

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ's) : The Role of an Editor:

The Scopus team conduct journal editors' workshop together with the Subject Chairs from our Scopus Content Selection & Advisory Board (CSAB) in many regions of the world. For more information about Scopus and the CSAB, its scope and function, please click [here](#).

Through the many interactions and discussions with journal editors, we thought it would be helpful if we prepared a set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) to reach out to as many journal editors as possible so that they can have an up to date reference list of similar questions and answers that their peers are facing. The FAQs cover a wide range of questions that have arisen during workshop discussions and individual contact queries. We consider them to be helpful for new editors, as well as the more experienced ones who wish for the latest editor updates, as well as guidance on publication ethics. For the purpose of this paper we will use the term "**Editor**" for the person who is the main contact person and leader of the journal. For some journals other titles such as **Editor in Chief** may be used.

Please use the FAQs below as a guide and reference only.

We have tried to make the FAQ's as concise as possible but they are by no means definitive questions and answers, as roles and responsibilities differ from journal to journal, along with their publishers. We welcome feedback on the FAQs and if you think additional questions would benefit the Editor community, please send them to titlesuggestion@scopus.com with the subject header 'FAQs'.

Frequently Asked Questions: The Role of an Editor

1. How do you become an Editor?

If you have aspirations to become an editor, one of the ways is through a direct invitation from a publisher. This may happen as a result of your expertise in a specific field of science or discipline, in particular when Publishers wish to publish a new journal. It could also be that you had approached them with the idea of setting up a new journal with their Publishing Company.

Another way to become an editor is to set up your own journal with a University Publisher where you are employed. You may also chose to respond to an advertisement for an editor or associate editor post in a journal in your specialist field, when you will then be interviewed by the Publisher for the post.

2. What are the typical criteria for an Editor position?

These would be:

- Expertise and experience in the specialist field related to the journal
- Publication record of a number of articles and /or books (usually in / related to the specialist field)
- Being a reviewer for an international peer reviewed journal
- Some journals ask for a PhD qualification or a senior research position with equivalent experience in research and scholarship
- Enthusiasm to undertake the Editor role , but ensuring recognition of all aspects of the reality of the role and the work involved

3. What is the main role and responsibility of a journal Editor?

The key role of a journal editor is to promote scholarship in the specialist field associated with the journal, whilst also promoting the journal as the best journal to publish in. For any journal the editor will need to encourage new and established authors to submit articles and set up a reliable panel of expert reviewers. Editors are also responsible for offering feedback to reviewers when required and ensure that any feedback to authors is constructive.

In terms of responsibilities:

- An editor should endeavor to be a leader in the specific field of practice underpinning journal content as it helps the journal development, presence and standing within the international community.
- An editor should also familiarize themselves with the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) '[Code of Conduct and Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors](#)'. This has a large resource on the topic of ethical conduct of journal editors, authors and reviewers. Elsevier also has an extensive number of resources to help new and established editors to undertake their role as editors. Although primarily for Elsevier Editors there are a number of guides which will be of value to any editor, their authors and reviewers. See their [Publication Ethics Resource Kit \(PERK\)](#), an online resource to support journal editors in handling publishing ethics issues and <http://www.elsevier.com/editors/home#supporting-authors> for other resources associated with the role of an Editor.
- Depending on how the journal is managed and how it is structured, an Editor may have to make all the decisions regarding which articles to accept or reject for publication. However many journals will have Associate Editors, Assistant Editors or Section Editors to help them with making those important decisions. For example, any decision involving unethical practice, will often involve the publisher or their representative alongside the Editor and a Section Editor who has discovered the issue.

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- As an editor, you will have three or four groups of people to contact on a regular basis: a) the publisher, b) the authors c) the reviewers and d) in some journals direct contact with the production team who manage the publication side of the journal. This latter group will work with the editor to agree which articles to place in each edition, ensure that the Editor does not use more than the agreed number of pages per issue (especially if paper based) and send editor information concerning all articles in their various stages of the editorial process. The Production team member dedicated to that Editor may also be responsible for communicating with authors and reviewers directly.

