

Quality Control and Peer Review



The peer review process at AMC was designed to assure the quality of advice given by AMC consultants.

Every new project or assignment is given a unique number which identifies the office and year and is then sequential. Every project has a designated Project Manager and Peer Reviewer.

At the time the job number is raised, the Project Manager selects the Peer Reviewer on the basis of appropriate skills and availability during the planned programme. The Peer Reviewer is informed and must agree to act in that capacity.

The Peer Reviewer must be involved in preparing and/or reviewing the proposal for two reasons:

- Any commercial offer by AMC must be reviewed before it is submitted. The appropriate person to review a project proposal is the prospective Peer Reviewer
- The Peer Reviewer must eventually sign off on the project report so he/she ensure that there are adequate skills, budget etc being included in the proposal.

At the time of cost estimation and submission of a proposal to the client (before the job number is raised), sufficient cost is included in the estimate for the Peer Review process. The client is informed of that cost and is advised that Peer Review is an established AMC policy.

It is the responsibility of the Project Manager to ensure that the project is completed on time and within budget.

It is the responsibility of the Peer Reviewer to confirm that the report or advice is technically sound based on the available data and that any written or graphic material is consistent with AMC's formats and standards.

Before the final report is issued, both the Project Manager and the Peer Reviewer are required to sign the AMC office and client copies.

The amount of time and involvement of the Peer Reviewer will vary with the size of the project. Typically, for a small project (less than ten person-days) or brief formal report, the Peer Reviewer will become involved only in the proposal and at the time of checking the report. The checks will involve review of grammar and presentation, spot checks on computations, and discussion of any technical issues with the Project Manager. Total peer review time would be 1 to 4 hours.

For larger studies, the Peer Reviewer would typically attend

at least one client meeting and two or three internal project meetings, while receiving weekly progress reports. He or she would spend a day or two checking the final report. Total peer review time in this case would be 2 to 4 days.

The cost of peer review for a larger job can be estimated at 2% to 5% of project fees. It might be more for a small job.

The overriding principle of peer review is that "anyone can make a mistake". In a complex study, a number of non-critical errors or omissions may be made by the team, including the Project Manager, without any adverse reflection upon them. It is the responsibility of the Peer Reviewer to identify and correct these errors or omissions before the report is finalised. Examples of the necessary checks are given below.

The responsibilities in this process are as follows:

Project Manager:

- Appoint Peer Reviewer, ensure adequate budget for Peer Review, maintain communication, prior arrangement for final review, allow adequate time for final review.

Peer Reviewer:

- Check and approve proposal. Maintain appropriate awareness, attend meetings, final review and sign off.
- Ensure that codes, guidelines, statutes are adhered to.

Office Manager:

- No issue of reports to clients until signed off.

Examples of Checks

The peer reviewer must determine the critical aspects and/or sensitivities of the study and do some independent checks. These may be arithmetic in some cases and of a logic nature in others. For example, for a pit optimisation output, the dollar surpluses must have been checked in Datamine or equivalent. The Peer Reviewer would not do that sort of check but must be able to satisfy him/herself that such a check has been done.

For a resource model, another reported or unreported method result could be inspected. Spreadsheets should be checked to ensure that logical errors are detected. For big spreadsheets, some testing of the response to changes in key parameter values must be done (zero the discount rate; double the fuel price; plot out the pit design and scale off dimensions to check overall slope angles and cut back widths; halve the density; zero the equipment ownership cost; etc, etc) in addition to some entirely separate or "manual" calculations.