

Associate Editor Manual

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Introduction.

This guide is for use by the Associate Editors in managing the peer review of manuscripts submitted to the Journal. In association with this guide is a document on the IEEE Sensors Journal Associate Editor nominations and appointments, 'Nomination and Appointment Form', which is available as a separate file from the [Journal's website](#).

The main role of the Associate Editor in a scholarly publication is the management of the peer review of manuscripts by members of the peer community. IEEE requires peer review of all papers and correspondence that appear in IEEE journals such as ours.

Manuscripts are selected for publication on the basis of merit and appropriateness, based primarily on the Associate Editor's decision.

Quality and timeliness of published material are our paramount goal. This is achieved through the excellent contributions of our reviewers. By assuring selection of appropriate, well-qualified and responsible reviewers who can identify quality manuscripts, and by efficiently managing the peer-review process, the Associate Editor assures the quality and value of a publication. To help speed up the review process and to let the Journal's Editor-in-Chief and Associate Editors concentrate on the professional side of their duties, much of the related work in managing the manuscript flow is handled by our Publications Office:

Leigh Ann Kattenhorn
(E-mail l.kattenhorn@ieee.org).

The Publications Office uses the Scholar One Manuscripts (S1M) electronic management system, previously called Manuscript Central. It is a tool for on-line electronic submission of manuscripts, their review, and monitoring (see <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/sensors>).

Left to the Associate Editor is the communications with reviewers, with authors, and with the Publications Office. In keeping up with the guidelines established by the IEEE Technical Activities Board (the body that facilitates activities of all IEEE Technical Societies), special procedures have been devised to reduce the submission-to-publication time window. The current procedures in use by the Associate Editors have been approved by the Council's Publications Board. Reading this entire Guide through is essential to get a sense of the process and to understand the interactions involved in discharging Associate Editor duties.

1. Background.

1.1. Publication Mission.

Publications play a major role in implementing the purpose of the IEEE as defined in its constitution and in its vision and mission. Throughout the world IEEE publications serve to advance the theory and practice of electrical and electronic engineering and allied arts and sciences; to enhance the professional standing of the IEEE members; and to promote the constructive use of technology for the public welfare. As part of IEEE, the IEEE Sensors Council is responsible for carrying out this mission. This is done in part through the Council's IEEE Sensors Journal, whose goal is to publish original high quality manuscripts pertaining to the Council's Field of Interest.

1.2. IEEE Sensors Journal 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.

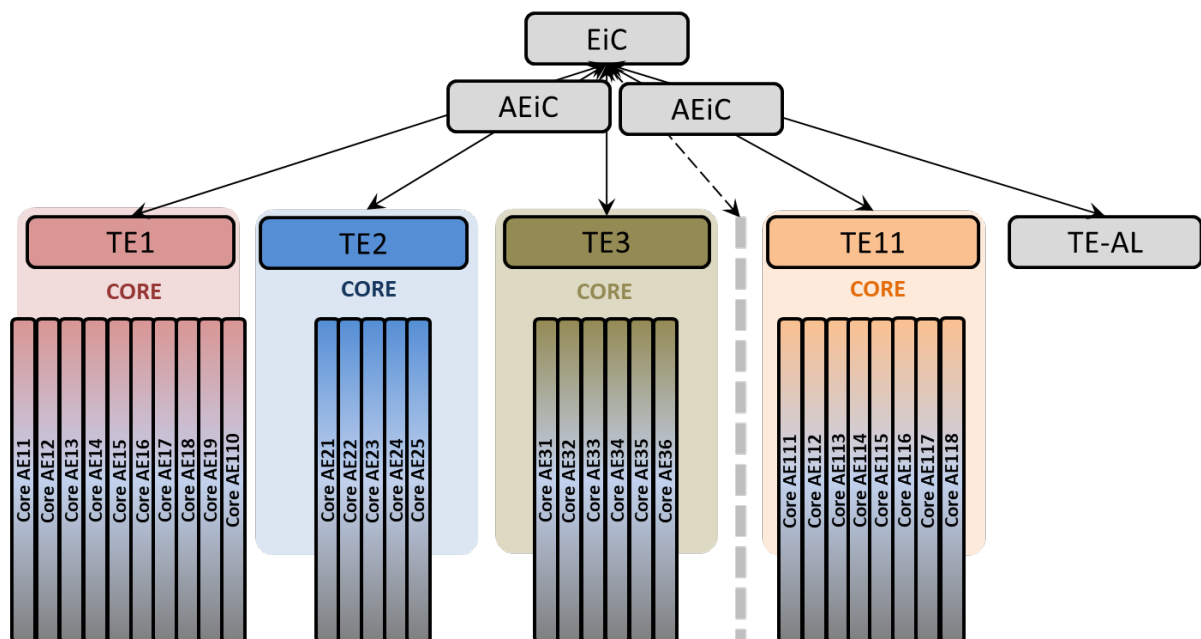
The Journal is exclusively scientific, literary and educational in its character. More details on the Journal's Field of Interest, formulated as Editorial Keywords, appear in the document 'Keywords for Manuscript Classification' available from the [Journal's website](#)

