

Panel meeting (6) 29.10.2025

Place: Teams

Present: Roosa Laitinen (chair), Jukka Forsman, Heikki Helanterä, Teemu Hölttä, Elina Kaarlejärvi, Raine Kortet, Taina Lundell, Péter Poczai, Mikko Tikkanen

Absent: Johanna Eklund, Marie Nordström, Annika Vilmi

Secretariat: Leena Wahlfors and Anna-Kaarina Linna

1. Opening

The Chair opened the Meeting at 13.08

2. Announcements

There were no announcements.

3. Announcement of engagements

It was noted that panelists must always disclose any potential conflicts of interest, especially when the panel is discussing a publication channel with which the panelist has had – or continues to have – close ties in the form of publication, editorial work, financial interest, or other influence. These ties include, at a minimum, the panelist having, within the last five years:

- published in the channel in question more than once,
- served as an editor or member of the editorial board of the channel,
- owned shares in the publishing company or a comparable organization, or
- held another position that could cause financial or interest conflicts.

Disclosure does not automatically prevent participation in decision-making, but the panel must take the ties into account in the evaluation process.

([Handbook 2025 - 2028.](#))

Please find the list at the end of the document (Appendix 1).

4. The Development of JUFO Classification

The development of the Publication Forum classification is part of the Forum's long-term operational and development plan. As part of this work, the Publication Forum Steering Group decided at its meeting on 8 September 2025 that:

A. Structure of the Classification

- In the Publication Forum (JUFO) classification, the designation “*Level 0*” will be discontinued. Instead, the category “*other identified publication channels*” will be used for scholarly publication channels that are not classified at Levels

1, 2, or 3, and that are not designated as professional or popular publication channels.

- From the beginning of 2026, evaluation panels will no longer assign publication channels to Level 3. Information on Level 3 will be removed from the JUFO portal at the beginning of 2027, when the updated classification is published.

Implementation:

- Update the website and the Panel Member's Handbook by the end of 2025.
- Apply the necessary changes to the panel-specific Excel templates used in the evaluation update at the beginning of 2026.
- Apply the necessary changes to the publication channel database and JUFO portal by the end of 2026.

B. Classification Criteria

Changes to level 1 criteria:

- Criterion 2 (Transparency):
Current wording: "The publication channel's website provides a transparent description of the editorial board and the peer review process. (A book publisher may meet Level 1 criteria even if the editorial board and peer review process are not described on the website.)" -> Revised wording: "The publication channel's website provides a transparent description of the editorial board and the peer review process. This applies also to book publishers."
- Criterion 7 (Relevance) will be divided into two separate criteria:
 - 7. Relevance: The publication channel is central from the perspective of its discipline's international or Finnish research community.
 - 8. Thoroughness: The primary objective of the publication channel is to promote and ensure scholarly quality, and its editorial and peer review practices are careful and reliable. A [checklist](#) of practices identified as problematic may be used as a support tool in the assessment.

Changes to Level 2 criteria:

- A new (fourth) criterion will be added: The publication channel enables immediate open access (either via the service itself or through self-archiving).
- From the specific criteria for Finnish- and Swedish-language publication channels, the criterion "Research questions are strongly contextualised within Finnish society or Finnish- and Swedish-language culture" will be removed.

Implementation: Update the website and the Panel Member's Handbook by the end of 2025.

C. Quotas and Calculation of Publication Volume

Quotas for publication series and book publishers will no longer take Level 3 into account. Consequently:

- The combined publication volume of series classified at Level 2 may amount to no more than 25% of the total publication volume of all series within the panel (Levels 1–2 combined).
- The list of book publishers is shared across all panels. Selections for Level 2 are made jointly by the panel chairs. Approximately 100 publishers across all fields may be classified at Level 2. Quotas are thus determined by the number of publishers, not by their publication output.

Implementation: Update the website and the Panel Member's Handbook by the end of 2025.

D. Aspects to be Considered in Evaluation

In the Panel Member's Handbook, Chapter 3.6 *Aspects to be considered in evaluation* will be updated as follows when there are equally influential and respected publication channels in the same field under consideration for level 2:

3.6.6 Publication channels of scholarly societies (formerly "Closed society publication channels"):

- The title will be changed to "*Publication channels of scholarly societies*".
- If there are equally influential and respected publication channels under consideration for Level 2, preference will be given to those published by scholarly societies. Publication channels that require society membership in order to publish (closed society journals) cannot be accepted at Level 2.

Implementation: Update the website and the Panel Member's Handbook by the end of 2025.

