

## IJDAR guidelines for associate editors

### Some clarifications on the IJDAR editorial process

#### Decisions

We sometimes receive queries about the “semantics” of the different decisions which can be recommended (by a reviewer) or made (by an editor). Here are some explanations:

- **Reject:** this means that you consider the paper not to be adequate for publication in the journal, either because the quality of its technical content is too poor for archival publication (see first part of these guidelines on expectations), or because the paper is out of scope for this journal, or because of ethical problems (duplicate submission, self-plagiarism or plagiarism).
- **Major revision needed:** in this case, you deem the paper to present some technical content which may be of the quality and scientific level expected for journal publication. However, the present state of the paper is below standard for publication, for reasons such as lack of putting the work into perspective, or lack of sufficient experimental validation, or serious flaws in the way the scientific contribution is presented or justified, etc. It must be stressed that a major revision *is in no way a commitment to ultimately accept* a revised version of the paper for publication. You must feel completely free to reject a future revision of the paper, if you assess the revision not to answer the concerns raised by the reviewers and the editor. We even *recommend* that you decide to reject a revision if it seems that the authors have not the will, or maybe the time or even the capability, to answer these concerns. Without making this a strict rule, we think that if a second revision still raises major concerns, it is probably better, in most cases, to reject it than to extend a time-consuming reviewing process.
- **Reject and resubmit:** this should be used in two cases:
  - When the authors did some errors when submitting the paper, such as uploading the wrong version, or something not properly formatted, or with figures forgotten. In such a case, you do not make any assessment of the technical content of the paper, you just ask them to prepare and upload a paper which is proper for entering the review process.
  - When the reviewing process concludes that the contribution presents some ideas which have the potential to be of interest, but that the paper, even after a major revision, has too many lacks, both in organization, in writing and in the way the scientific contributions are put forward, to let us reasonably expect that it will converge in a timely way towards a journal publication of the quality expected. Compared to a simple “reject” decision, this is a signal to the authors that they have some interesting ideas and contributions, but that they need to write a new paper, not to try to enhance the existing one.
- **Accept with minor revisions:** basically, this means that you consider the technical content of the paper to be of sufficient quality for publication. *This is actually a commitment to ultimately publish the paper*, provided the authors answer the remaining concerns (which should be relatively minor) in a timely and proper way.

- **Accept as is:** beware that this means that the paper is *completely ready* for publication, i.e. the next step is that it is transmitted as is to the publishing process. You should be sure that there are no remaining typos or formatting errors, that the source files for text and figures have been provided, etc.

Please note that when you as editor submit your decision, you should verify that the authors get a complete feedback. The online reviewing system provides the reviewers with two fields, one for feedback to editor alone, another for feedback to the authors. It happens that some reviewers make a mistake and write all their feedback and assessment in the field for editor alone. In such (rare) cases, you should yourself “cut-and-paste” the reviewer’s comments to the mail going out to the authors, carefully checking that you do not insert remarks intended to remain confidential.

### Handling of revised versions

When an author submits a revised version of a paper for which you had previously taken a “major revisions” or “minor revisions” decision, the revision is expected to be accompanied by answers to the reviewers’ comments. Check that this information is present in the paper (it should always be there for a major revision, for a minor revision it is more dependent on the kind of revisions which were asked for). Except in very special cases (such as a scientific controversy) the authors are not expected to justify their previous version, but to explain how they have answered the comments made and what they have changed in the paper.

The system by default suggests that you assign the same reviewers for this new round of reviewing. This usually makes sense, but you are fully free to decide not to invite all of them (see below), or to invite new reviewers in addition or in replacement. In all cases, and especially in the latter case of new reviewers, make sure that the mail going out to the reviewers clearly indicates that this is a revised paper, and that access is giving for all reviewers to the previous version and its reviews.

### The editor is in charge

Some editors tend to think that whenever they are in charge of a paper, they *have* to assign three reviewers. This is not true! When an editor is in charge of a paper, this editor has full authority to take decisions on this paper. Thus:

- You can decide to *reject the paper without any reviewing*. This may happen because you are an expert of the field and that it is clear, when you read the paper, that it is very far from being of the quality expected for journal publication. Don’t waste the time of 3 reviewers! Just reject it, with explanations to the authors of why you take this decision. Of course, this is even more the case if the paper is out of scope for the journal (usually, the editors in chief catch this, but they may be too quick to assign the paper to an editor). But it can also be the case if you asked for a major decision, and you get a revision where the authors have obviously not bothered to take the reviewers’ comments into serious consideration. If this happens, don’t irritate the reviewers by asking them to go through this paper again!
- You can decide to *accept the paper without any reviewing*. This is very rare for the first submission of a paper, and we ask you to remain cautious before deciding on yourself that your expertise in a field allows you to assess the paper to be so good that it deserves to be immediately accepted! But it may happen! It happens much more for revisions received after a “accept with minor revisions” decision; actually, in many cases, it is probably the right thing to do: check that the last revisions asked for have been made, and accept the paper without

reviewing. This will spare precious reviewer time, and will shorten the overall delay between submission and publication.

- You can decide to *change the number of reviewers* you invite. In some very special cases, and after reading the paper yourself, you may feel that the three reviews you get do not provide enough information for you to make a reliable decision; don't hesitate then to invite an additional reviewer. More frequently, you may receive a revised version of a paper for which only a subset of your reviewers had reservations, the others having suggested accepting the paper. Then, it may be appropriate to ask only for the reviews of those who had serious criticisms of the previous version. Beware that in all cases, you must adjust (rise or lower) the number of reviews required to make a decision. The reviewing system gives you this option on the papers you are in charge of. If you forget to make this adjustment, you may be at risk of not being warned that it is time for a decision to be made!



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