1.3. Publications of the IEEE Sensors Council.

The IEEE Sensors Council fully sponsors the publication of the IEEE Sensors Journal (started in June 2000). Other publications the Council (co)sponsors are listed on the [Council's website](#). Details of the IEEE Sensors Journal manuscript submission process and requirements appear in 'Guide for Authors' on the [Journal's website](#).

1.4. IEEE Sensors Journal Editorial Board Structure.

The Editorial Board of IEEE Sensors Journal is organized into 11 Topical Areas (TAs), clearly identified with Keywords for their Sensors context and are further detailed in a list of terms. Each TAs is led by an experienced Topical Editor (TE), as shown in the graphic below.



Associate Editors belong to a certain TA as core members, according to their primary expertise area. Other members of the EB are the Associate EiCs and TE at large (TE-AL).

2. Amendments to This Guide.

Amendments to this Guide will be made by action of the IEEE Sensors Council Publications Board, the Council's AdCom, the IEEE Publications Board, and/or IEEE Board of Directors. The most recent version of the Guide will be posted at the Journal website.

Amendments to the procedure may be recommended to the Council's Publications Board or to the Journal's Editor-in-Chief.

3. Work on the Editorial Board.

3.1. Membership Status.

The Journal's Associate Editors are required to be Members of the IEEE. There is no such requirement for reviewers or authors, however.

3.2. Appointments.

New appointments are made by the Editor-in-Chief (EIC) of the Journal. At end of term, the Associate Editor continues on an informal basis until all manuscripts assigned to him/her have been peer reviewed and final dispositions made.

3.3. Duties.

As a member of the Journal's Editorial Board, the Associate Editor contributes to the advancement of the Journal and is responsible for ensuring that the publication maintains the highest quality while adhering to the publication rules and procedures of both the Council and the IEEE.

3.4. Responsibilities.

3.4.1. Identifying and Securing Reviewers.

One of the most important functions of the Associate Editor is the identification of appropriate reviewers for each manuscript and securing from each an agreement to conduct the review in the allotted time. This is central to the peer-review process; it triggers activities in the Publications Office that set the peer review flow of a manuscript in motion. It is extremely important that the reviewers

- (a) understand that the time frame set forth for review is two weeks from their receipt of the manuscript,
- (b) agree to this schedule or suggest a modification acceptable to the Associate Editor, and
- (c) keep their S1M user record current with full, accurate contact information (mail address, phone number, fax number, and e-mail address).

Reviewers are identified via such means as peer contact, professional lists maintained by societies and other organizations, references listed at the end of the manuscript, Associate Editor's own contacts, various web-based searches, etc. Our S1M website has an extensive database of potential reviewers that can be searched by EDICS specialization codes. Our authors are also asked to suggest up to four reviewers when they submit their manuscripts. Some of these may prove useful; however, caution should be used to avoid conflicts of interest as authors sometimes list friends or colleagues who may be too close to the reported work to be objective and unbiased.

Reviewers should be selected across a range of ability. A more experienced senior reviewer can be balanced by eager junior reviewers. Good reviewers are like diamonds — they may be sturdy, but one must be careful not to overload them. It is extremely important that the schedule for conducting the review be met. One way to assure this, and for reviewers to not feel overwhelmed, is to request one, and certainly no more than two, reviews at a time from a single individual.

3.4.3. 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.

3.4.4. Communicating with Reviewers.

Sometimes reviewers need help. S1M access problems or questions should be directed to the Publications Office for troubleshooting and resolution: Leigh Ann Kattenhorn, l.kattenhorn@ieee.org. When problems arise concerning the technical aspects review process, the first line of communication is the Associate Editor. The Associate Editor must be available for such communication, probably by e-mail or phone, and be responsive to such requests.

3.4.5. Communicating with Authors.

The Associate Editor will likely communicate with the author(s), more than once if needed, as the status of the manuscript changes during the peer review process. The Associate Editor will help the authors clarify the instructions from reviewers and/or recommended changes in the manuscript. We request that the Associate Editor replies to authors directly through the S1M system. This creates a communications record in the online database that helps tracking review progress, diagnose problems, address author inquiries and deal with the occasional author who protests a decision. Once the Associate Editor determines the disposition of the manuscript based on the reviewer comments and own assessment of the manuscript, the decision is conveyed to the author using S1M.

