

Consistency or Contingency? Reflections on Uncertainty in Editorial Triage

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In recent reflections, attention has been drawn to the evolving rigor of evaluation frameworks within major indexing systems and the structural asymmetries that may emerge over time. These considerations have been discussed in our previous editorial, “*Rigor or Symmetry? Reflections on Fifteen Years of Diamond Open Access*” (<https://doi.org/10.33263/BRIAC161.001>), which examined how evaluative thresholds may shift across different temporal contexts.

A subsequent evaluation experience offers an opportunity to examine a related, yet distinct dimension of this process: not temporal evolution, but cross-case variability under comparable conditions.

Following a recent Editorial Triage decision, *Letters in Applied NanoBioScience* was not advanced to full evaluation due to several formal and structural considerations. These included the absence of a clearly articulated ethics statement, inconsistencies in the presentation of editorial roles, and incomplete referencing or linkage to internationally recognized ethical guidelines such as the Declaration of Helsinki and ARRIVE.

Each of these observations is legitimate. Transparency in ethical standards, clarity in editorial structure, and proper integration of external guidelines are essential components of contemporary scholarly publishing. Their identification at the triage stage is both expected and appropriate.

Notably, the issues identified were addressed promptly following the communication of the decision, requiring minimal time to correct. This raises a practical consideration regarding the evaluation process: whether, in cases involving clearly remediable formal or technical aspects, a temporary suspension of evaluation pending correction might allow for a more efficient and proportionate continuation of assessment, rather than necessitating a complete restart of the process.

Such an approach would not diminish rigor, but could enhance alignment between evaluative procedures and the practical realities of editorial workflows.

However, an additional aspect merits attention.

At the time of writing, DOI resolution issues persist for several published issues (2025, Issues 2-4). DOI functionality represents a fundamental element of digital scholarly infrastructure, ensuring traceability, citability, and long - term accessibility of published work. In a prior evaluation context involving a different journal under similar editorial responsibility,

temporary DOI resolution inconsistencies were identified as a decisive factor in failing Editorial Triage.

Notably, in the present case, no reference was made to DOI functionality.

This contrast does not diminish the validity of the criteria applied in either instance. Rather, it raises a broader question regarding the stability and consistency of evaluative priorities across comparable cases. When similar technical conditions are present, yet different elements assume decisive importance in different evaluations, the issue is not one of rigor, but of its operationalization.

Evaluation frameworks, by necessity, rely on multiple criteria. Not all can carry equal weight simultaneously. Yet, for such frameworks to function as coherent systems of assessment, the relative importance of core technical requirements should demonstrate a reasonable degree of stability across cases.

Otherwise, the criteria risk functioning not as consistent thresholds, but as context - dependent filters.

This observation invites further reflection on the structure of Editorial Triage itself. If certain requirements are considered essential in one case but not explicitly addressed in another, it becomes difficult to determine whether all criteria are expected to be satisfied at the same evaluative stage, or whether some are effectively deferred to subsequent phases of review.

Such variability does not necessarily imply inconsistency in intention. It may reflect the complexity of evaluating diverse journals within a dynamic publishing landscape. Nonetheless, from the perspective of applicants, the predictability of criteria remains a critical component of procedural fairness.

The issue, therefore, is not the existence of rigorous standards. Nor is it the identification of correctable technical deficiencies.

It is the consistency with which these standards are applied.

If rigor is to function as a universal benchmark, it must also demonstrate coherence across comparable evaluations. Otherwise, outcomes risk reflecting not only the quality of compliance, but the contextual prominence assigned to specific criteria at a given moment.

In an increasingly formalized publishing environment, where technical precision is both necessary and expected, clarity in evaluative logic becomes as important as the criteria themselves.

Ultimately, beyond individual decisions and specific observations, the credibility of any evaluation system depends not only on what it requires, but also on how consistently those requirements are applied.

In closing, we wish to address our authors directly. We acknowledge that, at this stage, we have not yet secured indexing for this journal, despite sustained efforts to align with current standards. Operating at the lower margins of financial sustainability, certain infrastructural implementations - most notably the full activation of DOI registration for recent issues - have been delayed. At the time of writing, DOI assignment remains incomplete for several 2025 issues; however, we are actively working to resolve this, and we are committed to ensuring full DOI functionality in the immediate future.

We regret any inconvenience this situation may have caused to our authors and contributors, whose trust and work remain the foundation of this journal.

We also extend our sincere gratitude to all those who have supported and sustained this publication over the years—editors, reviewers, authors, and collaborators—without whom the journal would not have endured for fourteen years.