



# GUIDELINES FOR SPECIAL ISSUES

## Physica D: Nonlinear Phenomena

The purpose of these guidelines is to describe the steps involved in the creation of special issues. A first goal is to reach a clear understanding between the Editors-in-Chief and the primary guest editor(s) concerning the responsibilities of the latter. A second goal is to establish a schedule that should put special issues into print as quickly as possible.

All special issues will have one or two *primary guest editors* who advance a proposal to the Editors-in-Chief, and develop the issue by soliciting contributions from persons who are doing important work in the chosen topic.

The primary guest editor(s) will usually name other *guest editors* to handle some of the manuscripts. A guest editor should be responsible for no more than five or six manuscripts.

Every special issue will have a *special issue editor*, whose task is to evaluate manuscripts that are recommended for acceptance and to examine the correspondence between guest editors, authors, and reviewers, to assure that the review process has been thorough enough to uphold the standards of Physica D. The special issue editor will usually be one of the Editors-in-Chief, although another experienced Physica D editor might be designated in some cases. The special issue editor will also handle the reviewing process of manuscripts submitted by guest editors.

### 1. Concept, planning and structure.

A proposal for a special issue should include such information as expectations for research articles and review articles. When or before manuscripts are submitted, the guest editors should establish which papers are research papers and which ones are review papers. These decisions should be respected throughout – there should, for example, be no conversion of a weak research paper into a review paper. Short communications should not be accepted. The following questions should also be addressed: What are the logical sections of the issue? What papers will be placed in what sections? Are the sections of roughly equal size? An early judgment should be made regarding the balance. If there are to be review articles, does each section have one? A form to be completed for the proposal of special issues may be found online at <http://www.ees.elsevier.com/physd>.

### 2. Timeline and editorial procedures.

Special issues are one of two types, and each has particular procedures for successful development. As will be evident below, a major concern is to make the final publication of the special issue as prompt as possible while keeping with high editorial standards.

- **Type 1. Meeting-based special issues**, those whose content derives from some conference, symposium, or meeting. (See page 3).
- **Type 2. Initiative-based special issues**, those for which an editor or primary guest editor solicits a set of papers from persons doing important work in the field. (See page 5).

The guidelines will obviously differ in the two cases, but one important factor is essential for both types of issue: *much more editorial management is required* to bring a specified set of manuscripts together for a given issue than is required for the production of a regular issue, which consists of random manuscripts that have independently reached publication at the same time.

All manuscripts will be submitted and handled electronically, through the journal's online submission and reviewing system (EES, <http://www.ees.elsevier.com/physd>), which will be configured for the special issue. The Journal Manager will inform the primary guest editor(s) when EES is ready and will provide instructions for those guest editors who are not familiar with EES.

The special issue editor will handle articles co-authored by guest editors. The primary guest editor(s) will be notified when a manuscript submitted by a guest editor has been accepted for publication in the special issue. Because a special issue should not be viewed as a means to promote the work of guest editors, manuscripts written by guest editors should constitute a small fraction (say no more than 10 to 20%) of the special issue.

### 3. Duties of guest editors

The following items summarize the duties of guest editors.

1. **Guest editors choose referees.** Requests to potential referees should be administered within EES and go out within ten days of the submission of manuscripts. Reviewers should be familiar with the high publication standards of Physica D, and preferably have published articles in this journal or one of its peers. A document describing guidelines for choosing reviewers will be provided to guest editors.
2. As is widely recognized in the world of scientific publishing, slow or unresponsive referees are a fact of life. For that reason, editors should not hesitate to contact additional referees if those initially invited have not confirmed their intent to write a report. Referees should be told at the original contact that a report is expected within four to six weeks. A reminder should go out to all referees who have not responded by the fifth week. It would also be prudent for each guest editor to consider who could be asked for a quickly written report if too few of the initially chosen referees respond in time.
3. The standards of Physica D must be respected as much in the preparation of special issues as in normal editorial work: Physica D aims to publish papers that either develop a new nonlinear phenomenon or shed new light on an existing one. Papers that merely extend existing arguments and techniques in a familiar direction are seldom sufficiently novel. Manuscripts whose subject matter fails to meet the journal's standards should be rejected without review; those which receive consistently negative reviews should be rejected.
4. **Guest editors communicate with corresponding authors.** When all reports for a given manuscript have been received, an email will be automatically sent to the handling editor. That editor will then write a decision letter within EES, which will be forwarded to the authors by the special issue editor. Particularly in the event of referee reports that take contrasting views of a manuscript, it is important for the handling editor to indicate to the author(s) that some referee comments require action and some may not.
5. The special issues editor will review, through EES, all decisions (reject, revise, accept) made by guest editors. In case of a paper for which the decision is not apparent, the special issue editor will consult with the guest editors before making a final decision. The final decision on each manuscript rests with the special issues editor.
6. **Guest editors check manuscripts for correctness and completeness.** In particular, they should make sure that accepted manuscripts conform to the Physica D journal format, are technically correct, free of typos and grammatical errors, and are written in good English.
7. Authors should be asked to correct typos before a manuscript is accepted for publication and forwarded to the journal manager. Instructions to authors may be found at <http://www.elsevier.com/locate/physd>.