4. What is an Editorial Board?

We will use this one title in this guidance, but in various countries and organisations this title may be different. For example this may be the Editorial Council, Editorial Committee or other similar name.

It is important to state the difference between those individuals directly involved in the management and development of the journal from those who may be reviewers and also adopt an advisory capacity.

An Editorial Board is primarily made up of a team of individuals that work directly with the Editor to develop the journal and promote new initiatives. Members of the Board may also take responsibility for key activities linked to the journal, for example the Book review editor or Section Editor (such as Section Editor for Systematic Reviews) .

The Editorial Board normally appoints a Chairperson, who could be one of the board members or could also be the Publisher. When there are meetings, either face to face, teleconferences or Skype, the Chairperson would manage the agenda and the meeting of the Editorial Board.

Editorial Board members are chosen for their expertise in key areas related to the journal or chosen for their international presence in the field. There are instances where excellent long standing reviewers can also be asked to join the Editorial Board. They are normally also from the same expert field as the journal topic.

Depending on the roles and responsibilities set by the publisher, the Editor typically reports directly to the Editorial Board.

A journal's Editorial Board normally undergoes a complete renewal after a set period determined by the Editor and Publisher (three years is an average time). This will involve removing some individuals, inviting others, and renewing some existing members for another term. It is important when inviting a Board member that this issue of term of office is included in the invitation letter to avoid any misunderstandings that can arise.

5. What is the role of an Editorial Board?

The role of the Editorial Board is:

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- To offer expertise in their specialist area
- To review submitted manuscripts
- To advise on journal policy and scope
- To work with the Editor to ensure ongoing development of the journal
- To identify topics for Special Issues of the journal or recommend a Conference which would promote the journal, which they might also help to organize and/or guest edit
- To attract new and established authors and article submissions
- To submit some of their own work for consideration, ensuring that they adhere to Conflict of Interest rules and stating their relationship to the journal. This is very important as the journal cannot be seen to publish only papers from members of the Editorial Board.
- It is important that Editorial Boards have a regular communication forum, either face to face in person (Depending on their country of origin, funding availability, etc.) or as more journals are doing today, communicating by teleconference or Skype type events.

6. How does the Editor choose members of the Editorial Board?

The quality of a journal is in a way reflective of the quality of its Editor(s) and Editorial Board and its members.

As such, it is recommended that a meticulous screening criterion be adopted for their appointment.

There are no specific rules for the number of Board members appointed; this is entirely the responsibility of the Editor and / or the Publisher of the journal. In general the main Editorial Board should be smaller than any International Advisory Committee / Council, as its members need to support the editor with the immediate issues related to journal activity and development.

Ideally many Editorial Boards are between 10-20 members.

The following issues can be considered when selecting members for your Editorial Board:

- The members need to represent the full geographical range where the journal is published (example: a journal from Malaysia for the Malaysian scholarly community is likely to have its main Board members from Malaysia. If this journal published in Malaysia has International in its title, it would be necessary to see members on the main Board from other countries. These could also be invited to join an International Advisory Board –ensuring widespread dissemination of the journal’s activities and content)
- Board Members' expertise should represent the subject area (s) covered by the journal's aim and scope (Policy).
- It is important that Board members are active in their specialist field and are therefore up to date with what is happening in research and developments in that field. The Editor should already be familiar with many of these and can invite new members from these colleagues and peers. Many of these will be authors who have already published in the journal and/ or written books on related topics. Editors need to be very clear as to why they have chosen to invite someone to the Editorial Board or any other related Board.
- Former Guest Editors of special issues and authors of key reviews
- Reviewers whose reviews are of a high standard over a long period of time and who have shown an interest in the direction of the journal

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- Depending on the nature of the journal some Board members may be invited from business or other type of industry .This demonstrates affiliation with people in the field. Editors will exercise caution of course with any conflict of interest areas.
- Individual requests from people who wish to be considered for membership. Your publishing contact will be able to help you to assess the quality of candidates whom you might not know personally and you can also request a Curriculum Vitae (CV) from them along with a letter outlining their reason for the request and why they are interested in the role and publishing generally . Choosing someone from this route can be discussed with the publisher. Very often; editors are approached by people to ask if they can join the Editorial Board as this is seen as a criterion for promotion in many countries. However, it is always advisable to approach these situations with caution and adopt a policy as above, where CV, letter and discussion with the publisher is required.

