and main difficulties or limitations in making the research.
- **Language:** This section shall be positively evaluated if the language facilitates the reading and favors clarity, simplicity, precision, and transparency of the scientific language. The Reviewers should not correct the text, whether in Spanish or English, but rather shall inform the Editors of any grammatical or spelling errors.
- Finally, a profound **review is required of the references**, to ensure that no relevant work has been omitted. The references are to be precise, citing the logic of the thematic area to be studied, the main works, and any documents that are comparative to the work itself, such as the latest research in the area.

3. Relevant dimensions of evaluation

“Retos” uses an evaluation matrix for each original paper that is in line the editorial criteria and fulfillment of the publication's rules and regulations. To this effect, the reviewers are required to provide a qualitative and quantitative evaluation of each of the aspects proposed in the matrix, with criteria such as objectivity, reasoning, logic, and expertise.

| INVESTIGACIONES | |
|--|------|
| Rateable items | P. |
| 01. Title and abstract (clarity and structure) | 0/5 |
| 02. Relevance of the theme | 0/10 |
| 03. Originality of the work | |
| 04. Literary review | |
| 05. Article structure and organization | 0/10 |
| 06. Argumentative ability | |
| 07. Composition | |
| 08. Methodological rigor | 0/10 |
| 09. Research instruments | |
| 10. Research results | 0/10 |
| 11. Progress | |
| 12. Discussion | |
| 13. Conclusions | |
| 14. Citations (variety and richness) | 0/5 |
| 15. References | |
| Maximum Total | 50 |

If the original paper is a literary review (state of the question) or another type of study (reports, proposals, experiences, etc.), the Editorial Board shall send the reviewers a different matrix that comprehends the structural characteristics of this type of original paper:

| ESTUDIOS, INFORMES, PROPUESTAS, EXPERIENCIAS | |
|--|------|
| Rateable items | P. |
| 01. Title and abstract (clarity and structure) | 0/5 |
| 02. Relevance of the theme | 0/10 |
| 03. Literary review | 0/10 |
| 04. Structure and organization of the article | 0/10 |
| 05. Argumentative Ability | |
| 06. Scientific composition | |
| 07. Original Contributions | 0/10 |
| 08. Conclusions | |
| 09. Citations (variety and richness) | 0/5 |
| 10. References | |
| Maximum Total | 50 |

4. Ethical Issues

- a) **Plagiarism:** Although the journal uses plagiarism detection systems, if the reviewer suspects that an original work is substantially a copy of another work, he or she shall immediately inform the Editors, quoting the previous work in as much detail as possible.
- b) **Fraud:** If there is a real or remote suspicion that the results of an article are false or fraudulent, this must be reported to the Editors.

5. Evaluation of Original Papers

Once the quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the manuscript has been completed, the reviewer may make recommendations to improve the quality of the original work. However, the manuscript shall be scored in three ways:

- a) **Rejected** due to deficiencies that are both justified and reasoned through a qualitative and quantitative assessment. The report should be longer if fewer than 30 out of the 50 possible points are awarded.
- b) **Acceptance without review.**
- c) **Conditional acceptance** and therefore including a review (longer or shorter). In this last case, it must include a clear identification of what review is necessary, listing the comments and even specifying paragraphs and pages in which modifications are suggested.