Discussion:

The secretariat explained the ground for the Change of level 0: The new designation is considered to be more neutral way to communicate in different contexts about identified publication channels that have not been approved to level 1. Level 0 channels are generally associated with the perception that they are of poor quality in one way or another, or have characteristics of predatory journals. In fact, the Level 0 is very heterogeneous. It includes channels that are properly peer-reviewed but local, new, or located at the interface between scientific and general audience publishing. Originally, JUFO classification did not have level 0 but this name was introduced by the Ministry in the Universities Act in 2014.

It was noted that there has long been a debate for and against maintaining level 3. The following reasons were given by the Steering Group for abandoning the Level 3 and merging it with the Level 2:

- Originally, JUFO classification had only levels 1 and 2. Level 3 was introduced in 2011 because level quotas were based on number journal titles, wherefore in some fields it was felt that level 2 was too broad and further differentiation was needed in form of level 3. Since 2014, level quotas have been calculated based on publication volume, which made levels 2 and 3 more exclusive and difficult to balance with journal quality and size across various subfields. This means that in many panels level 3 involves unhappy compromises.
- From the perspective of panelists and stakeholders, the distinction between levels 2 and 3 is the least important and credible according to surveys of panelists and stakeholders.
- Level 3 treats main field more unequally than combined level 2 and 3.
- Level 3 plays an important role when JUFO classification is misused for assessing individuals, which is not appropriate. In that sense it has been well-founded to reduce the hierarchy of the structure to reduce anxiety related to producing level 3 publications.
- Abandoning level 3 will reduce the work of the panels in the four-yearly update assessment, so more effort can be put on assessment on levels 1 and 2.

It was also mentioned that the removal of level 3 will not effect the current universities' funding model for 2025-2028. Funding for the year 2028 will be calculated in June 2027 based on the combined results of the previous three publication years (2024–2026).

The Panel welcomed the changes to the structure of classification. The new classification makes the panel's work simpler because the evaluation between level 2 and 3 has been found to be very difficult, especially due to quotas.

It was clarified that in the new level 2, panels may not include so many series that their combined number of publications (publication volume) would exceed 25 % of the total (number) volume of publications of all level 1 and 2 series in the panel's list. This level quota restriction ensures that level 2 represents only the top of the field, and that not too large a share of publications can be placed on level 2 compared to other panels.

The panel discussed that the criteria of immediate openness can be difficult to implement on some of the highest quality publishing channels and it would be an undesirable tendency if they could not be classified at the highest level.

5. Preparation for the Spring 2026 evaluation round

In the Spring evaluation round, the panels can classify leading publication channels in different fields into level 2. This level is reassessed every four years.

The scientific community is invited to submit proposals for classification to support the evaluation work of the panels. Members of the scientific community can influence the evaluation of publication channels by submitting proposals for changes to the current levels of publication channels. Proposals should be submitted via the JUFO portal.

The JUFO panelists evaluate the channels within their area of expertise and submit their key proposals for changes (downgrades and upgrades) to level 2 in the JUFO portal by the end of February.

Proposals made by the end of February 2026 will be taken into account in the first phase of the evaluation. In April–May, the panels will prepare a new preliminary level classification proposal, which will be finalized during the fall.

The required data materials for the panels are produced before the panel evaluations, including panel-specific Excel sheets that contain the channels to be evaluated, publication volume data, and statistics by scientific discipline classification.

More information at latest after Panel Chair Meeting of 27.11.2025

The matter was recorded for information.

6. Evaluation of grey area publication channels in the Publication Forum

Within the Publication Forum, there has long been discussion about so-called grey zone journals, which are not outright predatory journals, but which seek to maximise publication output with the least possible investment in editorial work and quality assurance. This business model is designed to maximise financial returns from article processing charges (APCs).

The Secretariat has continued work on clarifying assessment of grey zone channels by developing the [Checklist](#) to support the documentation and coherent consideration of problematic practices.

In line with a decision of the Steering Group, **panels are asked to give their views on whether there is a need to establish an Ethics Expert Group of the Publication Forum to promote coherent identification and treatment of grey zone and predatory journals across panels.** The group would be composed primarily of panel members, but external domestic and international experts could also be invited if needed.

The task of the Expert Group, in collaboration with the JUFO Secretariat and the panels, would be to:

- Develop the checklist of problematic publishing practices and the documentation of such practices,
- Clarify how problematic practices should be considered in the assessment of channels and in the justifications for decisions, and
- Compile and provide information on problematic practices in publication channels for the panels, the Steering Group, and the research community.

