

SHARING EXPERIENCES, PRACTICES & CASES (UPDATE JAN. 2023)

TSG editorial policies, AE guidance, and examples

TSG Editorial Policies and AE Guidance

- AE must **show respect and consideration to authors** and their papers, **treating papers as they would like their own papers to be treated**.
- **3-5 reviews are needed to make a recommendation, with a minimum of 3 solid reviews** (i.e. detailed and not single paragraph reviews), irrespective of the reviewer recommendations.
- **3 solid reviews are still needed to make a recommendation**, as per due process and to show authors that adequate consideration has been given to their work.
- AE should **avoid inviting lots of reviewers** so as not to end up with too many reviews. A proven approach is to **initially invite 10 reviewers**, which would likely yield 3 -5 timely reviews.
- **1 solid review rejection when only 3 reviewers** (i.e. 1/3 of the reviews), and **2 solid reviewer rejections with more than 3 reviewers should be an automatic rejection**.

TSG Editorial Policies and AE Guidance

- AEs should **rescind reviews and reviewers that provide meaningless or no feedback**, irrespective of their recommendation and the number of secured reviews, not invite them again, and **flag the reviewers' accounts for other AEs**.
- If **not enough strong reviews**, or when **not satisfied with the reviews**, or when the **paper has been in the system for more than 90 days**, AE should **review the paper and provide detailed comments** to the EIC, if 2 other good reviews have been secured, thus providing the **3rd min. required review**.
- **Reviewers' recommendations should not be ignored**, regardless of comments, as this is their final judgement for the record.
- To recommend a **rejection with only one or none reviewer rejection, proper and strong justification of AE recommendation should be provided**, regardless of review cycle, for the record and as per due process.

TSG Editorial Policies and AE Guidance

- Once reviewers have timely accepted to review a paper, AEs **should not rescind them unless late or for inappropriate/poor reviews.**
- A **first revision with a properly supported rejection from a reviewer should be rejected, with proper and strong justification from the AE,** to tighten up standards and avoid a possible rejection on a second round of revisions. However, **if the AE feels that the authors should be given another chance, he/she should make a proper argument for a second revision.**
- A **final decision should be made on a second revision** to avoid endless review cycles, which means that **if still significant issues remain, the paper may be rejected with properly supported and significant Revised and Resubmit (R&R) recommendations.**

TSG Editorial Policies and AE Guidance

- If the **AE strongly believes that a third and very last review cycle** is still necessary, as the required changes are significant enough but readily addressable, the **recommendation should be properly substantiated**.
- **Reviewers who accept a paper in a revision cycle should not be invited again**, to avoid overburdening reviewers with unnecessary requests.
- If a **reviewer rejects a submission and associated revision**, the reviewer **should not be invited for a second revision**, unless truly necessary, to avoid an interminable revision cycle. In this case, the **AE should evaluate and comment whether the reviewer's concerns have been addressed**.
- If a reviewer rejects or recommends R&R for a new or revised submission, and then declines to review the revision, or does not respond in a reasonable time (more than 60 days), the **AE should make a recommendation specifically indicating to the EIC whether the comments of the missing reviewer have been addressed**. This is especially **important if the reviewer rejected the paper in the previous cycle**.

TSG Editorial Policies and AE Guidance

- **New reviewers should not be invited to review revisions**, as this is unfair to the authors; however, if the AE strongly believes that additional input is required to make a recommendation (e.g. conflicting reviews or too few reviews), a new reviewer may be invited.
- **AEs cannot make recommendations with pending reviews within deadlines**; pending reviewers should be contacted first to make sure that they have not started the review.
- The **review process should be completed within a reasonable 90 days** (i.e. 3 months) to be **respectful of authors' timelines** and **considering competing journals, as per IEEE publication policies** that the IEEE monitors closely, **flagging journals that exceed this limit**. **Reminder emails are sent** to AEs who take longer than **90, 95, and 100 days** to make a recommendation.

TSG Sample Emails to AEs

- Thanks for your recommendation; however, since the **paper was not rejected by any reviewer**, I need you to **explain in detail why you think the paper should be rejected**. Hence, the paper is back on your AE dashboard, so that you can provide these details.
- Thanks for your recommendation; however, since the **paper was rejected by one of the 3 reviewers**, I need you to **explain in detail why you think the paper should be given a chance for a revision**. Hence, the paper is back on your AE dashboard, so that you can provide these details.
- Thanks for your recommendation; however, since the **paper was rejected by only one of the more than 3 reviewers**, I need you to **explain in detail why you think the paper should be rejected**. Hence, the paper is back on your AE dashboard, so that you can provide these details.

TSG Sample Emails to AEs

- Thanks for your recommendation; however, since the **paper was rejected by 2 reviewers** with solid arguments that you do not contest, the paper **must be rejected**. Hence, I have rejected the paper.
- Thanks for your recommendation; however, I need you to **specifically comment on whether and how the concerns of the reviewer who did not respond/declined were addressed in the revision**, for the record and as per due process. Hence, the paper is back on your AE dashboard so that you can take care of this issue.
- Thanks for your recommendation; however, since a **minimum of 3 solid reviews are needed, independent of the recommendations**, I need you to **justify in more detail your recommendation**, as your comments are too generic, **thus providing the 3rd required review**. Hence, the paper is back on your AE dashboard so that you can take care of this issue.

TSG Sample Emails to AEs

- Thanks for your recommendation, with which I agree. However, the **deadline for a reviewer hasn't passed**, and hence **the colleague should be contacted to make sure that he has not already started reviewing the paper**, to avoid issues that we have faced in the past with reviewers upset with being rescinded before the deadline and after spending time reviewing the paper. Hence, the paper is back on your AE dashboard so that you can take care of this admin. issue.
- Could you please **expedite the review process** for this paper, **including reviewing it yourself** asap, given the delay in processing it?
- Could you please **make a recommendation** asap, as **all required reviews are in** and given the delay in processing the paper?