Associate Editor Reference Guide

Introduction.

This guide is for daily reference use by the Associate Editor. A full-length manual 'Associate Editor Manual' is available from the Journal's website.

The administrative work in managing the manuscript flow is handled by our Publications Office. Please contact Lauren Young (E-mail l.young@ieee.org).

1. Background.

1.1. Field of Interest.

The Journal's Field of Interest is the study and application of sensing phenomena, including theory, design, and application of devices for sensing of physical, chemical, and biological phenomena. The emphasis is on the advance of electronics, physics, biology, and intelligence aspects of sensors and integrated sensors-actuators.

1.2. Editorial Board Structure.

The Editorial Board of IEEE Sensors Journal is organized into 8 Topical Areas (TAs), clearly identified with EDICS for their Sensors context and are further detailed in a list of terms. Each TAs is led by an experienced Topical Editor (TE). Associate Editors belong to a certain TA as core members, according to their primary expertise area. They are also assigned to one or more TAs as pool members, according to their secondary expertise areas

2. Work on the Editorial Board.

2.1. Responsibilities.

2.1.1. Numbers of Reviewers.

Manuscripts submitted to the IEEE Sensors Journal normally receive two or three peer reviews in addition to the assessment by the Associate Editor. It is our common practice to appoint four or five reviewers, in the hope that at least two reviews will be submitted on time. IEEE policy requires that no fewer than two peer reviews be conducted.

2.1.2. Communicating with Authors, Reviewers and the Publication Office.

S1M access problems or questions should be directed to the Publications Office for troubleshooting and resolution (Lauren Young, g,Young@ieee.org). When problems arise concerning the technical aspects review process, the first line of communication is the Associate Editor. We request that the Associate Editor replies to authors directly through the S1M system. In case of a correspondence with an author occurring outside S1M, this correspondence must be copied to the Publications Office, to assist in building a complete file.

2.1.3. "Blind" Reviews.

The identity of the reviewers is never revealed to the author or others. The Associate Editor must assure at all times that the identities of the reviewers are kept confidential.

2.2. Workload.

Any difficulties with workload (e.g. periods of absence, employment-related or personal circumstances) which might affect the peer review schedule should be reported *immediately* to the Publications Office, to administer temporary relief so that the editorial flow is not affected.

3. Originality of Material.

The IEEE Sensors Journal runs automatic checks on all submitted manuscripts for overlap with existing publications. The score from these checks is available to the Associate Editor via the manuscript's main page and shows details of the overlapping sources.

IEEE Sensors Journal has a well-defined policy of publishing expanded conference papers, where the originality of the full paper submission is subject to separate rules, as defined in 'Guide for Expanding Conference Papers', available from the Journal's website.

4. Peer Review Process and Schedule.

4.1. Submission.

A 'Guide for Authors' is posted at the Journal's website

The manuscript should include an abstract stating the scope of the paper and summarizing the author's conclusions so that the abstract itself, together with an informative title, may be useful in information retrieval.

4.1.1. Tracking.

Upon receipt by S1M, the manuscript is issued a Manuscript Tracking Number and other pertinent information necessary to track the manuscript through the peer-review process. This number should be always in the subject line of email messages regarding a specific manuscript.

4.1.2. Length and Format.

The required manuscript submission format for the IEEE Sensors Journal complies with the general IEEE rules as per the published Information for Authors (see 6.1). There is a variation as to the length of papers according to the manuscript type, as detailed below.

Regular Papers: The Council's Publications Board has established eight pages as the appropriate length for the final published manuscript. Although some papers may not be able to reveal the findings of the authors in eight pages, it is believed that most will be able to do so. Authors who exceed the eight-page guidelines are required to pay mandatory over-length page charges established by the Council and IEEE, to assist in defraying the expense of publishing each additional page. In any case, the length of the manuscript is subject to peer assessment and judgment by the Associate Editor.

If your assigned manuscript is of type "Expanded paper…", there are additional requirements on the submission format and the peer review. Please refer to the 'Guide for expanding conference papers', available from the Journal's website. In this case, the Associate Editor should use additional judgment on whether the guidance for expansion has been followed.

4.2. Peer Review Schedule.

After the technical checks by the Publications Office, the manuscript goes to a Topical Editor (TE) who assigns the manuscript to one of his core or pool Associate Editors to assume responsibility for managing the peer review. To guard the efficiency of the peer review process, the EiC, AEiCs and TEs can implement "immediate rejects", without involving Reviewers, on the basis of contents and presentation unsuitable for the Journal. The Associate Editor can suggest such course of action for an already assigned manuscript, before appointing Reviewers, by contacting the TE who has assigned the manuscript.

4.2.1. Editor Assignment.

Step A: up to 10 days:
The manuscript is assigned to a suitable Associate Editor based on the Editorial Board expertise grid. Associate Editors can receive, in principle, assignments by any of the TEs, although in most cases this will be within the circle of core and pool membership.

4.2.2. Reviewers appointment.

Step B: (Invitations up to 5 days; Acceptance to review up to 5 days):
The Associate Editor reviews manuscript and invites three to five reviewers. This step requires the Associate Editor to contact the reviewers using S1M, where the process of attaching relevant material to the emails, etc. is automated. The invited Reviewer is asked to agree completing the review within two weeks. If by accident the Reviewer replies back to the Associate Editor outside S1M , the Associate Editor must register in the system manually the act of the Reviewers agreement; this gives "agreed" Reviewers permission to access the manuscript.