The Expert Group would not evaluate individual publication channels assigned to the panels, but the panels could, if necessary, consult the group on individual cases. The responsibility for classification decisions would remain with the panels.

The JUFO Secretariat would coordinate and facilitate the group's work by providing background information and by relaying observations and experiences received from the research community, for example through the address saalistajat@julkaisufoorumi.fi.

The panel considered the gray area checklist to be good and useful because it harmonizes classification between different panels but did not see the need to establish an ethics working group.

7. The use of AI in scientific publishing

In its meeting on May 5, 2025, the Publication Forum Steering Group decided that the secretariat will prepare a study on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the scientific publication process. Based on this decision, a [survey](#) has been sent to panelists to assess the utilization of AI in scientific publishing, including related practices, experiences, and perspectives.

Panel members had the opportunity to pose questions and share comments on the topic. The study, which will be based on survey responses, panel discussions, and a literature review, is scheduled for completion in early 2026. All data used in the study, including the content of panel discussions, will be anonymized.

8. Other

The final supplementary assessment for 2025 will be carried out in November: For the panel members 1. - 20.11.2025, and the panel chair should confirm the evaluations by 30.11.2025.

9. Closing

The Chair closed the meeting at 14.42.

Appendix 1.

List of engagements

The panel members are asked to disclose their engagements with publication channels in which they have been an editor or a member of the editorial board in the past five years, or hold shares in the publisher or its managing company.

Panellist	Publication channel
Taina Lundell	Applied and Environmental Microbiology
Johanna Eklund	Conservation Science and Practice
Teemu Hölttä	Tree Physiology, Silva Fennica, Frontiers in Plant Biophysics and Modelling, Journal of Plant Hydraulics
Roosa Laitinen	Journal of Experimental Botany
Heikki Helanterä	Frontiers in Ecology and evolution (until 2024, not anymore) Associate editor, Myrmecological News (ongoing) subject editor, Phil Trans R Soc London (co-editor for a special issue in 2020), Published more than once in: Molecular Biology and Evolution, Molecular Ecology
Raine Kortet	Scientific reports
Elina Kaarlejärvi	Published more than once during past 5 years: Nature, Nature Communications, Ecology Letters, Global Ecology & Biogeography

Meeting minutes 15.1.2025

Place: House of Science and Letters, room 208 and Teams

Present: Roosa Laitinen (chair), Johanna Eklund, Heikki Helanterä, Teemu Hölttä, Elina Kaarlejärvi, Raine Kortet, Taina Lundell, Marie Nordström, Péter Poczaí, Mikko Tikkanen, Annika Vilmi

Absent: Jukka Forsman

Secretariat: Elina Pylvänäinen and Anna-Kaarina Linna

1. Opening

The panel chair opened the meeting at 13.00.

2. Introductions

3. Panel

a. Panel composition

The fields covered in this panel are listed in appendix 1. The panel went through the list and discussed if there is a need to supplement the panel composition.

Discussion:

- The panel did not identify a need for complementing the panel composition at this point.
- It was discussed that the research community could be consulted with publication channels that fall outside the panel members expertise.

b. Selecting the vice-chair of the panel

A vice-chair was selected for the panel. The vice-chair stands in for the panel chair when they are absent. The vice-chair also has a right to confirm evaluations in the JUFO portal on behalf of the panel chair.

Decision:

- Péter Poczai was selected as a vice-chair of the panel.

4. Orientation to the panel work

The secretariat introduced the Publication Forum, its aims and purpose as well as the evaluation criteria.

Discussion:

- It was discussed if also different platforms and research output types (e.g. patents) should be classified in JUFO.
- Nature index and its comparison to JUFO was also discussed.

5. Level 1 and 0 evaluations in the JUFO portal

The deadline for the first set of level 1 and 0 evaluations is 26.3.2025 for the panel members and the panel chair needs to confirm evaluations at latest on 1.4.2025. More information will be sent by email.

6. Conflicts of interest

The panel members were asked to disclose their engagements with publication channels in which they have been an editor or a member of the editorial board in the past five years.

7. Other

No other business.

8. Closing

The panel chair closed the meeting at 15.32.

Appendix 1

Panel's MinEdu fields

118 Biosciences

- Theoretical biology
- Mathematical biology
- Thermal biology
- Cryobiology
- Biological rhythm
- Evolutionary biology
- Behavioural sciences biology
- Zoology
- Ornithology
- Entomology
- Marine biology
- Freshwater biology
- Limnology
- Ecology
- Biodiversity conservation
- Mycology
- Plant science