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Department of Biodiversity,  
Conservation and Attractions

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## Publications, Reports and Manuscripts

*'Knowledge is power' (the full quotation is 'knowledge is power if you know it about the right person' (Ethel Mumford, 1878-1940)).*

*'A little learning is a dang'rous thing' (Alexander Pope, 1688-1744). (Thomas Huxley, 1825-1895, has said of this 'If a little knowledge is dangerous, where is the man who has so much as to be out of danger?')*

The policy of Science Division is that express approval must be obtained to publish research findings and educational articles. The authority to approve publications has been delegated by the Director to the Program Leader. Approval to Publish is sought by submitting an Approval to Publish form with a copy of the publication to the Program Leader and the Biometrician, and the Herbarium Curator if applicable. This should be done electronically.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that:

- All publications and reports produced by the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) scientists are of the highest quality. This is achieved by internal refereeing and through review by senior, experienced staff. Publication of low calibre work reflects badly on us all, not just the author(s) and demonstrates that time and resources have been wasted.
- Papers are published in appropriate outlets, especially (where possible) in high standard, widely-circulated, refereed journals. (Too many DEC publications in un-refereed journals will also reflect badly on all of us).
- Implications of the research outcomes are clearly understood by policy makers and managers in DEC and that decisions can be made about new procedures, etc., in a quiet and logical atmosphere. (Lobbying before careful consideration of the implications of research results can lead to poor decision-making because of the pressure-cooker atmosphere in which decisions are then often made.)

The Approval to Publish Form is not a means of censoring scientists, nor is it meant to be an attack on personal freedoms. The Director and the Division will always support DEC scientists who wish to publish their work as long as it is sound science and/or up-to-date information. (As an aside, it is interesting to note that we in DEC have much more freedom to publish than many of our colleagues in private enterprise.) However, research results acquired while employed by DEC or while using DEC's funds are the property of DEC and a draft paper or report does not become an official Department document until such time as

it has been approved for publication via the Approval Form.

Often the results of our research are politically sensitive, because they indicate that previously unknown environmental problems exist or that past policies or practices need modification. (There's nothing wrong with this - indeed it is the function of research to challenge the existing order). Lobby groups will want to use our research results to obtain action by Government or, sometimes, simply to embarrass policy-makers or politicians. For these reasons it is essential that DEC has the opportunity to review research findings and their implications before they are widely released. Also it is essential that people who wish to use knowledge have the full picture.

Scientists are sometimes not clear when to publish. Some err on the side of publishing too much preliminary work and later have to admit that their initial results did not hold up over a longer time frame. Others insist on dotting every *i* and crossing every *t* before publishing and tend to publish too little. You should avoid either of these extremes: if you are in doubt seek advice from more experienced scientists or during your annual appraisal.

It is Division policy that scientific papers be published in high quality, refereed journals. Publication in DEC journal, Conservation Science should be restricted to papers which, because of their length or limited relevance outside Western Australia, may not be accepted by external journals. If in doubt, seek advice from your Project Leader or Program Leader.

Similarly, educational and / or information papers should be published in quality, reputable journals or magazines.

Electronic media are increasingly being employed for publication. Science Division supports the use of all appropriate media in order to publish the work of its staff. Even though this Guideline was initiated before electronic publishing was commonplace, all the issues detailed in this Guideline are relevant to, and are to be adapted for, electronic media. In particular, websites, pages, etc. created with a significant input by Science Division staff are to be reviewed before

"publication" on any website. Eventually, an electronic system of templates and an automatic database will be established to expedite review and amendment of the pages of the Science Division website.

The web address corresponding to the uppermost level of nesting for the amendment or new work is to be recorded on the approval form. The web address should also be provided for journal publications that also appear in electronic form and all Science Division staff are encouraged to create links in web pages to facilitate access and dissemination of their work.

The first step in publishing research results is usually the preparation of a draft manuscript.

You should be careful with copies of drafts. There is a general rule on copying drafts that should be followed. Drafts, clearly marked as *draft-in-confidence*, may be sent to colleagues, both within and outside DEC, for critical appraisal but copies may not be supplied to anyone else, including political or lobby organizations, without the approval of the Director of Science Division. It is not ethical for colleagues to copy or use information in drafts supplied to them for review. Obviously, you should follow the journal rules when you are asked to review or referee a manuscript.

Some publications will have no or minor management or policy implications. In these cases there will be little or no delay in obtaining approval to publish if the paper is of sufficient quality (sound science etc.) and the target journal is appropriate. In other cases there may be major management or policy implications. If you have done your job properly these will have already been considered by managers and policy-makers before approval to publish a final draft is sought and, again, there will be little or no delay. If you haven't done this there may be some delay.

It is also recognized that many publications arise from collaboration with one or more external colleagues. In such arrangements the Science Division input may only result in junior authorship in any publications, and the internal review process will be undertaken, as is appropriate, within the senior author's organization. In such situations, Science Division officers are expected to keep track of the progress of any such publications and complete the Approval to Publish Form as appropriate, and attach a draft if practical. This procedure not only assists your personal tracking of the publication, but has the added virtue of maintaining the currency of SPP information. Also ensure that the senior author forwards sufficient reprints for your personal and departmental requirements.

It is most important that statistical analysis of the data collected is sound. If improperly analysed papers were to enter the scientific literature, DEC's (as well as your own) reputation and credibility would be exposed to attack. It is therefore sensible

to heed the following good advice (taken from Maindonald, *N.Z. J. Agr. Res.* 35: 121-142, 1992)..