7. If it is an International journal, what does the Editor need to ensure?

Throughout the many journal editor workshops that the Scopus team has organized, and the journals received for review by the Scopus Content Selection & Advisory Board (CSAB), the Subject Chairs have come across many journals that claim to be *'International'*. They believe that by including the word *'International'* in the title of the journal, that this would then be seen to be an international journal even though the content is seen to be mainly national or regional focused.

As an International journal, Editors need to ensure that the content is from a wide range of international authors, have an Editorial Board that has international expertise and where appropriate that are well represented geographically. Making it clear as well in the invitation to these international board members the expectations that you have of them in terms of reviewing and promoting the journal at international events in their country and to their colleagues who may then consider submitting articles to the journal .

8. How can an international Advisory Board support a journal and its editor?

In addition to the above points, setting up an International Advisory Board or equivalent can help support a journal and its editors by sharing best practices with them. Different journals set up their boards and committees differently, so in order to add more structure, their roles should be made explicitly clear to the external community and not simply publish a list of their names on a page for display. An invitation to join this type of Board can also be an ideal way of thanking international reviewers for their excellent reviewing role and their support of the journal.

9. What are journal reviewers?

All journals that have aspirations of getting indexed in Scopus must have a peer review process. All journal publishers and editors cannot succeed without some kind of peer review process and must abide by guidelines from a Publishing Ethics organization such as the

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Committee of Publication Ethics' (COPE, see Guidance for Peer Reviewers : <http://publicationethics.org/files/Peer%20review%20guidelines.pdf>). This is to ensure that the quality of articles is the highest there is in terms of constructive feedback to the authors and editors. Even after the journal has been indexed in Scopus, journal reviewers are essential in maintaining the high standards and quality of the articles in the journals.

10. How does the Editor set up a panel of reviewers?

It is always a challenge for most journals to have good reviewers. One of the ways is to invite peers with expertise in the subject areas related to the journal. The other is to invite authors who have published in the journal. Invited reviewers should be mindful of the total time spent on the review and giving prompt feedback to the editors. They should also communicate with editors regularly so that they can quickly provide feedback when any difficulties are encountered. Some journal editors and their publishers may have a **Call for Reviewers** notice placed on their journal website, so that potential reviewers can contact the journal for further information.

11. How much contact should the Editor have with the panel of reviewers?

There should be regular contact between the Editor and its panel of reviewers. This is to ensure that reviewers are made aware of changes to the journal or they may be invited to comment on a new policy or direction for the journal that the Editorial Board is proposing. Some journals because of large numbers of reviewers on their Panel of Reviewers keep them up to date through regular newsletters, every 3-6 months, which can inform them about new editorial members, editorial updates and other similar issues.

If you are an editor of an Elsevier Journal for example there is a new scheme whereby the best review of the month chosen by you as Editor , are awarded a certificate to show this excellent contribution and also their name will appear on the web site to illustrate their award . Some of you may wish to consider this kind of activity for your journal

12. What should be expected of a member of the peer review panel?

The panel of peer reviewers should all abide by a Code of Ethics regarding honesty, detecting examples of plagiarism, salami slicing or unethical research practice and giving constructive feedback to both the authors and editors. (See:

<http://publicationethics.org/files/Peer%20review%20guidelines.pdf>)

It is expected that they offer constructive feedback to the author and any confidential comments for the editor. Some journals will have specific author guidelines for reviewers to use to guide the actual review and reviewer and enables them to give feedback in a more structured way.

13. What guidelines should reviewers have for their role as reviewers?

All reviewers can use the guidelines as outlined by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) [here](#) as well as refer to the [Publishing Ethics Resource Kit \(PERK\)](#) (Elsevier) for reference. PERK provides an overview of standards of expected ethical behavior for all parties involved in the act of publishing: the author, the journal editor, the peer reviewer, the publisher and the society of society-owned or sponsored journals.

