

EGU Position Statement on the Status of Discussion Papers Published in EGU Interactive Open Access Journals

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This statement shall clarify the definition and standing of discussion papers published in the interactive open access journals of the European Geosciences Union (EGU). These journals pursue a two-stage process of publication and review, which is designed to foster and document scientific discussion and has proven to enhance the transparency, efficiency and self-regulation of scientific quality assurance.

In the first stage, manuscripts that pass a rapid pre-screening (access review) are immediately published as discussion papers in the journal's discussion forum. They are then subject to interactive public discussion for a period of multiple weeks, during which the comments of designated referees, additional comments by other interested members of the scientific community, and the authors' replies are also published alongside the discussion paper. In the second stage, manuscript revision and peer review are completed in the same way as in traditional journals (with further rounds of review and revision where required) and, if accepted, final papers are published in the main journal. To provide a lasting record of scientific discussion and quality assurance, and to secure the authors' publication precedence, every discussion paper and interactive comment remains permanently archived and individually citable.

The interactive open access approach of EGU has been practiced successfully since 2001, and the meaning and usefulness of discussion papers and interactive commenting are well established and appreciated in large parts of the geoscientific community. The following points shall clarify the status of discussion papers also for colleagues who may not be familiar with interactive open access publishing.

(1) Discussion papers are proceedings-type publications, comparable to traditional conference proceedings, working papers, preprints/e-prints, etc. (see arXiv.org, Nature Precedings, etc.). Like other proceedings-type publications, discussion papers are citable and permanently archived but are not peer-reviewed. Nevertheless, they undergo a pre-selection process prior to publication (access review by an editor, optionally supported by referees).

(2) Depending on the review and revision process, the contents and formulation of final papers published in the main journal are likely to differ from those of the corresponding discussion papers. As stated on the first page and emphasized by watermarks on every page of a discussion paper, readers are asked to refer to the corresponding final paper if available. Nevertheless, the discussion paper and accompanying interactive comments remain permanently archived, accessible and citable. Thus, differences between a discussion paper and the corresponding final paper are fully traceable. Interested readers can easily recognize at which time the scientific contents and messages have become publicly available, because dates of submission, acceptance and publication are clearly stated on the first page of every discussion paper and corresponding final paper.

(3) With regard to dual and prior publication policies, the EGU policy is consistent with the policies of other leading scientific publishers and journals. For example, Nature, PNAS, PLoS, Elsevier and most physics journals accept manuscripts that have been posted and archived on

electronic preprint or e-print servers prior to submission for peer-reviewed publication (see references). As outlined above and on the web pages of the EGU interactive open access journals, discussion papers are defined as proceedings-type publications similar to electronic preprints and do not constitute peer-reviewed publications. After interactive public discussion, it appears thus not inappropriate to submit the same manuscript or an improved version for peer-reviewed final publication elsewhere. "Elsewhere" naturally includes but is not limited to the interactive journal operating the forum where the manuscript has been published for review and discussion. Following common practice of traditional scientific publishing, the authors of a manuscript not accepted for final publication in an interactive journal may choose to submit their manuscript to an alternative journal. Normally, it would appear more appropriate to re-submit a substantially revised and improved version rather than the same manuscript that has already been published as a discussion paper. In practice, however, it is up to the authors and to the editors of alternative publication venues to decide if it may be appropriate to publish the same manuscript on a different level (peer-reviewed final paper following proceedings-type discussion paper). For clarity, every final paper in an EGU interactive open access journal is linked to the preceding discussion paper, and the date of each stage of publication is specified.

References

arXive.org:

<http://arxiv.org>

Elsevier:

<http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/authorshome.authors/preprints>

European Geosciences Union (EGU):

<http://www.egu.eu/publications/general-terms.html>

Nature and Nature Precedings :

http://www.nature.com/authors/editorial_policies/duplicate.html

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<http://www.plosbiology.org/static/policies.action>

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