

## Introduction

This document describes how the Editors of our fastest journals handle the key stages in the editorial process. For each key stage we selected the fastest journal and asked the Editor(s) how they handle this step. We realize there is a great variance between journals and therefore the document is just meant to inspire you.

## Contents

Key stages: Invite review and Agree to review ('Initiate Review').....	2
Key stage: Under Review .....	5
Key stage: First Decision .....	7
Key stage: Author Revision .....	9
Key stage: Revision to Final Decision .....	11

### Key stages: Invite review and Agree to review ('Initiate Review')

<i>What</i>	<i>How</i>	<i>By When</i>	<i>Why</i>	<i>Best Practice Steps</i>
Process elements / Critical steps	Methods / Tools	Standard time limit	Key reasons	Control points
<b>Open new assignments folder</b>	EES	Daily	Identify manuscripts awaiting review	Check every day.
<b>Initial review</b>	EES files	Depends on length and complexity of manuscript	To decide if manuscript should be sent for review	Reject manuscripts which are out of scope or not compliant with other basic journal criteria. If you would like to discuss desk rejects best practice in more detail, let your publisher know.
<b>Select reviewers</b>	<p>Editor knowledge</p> <p>EES reviewer database</p> <p>Propose reviewer function</p> <p>Find Reviewers tool<sup>1</sup></p>	ASAP	To initiate peer review process	<p>Ensure that reviewer invitations are sent within 24 to 48 hours of manuscript becoming available.</p> <p><b>If you know the reviewers well:</b></p> <p>Select reviewers using your knowledge of the reviewer community rather than the Find Reviewers Tool or EES database. Invite the required number of reviewers using standard EES reviewer invitation letters.</p> <p><b>If you do not know the reviewers well:</b></p> <p>Activate the Auto Uninvite function and automatic promotion of alternate proposed</p>

<sup>1</sup> [http://support.elsevier.com/app/answers/detail/a\\_id/722/session/L2F2LzEvdGltZS8xMik3MjYxODU0L3NpZC84T0l4Q2Jtaw%3D%3D](http://support.elsevier.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/722/session/L2F2LzEvdGltZS8xMik3MjYxODU0L3NpZC84T0l4Q2Jtaw%3D%3D)

	Auto Uninvite function			<p>reviewers. Activation of the Auto Uninvite function will uninvite non-responsive reviewers 3 days after the deadline to respond as stated in the invite e-mail (this is a once-off step). We recommend making use of the Auto Uninvite function in combination with the Automated Reviewer Reminders function, see next section. To make sure these two functions are properly aligned, contact your Journal Manager for assistance.</p> <p>Invite the required number of reviewers and designate an additional 2 or 3 alternate reviewers who can be promoted if required (maximum of 5 to 8 in total).</p> <p>Deadline to respond is the median for your journal which should be stated in the invitation letter.</p> <p>Where appropriate, use one or more of the tools identified in the 'Tools' column.</p>
<b>Reviewer responds</b>	E-mail (via system)	4 days	To accept or decline invitation to review	<p>Where appropriate, automatic uninvite operates.</p> <p>Otherwise invite a new reviewer on the basis of editor knowledge.</p> <p>If a reviewer is late responding, you can re-invite them as required.</p> <p>Reviewers who decline are requested to provide suggestions of alternate reviewers.</p>
<b>Act on responses</b>	EES	Daily	To keep submissions moving forward in	Invite additional reviewers as required.

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### Key stage: Under Review

<i>What</i>	<i>How</i>	<i>By When</i>	<i>Why</i>	<i>Best Practice Steps</i>
Process elements / Critical steps	Methods / Tools	Standard time limit	Key reasons	Control points
<b>Reviewer agrees to Review</b>	EES	Seconds	Reviewer agrees to review the manuscript	The reviewer has the number of days to complete the review from the day of invitation that matches the journal median. This will be provided to you by your Publisher or Journal Manager.
<b>Monitor manuscripts under review</b>	EES	Twice a week	To ensure reviewers return comments in a timely manner	Check under review manuscripts everyday for new reviewer reports and to identify overdue reviews.
<b>Send reminders</b>	EES  Automated reviewer reminders function	Twice a week	To remind the reviewer of the review due date	<p>We recommend making use of the Automated Reviewer Reminders function in combination with the Auto Uninvite function, see previous section. To make sure these two functions are properly aligned, contact your Journal Manager for assistance.</p> <p>For manual reviewer reminders: Send all reminders twice a week.</p> <p>Send reminders 3 days in advance of the due date</p> <p>Once manuscript is overdue, continue</p>

				<p>to send reminders twice a week.</p> <p>If the review is 12 days overdue, un- invite the reviewer.</p> <p>If the due date falls on a Friday, allow the reviewer the weekend to complete review. The due date is then manually updated.</p>
<b>Receive reviewer report</b>	EES	10 days after invitation	Reviewer has completed his review	Check EES daily for newly received reviewer reports.