The duties of reviewers as outlined in PERK include: Contribution to editorial decision, Promptness, Confidentiality, Standards of Objectivity, Acknowledgement of Source as well as Disclosure and Conflicts of interest.

Regardless of where the journal is in its stage of development, it is always good practice to agree and adhere to guidelines as mentioned above.

14. How does an Editor ensure that the journal publishes on time and with enough articles per issue?

It is an Editor's responsibility to ensure that a journal has sufficient articles in their editorial system for all their Issues per year. Editor's with new journals who may publish twice a year are required to do this as well as a journal that publishes 12 times a year. To do this they need to manage the journal so that articles are being submitted, being sent to reviewers for review and returned promptly within an agreed timeframe, decisions on revisions, acceptance and rejections made as quickly as possible and new revised papers re-submitted. An Editor's role is vital to the success of the journal and most importantly the dissemination of research and scholarly articles. Setting up systems for these decisions to be made is an essential part of a new editor role- but the outcome will of course depend entirely on the way in which the publishers supports the journal financially and with other resources.

Part of the Scopus journal selection criteria stipulates '**Regularity: No delay in the publication schedule**' and it would be to the advantage of the journal if it is published on a regular basis. If the Subject Chair reviewers see a journal that has for example 3 issues outstanding in being published and that only 2 or 3 articles have been published in previous articles then this is an issue of concern and would be a disadvantage in the review process, as it indicates that the journal has what is often called "copy flow" problems.

An editor should always be mindful of the number of papers in review and should encourage reviewers to speed up the process if they know the deadline is near. It would therefore be helpful to ensure that everyone is aware of the deadline. We suggest using electronic alerts for reviewers whenever possible. Again this depends on how the journal is managed by the publisher as much as the editor, as it is the publisher who normally has the funding for much of what can be achieved outside of the editorial processes.

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One way to ensure some new articles for publication is having '*special issues*' of the journal, focusing on a specific topic, as they are slowly becoming a popular source of article contribution. Another way is to have '*conference special issues*' and for Editors to speak to delegates at various conferences to encourage new authors to contribute articles.

Publishers can also issue a 'call for papers' alert to invite more contribution of articles. All these types of developments for encouraging authors to write and publish in the journal can be made visible on the journal web site which is why and up to date user friendly and informative web site is so important. There should also be an effective promotion of the journal whenever possible to reach as many potential authors who might want to submit their articles to your journal.

15. How can the Editor check whether the journal is being cited by other journals?

Knowing whether a journal is already being cited in Scopus gives an idea of the impact it will have if it gets selected for Scopus coverage. It is also a good indicator for authors to see the value of their research to others in their field. Use Scopus to search for (different variations of) the journal name in the "Source Title" field. The search will likely result in zero results or documents published in Scopus covered journals with similar journal names. Then click "View secondary documents" to find cited references from sources covered in Scopus that cite the journal name you searched for. Usually some trial and error with different name variants will give the best results.

16. What structure should a journal have?

The structure that a journal takes gradually develops over time but first and foremost, it depends on the aims and scope of the journal. A journal may choose to have an Associate Editor who has more responsibility with article decisions, and then have Sub-editors for different sections of the journal. For example, there might be a ***Global Health Editor in a Public Health journal*** where one of its aims and scope is ***to encourage knowledge sharing in current Global Health Issues.***

The best structure is what works best for the Editors, Publishers and Editorial Board. There is no prescriptive structure, only guidance from a wide range of international journals.

It is expected however that whatever the structure, it is visible on the journal web site and will have information for example about the journal aims and scope, author guidelines, submission process, Open Access costs, Access to current issues and archived ones. It will, also inform readers who the Editors and Board members are, together with information regarding where they work and often in the case of the Editors, a short biography or link to a professional CV site. Translation facilities should also be made visible ***whenever possible***, for any one accessing the web site or journal information.

