



Editors' Update

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Editors give their opinions on peer review

In a recent Editors' Forum, editors were asked to agree or disagree with the following:

For an optimum peer review, all Elsevier journals should:

1. Adopt double-blind review processes
2. Not ask authors to recommend referees for their papers
3. Offer more attractive incentives to referees

Through our Editors' Virtual Forum many of you shared your thoughts with us and other editors on this issue and we have summarized those responses here. Overall, most editors felt that no one policy should apply to all journals. Each journal is different in area and scope of specialty as well as size, and the general opinion was that individual editors should decide what is fair for each journal.

In response to the item regarding the adoption of double-blind review processes, all editors agreed that referees should be anonymous but felt that double-blind reviews were impractical. Authors typically cite their own work and, in some highly specialized fields, reviewers are well acquainted with their research colleagues, and a true double-blind review would not be possible.

Regarding the second point above, 100% of editors who responded felt that it is both appropriate and helpful to ask authors to recommend referees for their papers. They would not want to see a policy against this practice. In their experience, authors are objective in their recommendations and rarely, if ever, do these recommendations appear to be self-serving. In any event, editors are free to ignore these suggestions by authors. Some editors reported that they usually choose one of the recommended reviewers and select a second reviewer who was not recommended.

The practice of offering more attractive incentives to referees was met with a resounding negative response. Editors felt that the reward for reviewing should be intellectual rather than financial and, as

one editor put it, offering incentives might be the "top of a slippery slope." However, they did think that offering access to Science Direct or Scopus in the year of the review would be appropriate.

Interestingly, the majority of editors held very similar opinions on these peer review issues. They want to insure that the peer review process continues to be practical and fair although they feel that one policy for all journals would hamper the work of the editor. Establishing general guidelines and providing each editor with wide latitude in applying those guidelines seems to be the consensus of opinion.

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