

Session 6: Editorial Perspectives and Addressing Reviewers' Comments

Prof. Dr. Zainal Salam,
Centre of Electrical
Energy Systems,
UTM Johor Bahru
Malaysia

For CEES and FKE,
Post Graduates Students.
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EDITORIAL PROCESSES



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Peer Review

What is peer review?

An evaluation of the manuscript for competence, significance and originality by qualified expert in the same field

All ISI journals are peer-reviewed by at least two or more expert.

Normally IEEE has three or more

IEEE Transactions has very low acceptance rate

Peer review is a process

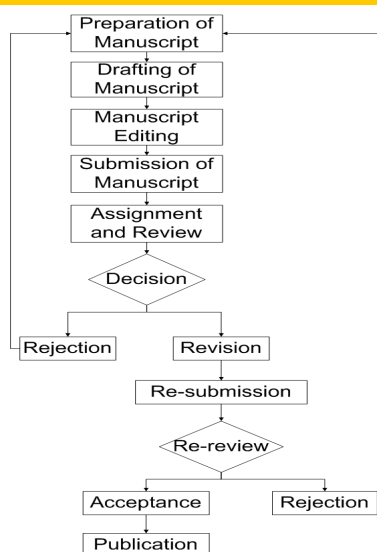


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Flow Chart of Peer Review System



Nowadays, many Journal practices "pre-editorial" process:

Paper with insufficient quality (poor language, "cold topic") is rejected without being considered for review.

Letter to Editor is now mandatory for certain journal:
Why your paper should be considered for review?



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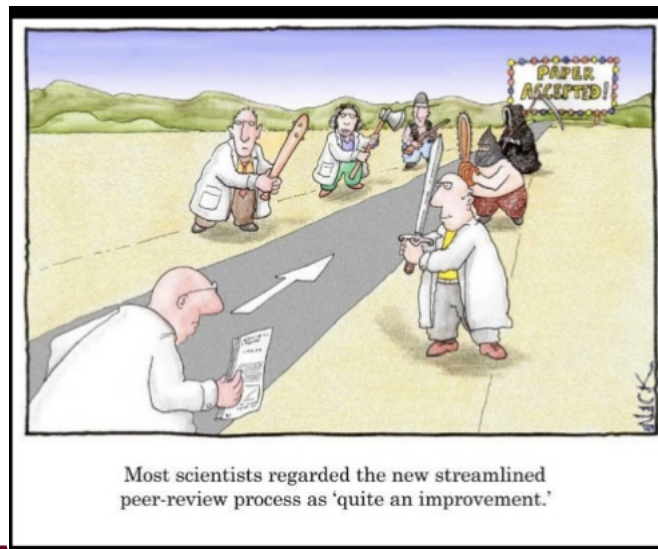
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Review Process

- In most cases, **double blind** review process is practiced (both authors and reviewer are unknown to each other).
- However, IEEE journals are mostly **single blind** (authors are known to reviewers but not the other way around).
- Editor may send many invitations, but normally few will response or agree.
- Many of the agreed reviewers failed to send review results despite consistent reminders.
- That explains why decision sometimes take a very long time.

Review Aim?



What the Reviewer is looking for?

- ❖ **Does the paper contain sufficient new material?**
- ❖ Within the scope of the journal?
- ❖ Writing well organized?
- ❖ Methods presented in the way that they can be replicated again?
- ❖ Adequate results?
- ❖ Discussion: relevant and concise
- ❖ Conclusions: supported by the data presented?
- ❖ Others:
 - ❖ language acceptable?
 - ❖ Figures, tables ok?
 - ❖ References cited in the text included in the references list?



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How Reviewer is Selected

- ❖ Normally the journal's **Editor-in-Chief** has a team of **Editors** (or associate editors) in specific fields within the journal scope.
- ❖ When a paper is being considered for review, he assigned one editor (most relevant) to handle the peer review process
- ❖ Since the field is somewhat familiar to the Editor, he may quickly recognizes the experts and send invitation emails as potential reviewers.
- ❖ Alternatively, Editor may browse the reference list and make the invitation.
- ❖ Some journals/Editors keep database of reviewers



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Why people want to review papers?

- It's a difficult and time-consuming task with no direct compensation. But still there are willing persons to do it.
- Personal Reasons
 - Self-esteem. You are recognized as expert in the field.
 - Close friend of Editor (doing favor)
 - Expanding CV and networking
 - Has personal ambition to be Editor one day (?)
- Knowledge
 - He wants **first hand information on new research** done by others (Note: the final paper may not be published in the near future, or may not be published at all)
 - Ensure his students are still “competitive”.



HANDLING REVISIONS



Decision

- Once sufficient review is returned (normally two or more), Editor will write **recommendations** to the Editor-in-Chief.
- The recommendation is weighted based on the reviewers **comments**.
- The Editor-in-Chief almost totally dependent on the Editor's recommendation to come up with the **decision**.
- The Editor-in-Chief communicates the decision directly (via e-mail) to the authors.
 - The decision can be: Accept, Minor Correction, Major Correction, Reject and Resubmit, Total Reject.
- **The decision e-mail is the D-day for the authors!**



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- **Very rarely** Editor-in-Chief disputes his Editor's recommendation.
- What happen when comments from two reviewer's contradict each other?
 - The Editor-in-Chief may instruct Editor to look for more reviewers.
 - The Editor himself can be a reviewer



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Meaning of decision

- **Accept as it is:**
Very rarely for first submission of manuscript.
- **Minor revision**
“Yes, we definitely want your paper”
- **Major revision**
“We like your paper. It has merits and worth to be published, but do as what being told by reviewers”
- **Reject and Resubmit**
“OK, we are still interested but please get the paper into the the right context of this journal. Add more things and we will see what we can do.”

