

Associate Editor Instructions (as of 4/19/2018)

Policies

CONFIDENTIALITY

It is the policy of *Medical Physics* to withhold the identity of the AE and referees from the author. At no point in the process should an AE disclose his/her identity to the author. If an AE needs to contact the author, please do so through the email correspondence tools inside eJP, which will by default send an email from the journal editorial office email address medphys@wiley.com. Alternatively, an AE may write to the journal managers or Editor of record at the editorial office email address, who will contact the authors on the AE's behalf. The Editor of Record, EOR, (Williamson, Das, or Goodsitt) is the Editor assigned to manage the manuscript and is the same individual who invited you to accept this assignment.

It is essential that AEs craft their review comments and EJP emails to the authors so as not to disclose their identities. For example, if an AE were to write "Please reference the following papers from my group" followed by citations would give away, perhaps inadvertently, the AE's identity.

The AE SHOULD NOT ASSIGN HER/HIM -SELF AS REFEREE WITHOUT DISCLOSING HER/HIS ROLE

It is the policy of Medical Physics that an AE should never assign him/herself as an undeclared referee on a manuscript they are managing, as this misrepresents to the authors how many external peer reviewers are commenting on their manuscript. The Editors do expect an AE to provide a detailed critique if one of the two assigned referees fails to submit a timely review. In this setting, it is preferable that you use the "Comments to the Author" section of the AE recommendation form for your independent review. If you assign yourself the referee role so as to make use of the template, it is essential that you declare to the author by including a statement of the form, "Note: Referee 3 and the Associate Editor are the same person," in your "AE comments to the author" section.

An AE may act as a referee on a paper they are not managing, at the request of another AE or editor, without acknowledging their AE role for the Journal.

PLAGIARISM

The article should present original, previously unpublished information. If there is evidence to the contrary, the referee should cite references that provide the evidence. The Associate Editor should be particularly alert to information in the article that might have been taken from another publication without an appropriate reference. *Medical Physics* follows the plagiarism policy of the American Association of Physicists in Medicine, which can be accessed [here](#). Additional information can be found in the editorial by Editor Emeritus Bill Hendee (*Medical Physics* 35, 804 (2008)).

All new manuscripts are screened by the plagiarism detection software Ithenticate. The iThenticate report can be accessed by the AE near the bottom of the Details tab. Typically the EOR reviews all reports with duplication index greater than 10% and documents his disposition in the yellow Sticky Note affixed to the details tab. If there is an appearance of plagiarism, not detected by Ithenticate, or if you disagree with the EOR's assessment, this should be brought immediately to the attention of the EOR.

Editorial Process Overview: 7 Basic Steps

1. Author submits manuscript
2. An Editor, typically the EOR, invites a potential Associate Editor to handle the peer-review process.
 - Editor issues email invitation to Potential Associate Editor.
 - Potential Associate Editor can Accept/Decline the assignment.
3. Associate Editor invites Potential Referees to the manuscript.
 - Associate Editor issues email invitations to Potential Referees.
 - Potential Referees can Accept/Decline the request.

- Associate Editor is prompted via email notifications to select and invite Potential Referees until at least 2 Referees agree to review.
- 4. Referees review the manuscript and submit comments to the Associate Editor.
- 5. The Associate Editor submits her/his own comments and recommendation to the Editor.
- 6. The Editor makes a final journal decision regarding publication of the current manuscript.
- 7. The Author is sent the decision.

Revised Manuscripts: When a revised manuscript is submitted, the process is repeated. Resubmissions are directed first to the Editor for consideration. If further review is needed, the original Associate Editor is usually requested to handle the process again, although in some cases the Editor may contact the original Referees directly.

As the **Associate Editor**, you are responsible for step #3 and step #5. When you accept an assignment to manage a new manuscript, we assume you will continue to manage all of its subsequent revisions.

Your Account Dashboard

When you first log into the eJP system, you are taken to your Dashboard (Home page). You can perform tasks under several headings: Author, Associate Editor, Reviewer, and General. Pay particular attention to your Associate Editor Tasks:

- Accept/Decline Associate Editor Assignment
- Awaiting Referee Assignment
- Contact Potential Referee
- Under Review
- Awaiting Associate Editor Recommendation
- All Pending Manuscripts
- Waiting for Revision

When there is a pending action item, you will see a **red arrow** ➔ next to a manuscript link. Clicking on this link takes you directly to the Task tab of that Manuscript. You will then see available Manuscript Workflow Tasks (Assign Potential Referees, Recommendation, etc.). Only tasks applicable to the current stage of the manuscript are visible. Click a task link to perform that task, or click another tab, such as Details or Files, to view information about the manuscript.

If no **red arrows** ➔ are visible on your Dashboard, then there is no pending work that you need to worry about. At any time, you may click the folder "All Pending Manuscripts" to check the status of all manuscripts that are assigned to you.