## Guidelines for Type 1 special issues

1. Type 1 special issues should be thematic issues that give an overview of current research and future trends in a specific field. The general topic should fit within the goals of the journal, and in particular concern nonlinear phenomena.
2. The professional society sponsoring the meeting should make it widely known well in advance of the meeting that a special issue is to be published. The primary guest editor(s) should be named in such notices. (If all concerned are courageous, the tentative date for publication can also be announced; see below. This would be wise, in that it would alert both authors and potential referees that a timeline has been established for the project.) Contributions to the special issue may be based on papers given at the meeting or be invited articles by respected scientists who were not able to attend the meeting.
3. Guest editors should be chosen at the time the forthcoming special issue is first announced. In the case of annual meetings, this could even be as early as the previous year's meeting, if a very attractive symposium is slated to be featured on the next year's program. Early announcement of the guest editor list should generate interest among potential contributors.
4. It should not be assumed that everyone on the program will contribute to the special issue. Standards for publication in *Physica D* will generally be higher than for presentation of a paper at a meeting. As mentioned above, a primary guest editor is also free to consider related papers that were not presented at the meeting. When the program is first publicized, the primary guest editor should contact authors and ask for their intentions. As part of the *initial* contact, prospective authors should be notified of a firm date for submission of manuscripts to *Physica D*.

Authors should be asked to submit their manuscripts via the journal's online submission and reviewing system no more than ten days after the meeting. The following submission instructions should be distributed at the meeting.

To submit a manuscript, authors should proceed as follows:

- a. Go to: <http://ees.elsevier.com/physd>;
  - b. Click on the "submit paper" option from the top menu;
  - c. Enter username and password (first time users will have to register) ;
  - d. After entering the title of the manuscript, please select the special issue name (which will be provided by Elsevier) as the "Article type";
  - e. Follow the remaining step-by-step instructions for submitting the paper, and select "Joceline Lega" in the "Request Editor" section.
5. Guest editors should begin to think of potential referees prior to the meeting, and to identify (but not approach) potential referees at the various sessions. It is never too early to start listing potential referees.
  6. Guest editors may decide to reject submissions without review. Requests to potential referees should go out within ten days of the submission of manuscripts.
  7. Guest editors must choose expert referees for the manuscripts assigned to them. All reports should be returned to the guest editor within six weeks.
  8. Guest editors should forward their decision letters to the special issue editor no more than two weeks after receipt of a sufficient number of referee reports.
  9. When the reviewing process is complete, guest editors recommend final accept-or-reject decisions to the special issue editor. Final acceptance of a manuscript rests with the special issue editor.
  10. When final versions of all accepted manuscripts are on the manuscript submission website (EES), the Elsevier production staff takes over. If all materials are submitted on time, the special issue can be in print within about six months.

## Timeline for Type 1 special issues

Step	Time in weeks (after the end of the meeting)
1. Submission of manuscripts	2
2. Requests to referees	2
3. Submission of referee reports	6
4. Guest editors write to authors	2
5. Special issue editor checks decisions	2
6. Authors submit revisions	4
7. Repeat steps 2 to 6 as needed	4-8
8. Editors recommend final decisions	1
9. Special issue editor checks decisions	2
10. Transfer of accepted manuscripts to Elsevier	1
TOTAL	26-30

Special issues should therefore be ready for publication in about 8 months. Manuscripts typically appear online as “manuscripts in press” 5 days after their acceptance by the special issues editor. An issue appears in print about 6 months after online publication of its last manuscript, provided Elsevier received all of the accepted articles within the agreed timeframe.

## Guidelines for Type 2 special issues

0. Perhaps there are two kinds of Type 2 (initiative-based) special issues, one in which all contributions are by request, and one in which unsolicited papers are considered. But the latter type is probably quite rare. For that reason nothing more will be said about it. Useful guidelines for such an issue could be inferred from this document.
1. Type 2 special issues are often initiated by a prominent person who becomes the primary guest editor.
2. Early announcement of the guest editor list should give invited contributors a positive impression of the strength of the project.
3. Invitations to submit manuscripts should go out to persons doing important work in the field. The primary guest editor should not use the occasion to promote all collaborators and former students. As part of the *initial* contact, prospective authors should be notified of a firm date for submission of manuscripts to Physica D.
4. Other contributors to the issue are obvious candidates to referee a given paper. Persons who are not contributing may be used as reviewers but care is needed not to offend a respected scientist in the field by requesting a referee report but not a manuscript.

All of the remaining steps are identical for both types of special issues. The timeline for a type 2 special issue is similar to the above.