Total rejection means “Its not that your paper is not good, **but is not suitable for our journal. Please send your paper to some other place.**”

**SO, NO MANUSCRIPT SHOULD BE WASTED.
THERE IS A JOURNAL OUT THERE THAT MAY BE
WILLING TO ACCEPT YOUR PAPER!**

When Receiving the Decision e-mail

- Normally Editor is very cautious with the wordings of the decisions:
 - “the manuscript is provisional accepted...”
 - “we are unable to accept the paper in its current form...”
- Very few papers are accepted without comments or a need for revision.
- When you get huge negative comments, don't lose hope.
 - Read carefully what its says; it might not be as bad as you first thought.
- Even if the paper is rejected, the comments/ suggestions by the reviewers (experts) can be very valuable.



How to handle Revisions

- ❖ If the Editor allows for revision (major or minor), there is a **great hope for acceptance** at the end.
- ❖ Read the comments carefully
 - ❖ Try to understand what are the issues raised
 - ❖ Sometimes the comments can be confusing
 - ❖ Think first: what the reviewer really want you to do



Responding to Comments

- ❖ Provide a **point-to-point** response
 - ❖ Acknowledge the comment is VALID
 - ❖ Give clear answer
 - ❖ Indicate the changes made to the article (highlighting).

- ❖ If you rebut (challenge) the comments
 - ❖ Justify your arguments clearly.
 - ❖ **Cite established reference to support your case.**

- ❖ **Do Nothing is NOT an option**



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Be Diplomatic in Answering

- Be polite and diplomatic in your answers even you disagree with the comments.
- Remember, they have done painstaking job to read your manuscript for FREE.
- Give respect to the reviewers contributions:
 - “First, we would like to thank the reviewers for their meticulous effort in reading our paper to improve its readability...”
 - “We appreciate the comments made by the reviewer...”
- **But don't OVERDO the praises!**



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Don't Argue with Reviewers

- If there are issues that you don't agree, don't start a debate:
 - Debate will prolong revisions (Rev 2, 3 etc)
 - Just state the facts as best as you can
- Don't question the reviewer integrity:
 - “We are of the opinion that the reviewer is not competent to review our paper...”

REMEMBER: EDITOR BELIEVES THE REVIEWER MORE THAN YOU (no matter how correct you are!)



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WHY PAPERS ARE REJECTED?



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Novelty is Not Clearly Mentioned

- What is the novelty of your work? (**Idea**)
- What is the principle behind it? (**How**)
- How is it different from other related work? (**Unique**)
- What's so special about your idea? (**Merit**)



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Literature review is not adequate

- Not **thoroughly** done
 - As a result, research gaps are wrongly defined/not unique
 - Repeat of previous work, no new contribution
- Question: It is not possible to review everything, so how to be adequate?
 - Answer: Narrow down the scope (focus).



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Key Article Components are Missing

- IMRAD not adhered to (missing)
 - Summary on the state-of-the-art
 - Identification of knowledge (research) gap
 - Novelty not mentioned
 - Methodology
 - Results/Discussion
 - Conclusion
 - References (important ones missing)



Overstating your Achievement

- **Insufficient Evidence** for the claims
- Unjustified **self glorification**
 - “Our work is the best in the field...”
- **Over criticizing** (putting down) other works
 - We found the work in [1] is too primitive...”
- **Lack of Modesty** (sounds arrogant)
 - “This paper present a newly found theory, which has never been discussed elsewhere...”
 - “This is the first time that anyone has discover
- **Not open** to ideas/comments (from reviewer, editor, peer)



A bit of modesty may be more attractive...

- You don't have to be arrogant to claim superiority
 - “**To the best of our knowledge** there seems to be an inadequate...”
 - “**Based on the literature review**, it can be concluded that this is the first attempt to...”
- But don't be too apologetic
 - Shows lack of confidence in your own work
 - “We are not certain (unsure) if our work is the first...”



Ambiguous and Inconsistent

- **Ambiguous: Meaning:**
 - (1) has several possible meanings or interpretations; *an ambiguous answer.*
 - (2) lacks **clearness** or **definiteness**; **obscure**; **indistinct**
- **Remember that:** the reader cannot read your mind, they can only read what you have write.
- **Consider this:** The material is already difficult enough to understand, don't let the readers scratch their head to think what are you trying to say!



Subjective Writing

- Technical paper should be very **objective**
- Readers should not be allowed to interpret. **You must tell exactly what it means.**
 - “The **result** shows that **our experiment** is **superior** than the work published in [1]
 - “From **Fig. 1**, there is a **15% increase** in the **output power**, in comparison to [1]...”
- Another Example
 - “The simulation is in excellent agreement with the **theoretical prediction...**”
 - “There is only **0.1% discrepancy** between the **simulation and the theoretical prediction; thus...**”



Not Respecting Previous Publication

- Plagiarism
- Repeating others work (no novelty)
- Citing incorrectly (improper referencing)
- Dismissive statement (harsh criticism)

Note: Citing others does not reduce novelty of your work. **On the contrary**, it's a proof of authors awareness of other work and show his ability to define new contribution



Other Possible Issues

- Too many spelling (typo) errors
- Grammar
- Figures, graph, tables not clear
- Sentence structures are problematic

Need proof reader/editing services

Do not copy/paste diagram. Redraw them

Revise! Revise! Revise! (x10)



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**Don't worry about rejection...
Nobel Prize Winners
had their papers rejected too!**



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Final Notes

- **Cherish your own work** – if you do not take care, why should the journal?
- There is no secret recipe for success – just some simple rules, **dedication and hard work**.
- Editors and reviewers are all busy scientists, just like you. Make things easy to save them time.



zainals@fke.utm.my