3.4.6. Communicating with the Publications Office.

Communication between the Associate Editor and the Publications Office is extremely important. Normally this is done via e-mail automatically 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. However, we encourage all communications to go through S1M. For example, if an author sends you a question by email about her/his manuscript, log into S1M and click the author's name to generate a message back with your answer. Cut and paste the author's original message at the end of the reply generated by S1M. The reply is archived in the S1M database giving you, the Publications Office, and the EiC a complete record of all correspondence on this specific manuscript. You will find this extremely helpful as you manage various papers assigned to you over your current appointment. Authors frequently send routine status inquiries to the EiC. If all your correspondence is documented in the S1M database, the EiC can reply directly without forwarding such requests to you or to the Publications Office.

The S1M system is web-browser based and access is available world-wide. Associate Editors can thus attend to their duties while traveling and on temporary assignments away from their home base. If an AE is contemplating being away from "home base" without Internet access for one week or more, it is extremely important that the Publications Office be notified of this and provided with at least one means of emergency contact (*e-mail, phone or fax*).

If a situation is urgent and requires an immediate response, please mark your e-mail URGENT REQUEST in the Subject line. The Office receives hundreds of inquiries every day, and this will help to prompt a quick response.

3.4.7. “Blind” Reviews.

Reviews of manuscripts submitted to the Journal are “blind” reviews — the identity of the reviewers is never revealed to the author or others. In the Reviewers assessment form there are two clearly marked kinds of boxes for free comments – one is to be forwarded to the Authors with the aim to improve the manuscript and the other is confidential to the Associate Editor and therefore may contain information revealing the identity of the Reviewer. The Associate Editor must assure at all times that the identities of the reviewers are kept confidential.

3.5. Workload.

An Associate Editor will be assigned tasks depending on the submission flow, thus each Associate Editor may not receive the average number of assignments. Variations will depend on the balance between EDICS categories.

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. Temporary relief can be administered to assure that the editorial flow is not affected. If an AE fails to assign reviewers promptly, the Publications Office in consultation with the EiC may transfer that manuscript to another AE to avoid unwarranted publication delay. If this happens occasionally, the Publications Office will continue to assign new manuscripts to the said AE assuming that the scheduling problems have been of short-term character. If this happens multiple times, then the said AE will be asked to discuss with the EiC adjusting his/her manuscript workload appropriately.

4. Publication of Original Material.

The Sensors Journal publishes original material. The corresponding author submitting material to the Council’s publications is required to complete a Copyright Form confirming the originality of the manuscript and the fact that it has not been submitted for consideration elsewhere. Copyright of material appearing in an IEEE publication is done for the purposes of

- enhancing the accessibility, distribution, and use of information
- enabling the IEEE to control the use of its name
- serving and protecting the interests of its authors and their employers.

Copyright policies are applied consistently throughout the IEEE for all publications bearing the name and identity of IEEE.

Copyright is held by the IEEE itself, and not by any of its entities. In return for the transfer of authors’ rights, the IEEE grants authors and their employers’ permission to make copies and otherwise reuse the material under terms established by the IEEE.

To assure that the IEEE and the Council’s rules regarding submission of original material are followed, the Council has developed sanctions to discourage the fraudulent submission under copyright protection of material that has already been submitted elsewhere (See the section

on “Sanctions”). The IEEE may choose to exert additional sanctions against author(s) for double submission of manuscripts.

The IEEE Sensors Journal runs automatic checks on all submitted manuscripts for overlap with existing publications. This is necessary in order to avoid the trap of plagiarism and/or self-plagiarism, which may result in serious consequences for the Author and Publisher. When the calculated overlap score exceeds the norm set for the IEEE Sensors Journal, the manuscript is taken into a different flow and is not assigned to an Associate Editor. The score for the manuscripts that pass this test 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](#).

5. Publication of Timely Material.

The IEEE Sensors Journal subscribes to the goal to deliver with utmost care a decision on a submitted manuscript and in the shortest time possible. The following is a step-by-step description of that process.

At the time of publication of a manuscript, two dates are listed along with the manuscript: 1) the formal date of submission of the manuscript (the date the manuscript is received by S1M); and 2) the date of our e-mail to the AE finally approving the manuscript for publication (the Accept status date). These two dates are used for the calculation of a metric for the successful operation of the Journal.

6. Peer Review Process and Schedule.

6.1. Manuscript Submission.

A ‘Guide for Authors’ is posted at [the Journal’s website](#)

6.1.1. New Submissions.

All new manuscripts and their revisions are [submitted electronically, via S1M](#).