### Key stage: First Decision

<i>What</i>	<i>How</i>	<i>By When</i>	<i>Why</i>	<i>Best Practice Steps</i>
<b>Process elements / Critical steps</b>	<b>Methods / Tools</b>	<b>Standard time limit</b>	<b>Key reasons</b>	<b>Control points</b>
<b>Initial review of manuscript by Editor</b>	EES	Daily	To ensure the manuscript is fit for review	<p>Check each new manuscript in EES daily until list of tasks is cleared.</p> <p>Manuscript must be within scope of journal.</p> <p>Immediately reject repetitive topics/substandard manuscripts.</p> <p>Consult with Editor-in-Chief/Editorial Board on these points as appropriate.</p>
<b>All reviews complete</b>	EES	Daily	To determine if all required reviews have been completed for manuscripts	Check and action EES folder daily.
<b>Open submissions with required reviews complete 'to do' list</b>	EES	Daily	To determine which manuscripts have all required reviews completed	Check and action EES folder daily.
<b>Review reviewer reports</b>	EES	Daily	<p>To determine if all reviewers concur</p> <p>To determine quality of received reviews</p>	<p>Make a decision if the agreed number of reviewers concur.</p> <p>Invite third/promote alternate reviewer if reviewers do not concur.</p>

			and if further reviews are required	<p>Update required number of reviews if necessary.</p> <p>Consult with Editor-in-Chief/Editorial Board on these points as appropriate.</p> <p>Give weighting to expert referee's opinion</p>
<b>Make and submit a decision</b>	EES	ASAP (as soon as a decision is clear)	To make a decision based on the reviewer recommendations and to notify author of results	<p>Do not comment on straightforward decisions.</p> <p>Comment on less straightforward decisions.</p>
<b>Sends notification letters</b>	EES	Immediately	To communicate decision to author	<p>Prioritize accepted manuscripts</p> <p>Send rejection notification letters following this.</p> <p>Use customized or standardized letters to suit specific decisions.</p>



**Key stage: Author Revision**

<i>What</i>	<i>How</i>	<i>By When</i>	<i>Why</i>	<i>Best Practice Steps</i>
<b>Process elements / Critical steps</b>	<b>Methods / Tools</b>	<b>Standard time limit</b>	<b>Key reasons</b>	<b>Control points</b>
<b>Revise decision</b>	EES	Daily	Your decision is required	Return to author if revision is required.
<b>Author accepts to perform revision</b>	N/A	See control points	Author to perform revision	<p>Deadline for receipt of revisions from author is the median time for your journal.</p> <p>Send reminder 2 weeks prior to manuscript due date.</p> <p>Authors may ask for an extension. Extensions can be up to 30 days.</p> <p>If there are further extension requests by the author, advise the authors to withdraw their manuscript by “Declining to Revise” and to resubmit at a more suitable time.</p> <p>Send author revision reminder 5 days after revision due date has elapsed.</p> <p>If the author fails to respond, withdraw manuscript in line with Journal Policy.</p>

<b>Submit revised version</b>	EES	See control points	Author submits revision	Check the manuscript on receipt to decide if you wish to make an immediate decision or need to send the manuscript for further review.
<b>Author declines to perform revision</b>	EES	Immediately	Author declines to perform revision	<p>You may ask the author to 'Decline to Revise' due to timeframe restrictions.</p> <p>Note: The author may 'Decline to Revise' for other reasons.</p> <p>You may wish to offer a timeframe extension upon receipt of the 'Decline to Revise' notification email</p>
<b>Withdraw manuscript</b>	EES	Immediately	Author wishes to withdraw manuscript	<p>If author indicates they want to withdraw the manuscript, send e-mail to ask for verification.</p> <p>If no response is received from the author within the number of days in the median information provided, withdraw the manuscript.</p>

**Key stage: Revision to Final Decision**

<i>What</i>	<i>How</i>	<i>By When</i>	<i>Why</i>	<i>Best Practice Steps</i>
<b>Process elements / Critical steps</b>	<b>Methods / Tools</b>	<b>Standard time limit</b>	<b>Key reasons</b>	<b>Control points</b>
<b>Return revision</b>	EES	Seconds	Author has returned revised version and wishes to proceed with publication	Author action
<b>Check for returned revisions</b>	EES	Daily	Submissions/decisions needing work every day	Check EES at least once a day. Ad hoc if e-mail prompts (ad hoc checks for standard tasks/work – not for tasks involving making final decisions).
<b>Review revision</b>	EES	Same or next day	To see if revisions have been carried out and if the submission should be returned to reviewers	Check daily.
<b>Return to reviewer</b>	EES	ASAP	To ensure that manuscripts which received an initial major revise decision can now be accepted in their revised form	If minor, decide yourself on the same or next day.  If major, read review and author comments and send back to original reviewer with strict deadlines.  Decide without review if manuscript is within your own field/you agree with author's rebuttal/if initial reviewer's comments were too strict/if author has clearly answered reviewer comments.

				Only return revision to reviewer(s) who reported major concerns.
<b>Complete second review</b>	EES/PDF	ASAP	To complete review process	<p>Allow the number of days for short items and for full manuscripts that are outlined in the median information provided to you.</p> <p>If you send reminders manually, send reminder 2 days before due date and every 2 days thereafter.</p> <p>Check status every day.</p>
<b>View returned second review(s)</b>	EES	ASAP	To facilitate decision	<p>Accept reviewer recommendations unless reviewer comments are unhelpful, in which case make decision directly or consult with Editorial colleague.</p> <p>Check every 2 to 3 days. If the second review suggests major revision again, manuscript should be rejected. If manuscripts have minor revision suggestions, only return manuscript for review to the reviewer who expressed concerns.</p>
<b>Make decision</b>	EES	1 hour maximum	To finalise decision on manuscript	<p>When all reviews are complete, make decision ASAP.</p> <p>Notify authors immediately via 'Notify Author' link in EES.</p>