17. How many Editors should a journal have?

This very much depends on the Publisher and the budget for all remunerated posts. There are no specific rules but essentially there should only ***be one Editor or Editor-in-chief***. Then there can be a number of ***Associate Editors*** and / or ***Section Editors*** who will have specific responsibilities within the journal structure.

If there are several sub-editors in place, the Editor must outline the responsibilities for each role and who among them will undertake total responsibility for all decisions made while ensuring the quality of the decisions. This type of total responsibility is more often seen in journals where there is a large volume of articles and where the main Editor is no longer in a position to be able to undertake all the decisions on their own given the volume of work involved.

However, it is important to note that the Editor still has the overall responsibility for the decision making process and the overall quality of the journal and its content. It is important to ensure that the structure of the journal and its editors is made visible to the reader, especially names and affiliation of the individuals. Some journals also include photographs as well but that is a personal preference for that journal.

18. How do the Editor and Editorial Board decide on its aims and scope?

For new Journals:

When a decision has been made to set up a new journal, the appointed editor would initially decide a draft version of the actual aims and scope. The editor would have a vision of the journal's future direction and the types of articles it hopes to attract. This would be discussed with the publisher at some stage, depending on the actual involvement in the journal at this level by the Publisher. As the journal Editorial Board is established, both the editor and the Board would then collectively discuss and decide on the aims and scope of the journal, using the initial draft document.

For established Journals: The Editor and Editorial Board may wish to develop the established journal and may wish to amend the original aims and scope. This is normal practice, and the process would be similar to the one for new journals. Following agreement it is essential that this change be disseminated to potential authors and reviewers as soon as possible. This can be undertaken through the main journal website for authors and an email to all the journal reviewers and Board members.

19. How often should a journal undertake a review of its activities?

For new journals the Editor may wish to review its activities every three months but again this is an editorial decision. The publisher may also have their own requirements. Once they

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have established the journal and it is becoming known to authors and reviewers in that research community, they may then choose to review it once every six months. Ultimately, it depends on the publisher of the journal to decide what is the best policy, based on their expectations of the journal.

20. What is a Special issue of the journal?

A *'Special Issue'* is a collection of papers focused on a specific topic. It may also be a collection of papers from the Conference associated with the journal or linked Association. Both of which can then be used to promote the journal.

Special Issues can also be a retrospective collection of papers published over time e.g. *Problem-based learning 1999- 2012*. There are also Special Issues that are used to market the journal and related journal activities such as international journal conferences.

21. How much time does an Editor use to undertake the role?

The time taken varies between journals and their Publishers. If it is a new journal, an editor would probably need more time on developing the journal, improving copy flow (article submissions) of the journal, communicating with and developing the reviewer panelists, as well as working with the Editorial Board members.

Once, the journal becomes more established and visible, then an editor could work up to 2 whole days or more on the journal. This again depends on the Editor –Publisher agreements and the number of other editors involved in the journal structure.

This is unlike managing the review process or deliberating over decisions made by journal board members where it might take anywhere from 1-3 days.

Another aspect of the role is speaking to colleagues, through teleconferences or other communication system. This is in addition to the ongoing daily email correspondence with authors, potential authors, paper submissions and inquiries which is very difficult to quantify on the amount of time spent in total. It is all dependent on the way the journal operates and its publisher requirements. The Editor role does generally increase in workload as the journal gains more success as a publication.

One other aspect is whether or not the journal has an admin editor appointed specifically for the journal who manages the day to day correspondence or a production manager who manages the publication processes and electronic submission who may work in another country, as in the case of Elsevier journals. Due to changes in the electronic submission system and the speed in correspondence, the time demands on an editor will increase exponentially.