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.

6.1.2. Manuscript 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.

6.1.3. Manuscript 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.

6.2. Peer Review Schedule.

After the manuscript has been received in S1M and qualified by the Publications Office's technical checks as a valid submission, a Topical Editor (TE) is selected to match its technical area, as indicated by the EDICS. The TE assigns the manuscript to one of his core or pool Associate Editors (see 1.4), who assumes the responsibility for managing further 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.

It is recognized that the Associate Editors often perform such duties for more than one periodical at a time. Different publications may have distinct rules for manuscript management, peer review, and scheduling. The IEEE Sensors Journal will function according to the following standard schedules, and every effort will be made to keep all parties of the peer review to this schedule.

6.2.1. Editor Assignment.

Step A: up to 10 days:

The manuscript is assigned a manuscript number and technical checks are implemented. The selection of TE is done according to EDICS and the TE assigns to a suitable Associate Editor based on the Editorial Board expertise grid. The TEs strive for a uniform distribution of load among Associate Editors, which requires flexibility in balancing all TAs. Thus 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.

6.2.2. 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.

To help Associate Editors, when in difficulty to identify potential Reviewers in a narrow field, S1M allows submitting authors to nominate suitably qualified reviewers. These nominations should be used only when appropriate and with caution; unless they are well known to the Editorial Board, a thorough check on their identity and expertise is mandatory, particularly when their e-mail address is not linked to a known institution or is non-geographic (such as provided by Google, Hotmail, Yahoo, etc.). Nominees should not be from the same institution as the authors and it is good practice to use nominees from a different country. Most certainly, author nominations should not constitute the majority of the invited Reviewers.

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.

6.2.3. 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.

6.2.4. 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:

6.2.4.1. *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.

6.2.4.2. *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.

The Publication Office will use discretion to associate newly submitted manuscripts with already rejected ones. Often, this is in the Authors' interest and such information will be provided by them. However, 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).

7. Quality of Publication.

7.1. Main Criteria.

To be accepted, a manuscript must satisfy two important criteria: Novelty and Appropriateness. This can be judged from the answers to the two questions formulated in 7.1.1. and 7.1.2. below.

7.1.1. Novelty.

— 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"

7.1.2. Appropriateness.

— 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?

7.2. Presentation.

The Journal is published in English. The manner of presentation of the author's findings must be sufficiently literate to convey the author's ideas 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". While current trends in academic writing show a preference for "active voice" (making the author an active player, rather than a passive observer, in the text), such considerations won't play a role in selection of a manuscript for publication. However, 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).

7.3. Appropriate Publication Length.

As already briefly mentioned in 6.1.3., the manuscript needs to be long enough to meet the burden of disclosure, but no more; every effort must be exercised to eliminate "waste" of space. The Council has established eight pages as the "standard" length of a final manuscript.

It is recognized that some manuscripts may not be able to meet the burden of disclosure in only eight pages. However, the authors will be 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.

8. Other Formal Correspondence

The only type of “correspondence” that will be published in the Journal is that in which the commenter(s) provide comments on a manuscript previously published in that Journal. Such items are peer reviewed according to the same criteria and timeline as full manuscripts.

Correspondence is submitted through S1M and processed according to the published procedure “Guidelines for Comments and Reply” on the Journal’s website.

9. Award-Quality Manuscripts

The final page of the manuscript online review form provides a space that permits the reviewer to indicate whether he/she believes the manuscript is of award quality. If the answer to the question is “Yes,” the reviewer is requested to provide justification and further details.

Associate Editors are also encouraged to nominate award quality papers. Award nominations should be communicated to the EiC or Publications Office.

Copies of the nominations will be eventually passed to the Council’s Awards Committee which oversees the process and recommends candidates for the Journal’s annual Best Paper Award to the Sensors Council for consideration.

Summary

Timely publication is one of the IEEE Sensors Council’s important goals. In today’s review process, the role of the Associate Editor is to solicit reliable, knowledgeable reviewers who will commit to a speedy review cycle, and to make timely publishing decisions for their assigned manuscripts. It has been the IEEE experience that reviewers will respond when they are informed clearly of the time schedule established for the review.

The Council is keenly aware of the value of good reviewers, as well as the difficulty in locating good reviewers in sufficient numbers. There is sensitivity not to overburden popular reviewers with too many review requests. With the online tools available through S1M, there is a broadening reviewer database that can help AEs identify candidate reviewers. Associate Editors are also reminded that when forwarding information to the authors, the anonymity of the reviewers must be preserved.

Last, but not least, we endeavour not just to pass judgment, but also work with our Authors towards writing and publishing better papers, to the benefit of the whole Sensors community.

March 8, 2024