Additionally, the Associate Editor receives email prompts and follow-up notifications for tasks in steps #3 and #5 so that you know when you need to log into the system to perform action tasks on manuscripts assigned to you. The email messages contain hyperlinks that bring you into the system at an appropriate screen.

Availability Dates

If you know of specific dates when you CANNOT perform your Associate Editor responsibilities (such as vacations, meetings, etc.), please click on the "Modify Availability Dates" link under General Tasks on your Dashboard (Home page). You will be presented with twelve fields/months where you can specify which days you will not be available. The Editor or the Editorial Office will use this information to avoid offering new manuscripts during the specified periods. However, we assume that you will continue to manage revisions of your previously accepted assignments. If you are unable to continue servicing your assignments, please contact the Editor responsible for the manuscript so that he/she can make other arrangements to manage revisions.

General Navigation and Getting Help

The upper right-hand corner of every page carries links that allow you to:

- Return to your Dashboard (Home)
- Display Help contact information
- Log out of the journal's submission and review site

Throughout the system, **red arrows** → reflect possible pending action items that that might benefit from your attention as Associate Editor, by clicking on the associated link.

If you need additional help, you can click on the help signs  located throughout the system. A help dialog box will pop up with context-sensitive help comments.

Accepting/Declining the Associate Editor Role for a Manuscript

You may accept/decline an Associate Editor invitation/assignment by clicking a link in the email invitation, or by logging into the system and locating the manuscript on your dashboard. If there is a manuscript link preceded by a red arrow in the “Accept/Decline Associate Editor Assignment” folder, then you have a pending invitation. Click the manuscript link to view the details of the manuscript; at the bottom of the details page, you will be presented with Accept and Decline links.

If you decline, you will be able to indicate your reason for declining the assignment. The Editors greatly appreciate your suggestions for alternative AEs. Potential AEs who are not members of the Editorial Board or Board of Associate Editors should have experience with the Journal as a Referee and/or author in addition to be an expert on the topic of the manuscript.

If you accept, you will be taken immediately to the manuscript Tasks tab and presented with two possible tasks: “Assign Potential Referees” or “Recommendation without Review.”

Recommendation without Review

Please take the time to consider whether a manuscript is worth sending for external peer review. Here are some common circumstances that may merit a Recommendation without Review:

- Manuscript is inappropriate for the journal or unlikely to survive peer-review: AE should bypass external peer review by selecting the “Recommendation without Review” option. Select “Reject” as your recommendation and enter comments to the editor AND author in the AE Recommendation form. An author-readable brief paragraph outlining the basis of recommendation is necessary.
- Exceptionally Poor English or Sloppy Manuscript: a manuscript that contains interesting science muddled by exceptionally poor English or multiple misspellings, poor composition, or an obscure writing style should be returned to the editorial office by the AE without external review. Bypass external peer review by selecting the “Recommendation without Review” option. Select either “Editorial decision deferred” or “Rejected with Resubmission Possible” as your recommendation and enter comments to the editor and/or author in the AE Recommendation form.

For more information about making a recommendation, see “Associate Editor Recommendation” below.

Assigning and Contacting Potential Referees

If a manuscript is appropriate for external peer review, please click the “Assign Potential Referees” task link. You will be shown a page of detailed instructions for navigating the referee search, selection, and invitation tools. Click “Continue” at the bottom of the instructions page when you are ready to assign referees.

As described in the Referee Assignment Instructions, the page is separated into 7 tabs for searching and compiling a list of potential referees. By default, you will begin on the “Search” tab, but you can navigate to any tab at any time. Above the tabs, there is a header showing the manuscript details: the manuscript reference number,

corresponding author's name, current stage of processing, and manuscript title. The manuscript reference number is a hyperlink that will open the manuscript record in another tab or window so you can explore the details and files while leaving the Referee Assignment Task open.

Author-suggested referees: Referees suggested by the author to include or exclude will appear on the "Reviewer Notes" tab. You are encouraged to honor the author's recommendations (especially exclusions) unless there are strong reasons not to. But, ultimately, you are free to use your discretion in assigning referees.

Post-doctoral research associates and advanced graduate students: An Associate Editor may select a post-doctoral or advanced graduate student to review the manuscript, if the AE supervises the review process. The Editors encourage such supervised/mentored peer review experiences as this allows the trainee to gain experience in reviewing papers and enters the student into the database for possible other reviewing opportunities.

The Editors strongly encourage AEs to select and order a list of at least 3 or 4 Referees even though only two referees are required. If one of your top choices declines or fails to respond, EJP will automatically invite the next potential reviewer on your list. You can personalize the invitation to all queued potential referees by using the expandable "Comments to the Referee" text box. This text will automatically be inserted into the initial and subsequent (chaser) invitation form letters. If you want full control over whom is invited in what order, then you should only list two potential referees at a time. However, then you must be responsible for promptly assigning new potential if one or both of your preferred referees declines.

