



Criteria of Peer-Reviewed Content

Materials that are designated as peer-reviewed meet the following criteria. They

- Are unbiased and research-based.
- Are appropriately written for an Extension audience (avoiding technical jargon and complex style), and the information is applied rather than philosophical or theoretical.
- Are needs-driven – the topic addresses and responds to an identified need.*
- Have application across the state, within a particular region of the state, or within a certain identified clientele group (limited scope should be identified early in the document).
- Are relevant to current VCE work – the topic pertains to a current program team.
- Exhibit a depth of scholarship that reflects innovative or new knowledge or the compilation of existing knowledge in a new or innovative format or delivery method.
- Cover a topic in-depth, typically consisting of three or more pages of information or the equivalent in electronic format.
- Have been reviewed by peers and colleagues whose comments and suggestions have been incorporated when appropriate.

* “Identified need” includes emerging topics known to faculty members, federally defined needs, program team needs, and/or needs of a particular industry. These needs might not be identified through VCE agents or local needs assessments but still represent valid topics to be addressed with VCE content.

Submission of Content and Peer-Review Process

1. The author (see Notes [1](#) and [4](#)) completes Part I of the Peer-Reviewed Content Request Form (VCE-747NP). Part I includes a justification and assessment of need, an abstract, and a suggested peer-review team. The author submits an

electronic packet to the department head (see Notes [2](#) and [3](#)). It is suggested that the electronic packet be assembled in a cloud-based file, such as Google Drive or Dropbox, or in a single file to be emailed. The electronic packet should include the following items:

- The completed [Peer-Reviewed Content Request Form](#).
- The written publication content in a reviewable format (such as MS Word so that “Track Changes” can be implemented).
- Any photos or graphics that are part of the content. It is recommended that photos and graphics be added to the end of the document for purposes of the review. However, the final document for submission **must following the guidelines listed at www.communications.cals.vt.edu/resources/word-file.html**.

2. The department head finalizes the list of peer reviewers. The recommended peer reviewers are as follows:
 - One Virginia Tech or Virginia State University faculty member (within or external to the author’s home college).
 - One faculty member with applicable expertise external to Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, and VCE.
 - Two VCE agents.

The makeup of the peer-review group is at the department head’s discretion. For example, there could be occasions when there are no qualified Virginia Tech or Virginia State faculty reviewers available, and the department head could choose instead to select two reviewers external to Virginia Tech or Virginia State. It is expected that the department head will follow the suggested makeup of the peer-review group whenever possible.

3. The department head sends the content and a [Peer Reviewer Feedback Form](#) (VCE-748NP) to each peer reviewer. (See Note [3](#))
4. Peer reviewers return the completed Peer Reviewer Feedback Form and the document – if changes were suggested on it – to the department head, who reviews the feedback.
5. If department head determines that the content should be published, he/she completes Part II of the Peer-Reviewed Content Request Form and sends the packet back to the author.
6. The author makes the suggested revisions to the content and resubmits the materials to the department head for review to ensure that the appropriate edits were made. Upon satisfactory review, the department head signs Part III

- of the Peer-Reviewed Content Request Form and returns it to the author, along with the final manuscript.
7. The author then prepares the manuscript for submission following the [Preparing Your Manuscript For Submission Guidelines](#) (VCE-751NP). Authors are encouraged to use the Peer-Reviewed Content Template (VCE-750NP) to help ensure that the content is properly formatted.
 8. The author submits (1) the revised manuscript, (2) the signed Author Checklist (VCE-733NP), (3) the signed Peer-Reviewed Content Request Form, and (4) any additional image or graphic files to the Office of Communications and Marketing via the online [Project Request System](#). The signed Peer-Reviewed Content Request Form and the Author Checklist should be scanned and uploaded to the Project Request System.
 9. Communications and Marketing reserves the right to review the submission materials and request changes prior to accepting the publication.
 10. A Communications and Marketing staff member will contact authors periodically to notify them of the publication's status. Authors might be asked to respond to questions or approve layout and artwork. Authors will be asked to respond within a particular timeframe in order to keep the publication moving through the process. If for some reason Communications and Marketing does not receive a response within 15 working days, the project will be placed on hold until a response is received. Once a response is received, the job will be reactivated and a new deadline established. Questions regarding the publications process should be directed to the [VCE communications manager](#).

Waiver Request for Peer-Review Procedure

For materials that have already undergone rigorous review through another avenue, a waiver might be granted. For example, a waiver might apply to content that was produced through a multistate or multiagency effort or content that was produced at a regional or national level.

- Authors who want to publish content already peer-reviewed through another avenue should check the “Waiver from the peer-review process requested” box in Part I of the Peer-Reviewed Content Request Form and provide documentation of who reviewed the publication and justification for waiver prior to submission.

- A waiver can be requested for minor revisions to previously published content. See Section V, Revisions.

Revisions

Authors are expected to keep their content up to date, and they must submit revisions as follows:

1. **Minor revisions** that do not include substantive changes in content are submitted through the above process with a waiver of peer review (see Section IV, Waiver Request for Peer-Review Procedure). Content will remain in the format it was originally published in (e.g., content with an existing VCE publication number will keep the original number).
 - Examples of minor revisions could include updating dollar amounts, references to policies or legislation, and website URLs; correcting contact information for agencies or experts; or adding information.
2. **Major revisions (more than one quarter of the publication content changed)** must meet the current guidelines for peer-reviewed content and follow the process above. Previously published content will be evaluated according to the current guidelines.
 - Examples of major revisions could include changes in procedures, recommendations, or processes; new or updated research citations; and changes in referenced products.

Notes

1. In all instances, the term “author” refers to any Virginia Cooperative Extension faculty member.
2. In all instances, the term “department head” refers to the author’s unit leader or the unit leader’s designated representative.
 - In the case of faculty members who are not attached to an academic department (such as 4-H faculty), the unit leader is the appropriate VCE associate director.
 - In the case of Virginia State University faculty members, the unit leader is the Virginia State Extension administrator.
 - In the case of VCE agents (see Note 4), the unit leader is the appropriate VCE associate director.
3. It is understood that the department head/unit leader might wish to delegate the management of the peer-review process to a faculty member (a designated

representative). It is expected that the unit leader will retain responsibility for the integrity of the process.

4. If the author is an Extension agent, the author is encouraged to engage and discuss the publication's priorities, objectives, outcomes, and outline with the subject-matter specialists or department head prior to the development of a publication. Subject-matter specialists will conduct a search of existing literature for other materials that have similar outcomes and ensure that the proposed publication does not duplicate existing publications. Agent-authored materials should be submitted to the department that is associated with the collaborating specialist.
5. Should the author disagree with the decision of the peer-review process, the author may appeal the decision by explaining, in writing, the reason for the appeal and submitting it to the department head/unit leader. The responsible party will respond to the author, in writing, within 10 business days, as to the actions that will be taken to resolve the appeal. Should there not be an agreeable solution, the author may forward the appeal and the response to the VCE director for consideration.

Last updated: April 23, 2016