- Describe the statistical analysis in enough detail that another scientist could reproduce your analysis in another data set.
- Include standard errors or standard deviations (or their equivalent) and sample sizes wherever relevant. Where there are multiple error strata, be sure to quote the SE that is relevant to the comparison made.
- Provide the reader with some reasonable minimum assurance that you have made coarse checks of the assumptions underlying your statistical methods.
- Ensure that the statistical analysis correctly reflects the experimental and sampling designs.
- Ensure that replication is at the level of whole treatment units, and analyse accordingly.

Applied scientists need to learn to look at what they write from the users' point of view: assume that the user is a hyper-sensitive individual and remember that diplomacy is usually better than confrontation. Confrontation should be used only as a last resort. If you see it looming it is important to keep personality out of the issue and involve your Project Leader, Program Leader or, if necessary, the Director, to ensure that your point of view is seen as an objective position of Science Division.

Authors intending to submit a paper to *Conservation Science Western Australia* or *Nuytsia* must also obtain approval to publish. Approval to publish and submission of the paper to the journal editor are separate processes.

Authors submitting a paper to *Conservation Science WA* or *Nuytsia* are encouraged to nominate four scientists external to DEC and qualified to act as referees. Selection of referees is made by the Editor in consultation with the appropriate member of the Science Management Team, who is not obliged to accept any of the author's nominations. An author who is a member of this Committee will of course not be consulted about this matter. The manuscript will then be submitted to referees for evaluation of its scientific merit.

Authors who subsequently are dissatisfied that their paper submitted to *Conservation Science WA* or *Nuytsia* has not been evaluated objectively by a referee should initially discuss their concerns with their supervisor. If concerns still exist, the matter should then be taken up with the Editor. If the matter cannot be resolved, the Director of Science Division and the relevant Program Leader will decide the matter.

**Note** that for all papers published by officers of DEC, copyright is held by the State of Western Australia (not by DEC or the officer). It is best that this requirement is brought to the attention of the Editor of the journal when the paper is submitted. Attached is a specimen letter that provides the appropriate words and tone.

## Explanatory Note – Approval Form

Type of submission:

- Paper for external journal
- Paper for Conservation Science WA
- Paper for *Nuytsia*
- Book chapter
- Book

- Conference paper
- Conference paper - abstract only
- Workshop paper
- Interim Grant Report
- Final Grant Report
- Text for a poster
- Article for *Landscape*
- Article for external popular magazine (e.g. *Geo*, *Australian Geographic*, *Australian Natural History*)
- Pamphlet
- Any other publication with a Science Division author identified in it
- Web pages and other electronic media

**Note: book reviews are excluded.**

The controlled version of this document is on the DEC web. Previously printed versions of this document may not be current. This document was last amended in August 2009 and can be located at the following URL address:  
<http://calmweb.calm.wa.gov.au/drb/science/docs/guidelines/>



Science Division – Guideline 9 Appendix 1

APPROVAL FORM FOR SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL PUBLICATIONS, REPORTS (INCLUDING INTERIM GRANT REPORTS), POSTERS AND CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS, WEBSITE ETC.

Junior authors on publications to be reviewed and submitted by an external senior author must also complete this form.

Type of submission .....

For publication in .....

Author(s) .....

Title .....

Manuscript already read critically by .....

Has manuscript been read by Project Leader (if applicable)? .....

To which RPP or SPP does this publication relate? [ / ]

Attach the plain English synopsis of <250 words and summary of management implications Yes [ ]

Avoid jargon, explain why the research was done, give the main results, and if appropriate indicate the conservation status of the taxon studied.

Submitting AUTHOR'S NAME ...../...../200...

PROGRAM .....

This form and the accompanying manuscript should be submitted to Biometrician, Program Leader and Science Directorate Executive Assistant by email simultaneously, and to the Herbarium Curator if it contains a taxonomic component related to plants, algae or fungi.

1. Paper submitted to Biometrician for review and databasing

Approved by Biometrician ...../...../200...

OR returned to author for revision ...../...../200...

2. Paper submitted to Herbarium Curator for checking of specimens if necessary

Approved by Curator ...../...../200...

OR returned to author for revision ...../...../200...

3. Paper submitted to Program Leader for appraisal of policy, economic and management implications

Approved (or noted) by Program Leader ...../...../200...

OR returned to author for revision ...../...../200...

4. If approved, the Science Directorate Executive Assistant files a copy on the SPP file, returns MS to author for submission to external journal, and sends signed approval sheet and Abstract to Woodvale Librarian for database ...../...../200...

Author is to retain this form until one year after publication. Authors are responsible for the cost and distribution of any reprints they may wish to order. It is obligatory for all Departmental authors of any submissions – as per explanatory Note in the Guidelines - to provide a reprint or photocopy, immediately upon publication, to their Program Leader and Project Leader, and two paper copies and one electronic copy to the Wildlife Science Library. Last amended August 2009. http://calmweb.calm.wa.gov.au/dr/science/docs/guidelines/



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Environment and Conservation**

Your ref  
Our ref:  
Enquiries:  
**Phone**  
**Fax**  
**Email**

Science Division Guideline 9 – Appendix

**DRAFT SPECIMEN SUBMISSION LETTER TO JOURNAL**

Name and  
Address here  
SUBURB IN CAPS WA 6008

Dear XXXX

**SUBJECT HERE IN CAPITALS**

Please find enclosed xxx copies/attached a copy of a paper with the title.....  
by .....

Would you please consider this for publication in .....

Please note that copyright is claimed by The State of Western Australia for the contents of the paper,  
but not for the format of publication.

I look forward to receiving referees' reports in due course.

Yours sincerely

**Signature (here)**

**your Name here**  
**your Position here**

**date here**