When you have completed your list of potential referees and clicked the "done/finished" button, you will proceed to the "Contact Potential Referees" task. The referees you queued will appear in a table.

At the top of the table, you can adjust the number of required reviews for the manuscript. By default, 2 referees are required; this can be adjusted up or down as needed. Setting it to zero will advance the manuscript to recommendation without review.

In the table, each referee has an adjustable "Due Date Duration" and a list of action links. By default, reviewers have 14 days to complete a review, but you can adjust the duration up or down before sending the invitation. Click "Contact" to open an invitation email that you can edit before sending. You must click "Contact" separately for each referee you wish to invite. When you are done sending invitations, click "Continue" at the bottom of the table to return to your dashboard.

Invitation follow-up emails are sent automatically at standard pre-set intervals. If the referee has not replied within 2 weeks, the invitation closes. The system will automatically invite the next queued referee.

On your dashboard, the red-arrowed task to "Contact Referees" will remain until the desired number of Potential Referees has agreed to accept the request to review. This task link allows you to return to the Contact Potential Referee screen and check on the status of securing assigned referees to review the manuscript.

If your selected potential referees decline or are unavailable, and the end of your queue has been reached before the required number of referees has accepted the review assignment, you will receive a notification email that more potential referees are needed. The manuscript will move to the "Assign Potential Referees" folder on your dashboard, with a red arrow and manuscript link. Clicking on the link will direct you back to the potential-referee-assignment page; your previous choices and their current status will be pre-filled in the "Current Reviewers" tab.

Associate Editor Recommendation

After the desired referees have submitted their reviews, the Associate Editor receives an email prompt to make the "Associate Editor Recommendation." The expectation of the Editors is that the AE will step in and provide a detailed review in the event one of the two committed referees fails to deliver and evaluation (or delivers an unusable evaluation) within two weeks of the evaluation due date.

On your dashboard, under the task “Awaiting Associate Editor Recommendation,” look for the red arrow and a manuscript link to “Make Associate Editor Recommendation.” Click the link to go to the Task tab of the manuscript. The Task tab presents a link to go to the recommendation form, which will also display referee comments, but you may wish to re-visit the Files tab to refresh your memory on the manuscript before proceeding to your recommendation form to read referee comments and complete your assessment.

The Associate Editor's Recommendation form is made up of six sections:

1. Manuscript information.
2. Referees' Overall Rankings and Recommendation (see below).
3. Referee's Comments.
4. Associate Editor's Recommendation and Rankings
5. Associate Editor's Comments to Author.
6. Confidential Remarks to the Editor.

RECOMMENDATION WITHOUT REVIEW: As described previously, you may recommend rejecting the manuscript outright without peer review if it is obvious to you that the authors' work is not suitable for the Journal or not of sufficient quality to survive the peer review process. Additionally, you may recommend reject-and-resubmit without external peer review if the manuscript is poorly written but of enough interest to merit requesting that the authors have it edited to remedy language/compositional deficiencies before initiating peer review. If you “Recommend without Review,” please write a short paragraph explaining the basis of your recommendation to the authors.

RECOMMENDATION BASED ON REFEREE REVIEWS: Use referee remarks and comments to formulate your recommendation to the Editor. Please write a short author-reviewable paragraph explaining the basis of your editorial recommendation. If you recommend major revisions and another cycle of review, please include a short summary to guide the authors' efforts and to address any contradictory recommendations by the reviewers. If the Referees give contradictory guidance; the evaluations fail to give the authors actionable guidance on improving the paper; the Referees make unreasonable demands on the authors; or the Referee evaluations miss obvious weaknesses in the manuscript, you should address these concerns and resolve any ambiguities in your report. Also, if the manuscript requires editing to address grammar or style errors, this also should be noted. Note that neither AEs nor Referees are responsible for detailed editing or exhaustive listing of grammar errors. Typically, an example or two is sufficient. For papers that are of potentially publishable quality, the Referee reports, including the AEs report, should provide the authors a concise, complete, and actionable plan of remedial revisions for achieving. If you believe the paper is not acceptable for publication and should be rejected or referred to another journal, your report should summarize the basis of this recommendation.

Using your recommendation, the Editor (EOR) will select a decision-letter template and prepare a decision letter for the authors. The Editor can check off which of the reviewer comments to pass on to the author in the Decision Letter, so if you find inappropriate comments, please flag these to the Editor's attention using the “Confidential Remarks to the Editor” text box.

Pressing the "Submit Recommendation" button passes the manuscript to the Editor's desktop, to make the final journal decision, select/edit the decision letter, and email it to the author.

Checking a Manuscript's Status; Associate Editor Workload Report

You may obtain the status of manuscripts assigned to you at any time by clicking the “All Pending Manuscripts” folder on your Dashboard (Home Page) to see a summary of all active papers assigned to you.