4.2.3. Delivery of Reviews.

Step C: Return of reviews up to 2 weeks:
Reviewers access the manuscript files and report their evaluations through S1M. Each reviewer completes the review and fills the Reviewers' form online. Upon expiry of the 2 weeks period, S1M will begin sending automated reminders to the reviewer, with a copy to the Associate Editor, setting a new deadline for returning the review. If a reviewer is considered to have stopped responding, the Associate Editor must invite a new Reviewer within 3-4 days.

4.2.4. Editorial Decision.

Step D: Decision up to 5 working days:
The AE should monitor the reviewers' progress and help keep them on schedule. Once the required number of completed reviews have been received, the Associate Editor makes a manuscript decision based on own review and reports from Reviewers. Reminders are sent to the AE in cases of delays for more than a week, with copies to the TE and if the delay is for more than 2 weeks.

The decision is fully owned by the Associate Editor and it does not need to be the "average" of what the Reviewers recommend. The decision should account for the expertise of the individual reviewers, their professional experience and other relevant factors. In case of a decision diverging substantially from the recommendations of the Reviewers, the arguments

for a particular decision can be entered in S1M as an accompanying note. This should be helpful in case of an appeal by the Author.

The Associate Editor's decision is communicated to the author through S1M and includes the reviewer's comments. Any information about the identity of the reviewers is automatically redacted. The types of decisions available to the Associate Editor are as follows:

4.2.4.1. Acceptance.

In this decision category, the Author(s) are informed that their manuscript is accepted for publication, with two options:

Publish Unaltered (sometimes referred to as A)

- Accept the paper as is, with no changes.

Publish in Minor, Required Changes (also referred to as AQ)

- Accept the paper with minor, required changes which usually the Associate Editor can adjudicate directly. This requires a clear list of required changes to be passed to the Author. Preferably, a resubmitted AQ manuscript should be evaluated by the Associate Editor without further peer review. However, in cases where the authors' compliance with the recommendations is in question, the manuscript can be returned to the same reviewers for confirmation.

  AQ is conditional acceptance and manuscripts can be rejected after an AQ decision only on the basis of non-compliance with the mandatory changes.

4.2.4.2. Rejection.

In this decision category, the Author(s) are informed that the submitted manuscript will not be published in the IEEE Sensors Journal, with three options:

Review Again After Resubmission (also known as R1: Revise and Resubmit)

- The paper is not acceptable in its current form, but has merit. A major rewrite is required. The Author should be encouraged to resubmit a rewritten version after the changes suggested in the Comments section have been completed. The author's revised manuscript will be resubmitted using S1M. The Editorial Board will endeavour to assign it to the same Associate Editor who, if appropriate, may use the same reviewers as before. This is possible only if the Reviewers have not stated explicitly that they do not wish to review the paper again.

It is essential to avoid over-reviewing manuscripts, however, without compromising quality. The Associate Editor may work from the premises that quality Reviewers, who have reported that the paper is ready to be published, should not be asked to review again if the changes in the manuscript are not likely to change their view; in such cases new reviews can be requested only from the rejecting Reviewers. If a new Reviewer needs to be drawn in, it is appropriate that they are made aware of the history of the case and the existing discussion – what were the identified issues? This may prevent the involvement of totally new views (sometimes potentially contradicting with those already addressed), to avoid frustration by the Authors, often resulting in solid grievance cases.

Reject (also known as R2: Resubmit elsewhere)

- The paper is not acceptable for the Sensors Journal. The Author should be encouraged to submit to another journal. This decision is made in the two main cases of a) mismatch with the area of IEEE Sensors Journal ('out-of-scope') and b) of inadequate quality. If a), it is good practice to indicate that in the decision letter, to avoid possible confusion with b).

Reject, do not resubmit (also known as R3: Paper is seriously flawed)

- The paper is seriously flawed. Resubmission is not encouraged.

Repeated re-submission of the same work may become ultimately inefficient and the Associate Editor should use additional judgment after a second re-submission (usually indicated by the manuscript's label ending in *.R2).

5. Quality of Publication.

5.1. Criteria.

To be accepted, a manuscript must satisfy two important criteria: Novelty and Appropriateness. This can be judged from the answers to the following two questions

— Does the manuscript disclose new science/engineering or contain fresh new approaches to established science/engineering?

This criterion is relaxed in the case of Review papers, where the emphasis is not on reporting original work. We require that the title of such manuscripts ends in "…A Review"

— Is the manuscript a good "fit" for IEEE Sensors Journal, appealing to the publication's readership? Is the manuscript "complete," allowing to understand the disclosure not requiring excessive supplementation by other work?

5.2. Presentation.

The paper must be communicated in reasonable quality technical English. Manuscripts which do not meet this requirement should be referred back to the assigning TE, prior to peer review, with a brief justification for suggesting an "immediate reject". Manuscripts that are loosely written and repetitious, or restate established scientific principles instead of merely providing the appropriate reference to such science, will require reworking. It is up to the Associate Editor to determine whether a fix can be accomplished without another round of reviews (the AQ decision), or a major undertaking is needed for which another round of reviews will be required (the R1 decision).

5.3. Length.

The Council has established eight (8) pages as the "standard" length of a final manuscript . The authors are required to meet the expense of publishing every page over eight. Quite often less than eight pages may be quite sufficient – then the Associate Editor, with advice from the reviewers, should require the author to alter the manuscript to an appropriate length, by providing clues for material to be eliminated.

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