22. What should an Editor look for in an article?

Depending on the type of journal and how many issues it publishes per year the editor will receive a varied number of articles on a regular basis. However, the Editor (s) should

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normally check the articles to see if they meet the minimum criteria for publication in the journal. This will ensure that some articles are rejected without being sent out to review and additional work for reviewers. In general an Editor is looking for essential characteristics in an article in order to maintain the quality of the journal. Examples are:

The author has clearly read the aims and scope of the journal because the article meets that requirement

- It should be well written in the language of the journal with a good abstract in both English and specific language (non – English language journals) and the same in English language journals. In either journals it is important to make the article easy to read without complicated language
- It should fit with the aims and scope of the journal and where possible it offers new knowledge and research findings (This will be dependent of the journal).
- If it has good reviews from the reviewer with constructive comments for revision (**very few articles are accepted without some required revision**) it is expected that the authors will consider these comments and revise accordingly.
- The article should not have any unethical publishing nor unethical research practices (see: <http://www.elsevier.com/ethics/toolkit> for factsheets on plagiarism, salami slicing, research fraud, duplicate submission, authorship and conflict of interest).
- If it is a research article the authors should have included both an ethics statement regarding permission for the research to be conducted but also if human subjects involved it is also important to include a statement concerning protecting of research participants
- It is expected as good practice that when authors submit their articles for review that a letter should accompany that article which states that all the authors are in agreement with the submission and that the paper is not being sent to another journal nor has it been published anywhere.
- It is good practice to ensure that authors have considered all the author guidelines for the journal in relation to the article structure and content

23. What should the Editor do if a case of plagiarism or other type of unethical publication practice is suspected?

There is now greater awareness for the need of publishers and editors to be more vigilant and report infringement of publication ethics.

On a practical level the first thing an editor should do is conduct an early investigation using iThenticate/CrossCheck or other anti-plagiarism software if they have access to these programmes. If they do not have access to one of these then they need to access by other means initially the articles that are related to the suspected case of plagiarism or other unethical practice to check accuracy of either the reviewer feedback and observations or the Editors own observations. This may be easier if they already have access to Platforms such

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as Science Direct for Elsevier articles. Anti-plagiarism software however will not identify “[salami slicing](#)”.

See the [Elsevier Ethics Toolkit](#) for more information about “salami slicing” and other examples of publication ethics.

If the editor determines that there is case of plagiarism to be investigated then if the journal has a publisher who is in regular contact then they need to be notified. This will ensure that any communication with an author has their support. Some publishers have templates for Editors to use in such cases (see: Elsevier own guidance for authors for templates and other linked resources: <http://www.elsevier.com/editors/perk>).

It is imperative that each case is looked at individually and therefore we do not advocate the use of one statement of actions to penalize the offender. Each case is considered separately and editors will need to decide if it is a deliberate action on the part of the author or is it due to lack of understanding of the requirements of ethical writing. This can happen for new authors or some authors where translation to English is often difficult.

An example of this is where there are no words / phrases in that language that translate into English, and a developing practice noted by some Editors is the ‘borrowing’ of words, phrases or often sentences that are considered appropriate for what they mean to say. Unfortunately for some authors this has proved problematic when the article is checked for plagiarism, because in some instances the ‘borrowing’ of too many phrases, sentences and words means that a case of plagiarism is detected. Care is needed to ensure that this practice does not extend beyond what is helpful to the authors in their translation of their work. Many of the large Publishers offer the services of a Translator which can avoid this practice.

There are two main instances where cases of plagiarism can be identified – at the reviewer stage and at the post-publication stage. This latter situation is slightly different in that most of these are identified by the authors who have been plagiarized or researchers using the articles that have been plagiarized from.

If these are agreed to be plagiarized, the paper will be withdrawn from a journal and this will also be stamped across the paper wherever it is archived. The author in such circumstances may well experience serious consequences from his /her employer.

Each individual journal needs to ensure that it has policies in place to manage unethical writing in articles and in research itself.

To learn more about plagiarism and other breaches of publication ethics, you can refer to the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) guidelines here: <http://publicationethics.org/resources/guidelines>. They also have flow charts or decision making pathways for journal editors to consider when unethical practice is suspected.

24. Should a journal have standard templates for decision letters to authors?

The Editor and Editorial Board need to decide what best practice for their journal is, and include a clear policy for unethical practice and what will occur should this happen and of course at what stage in the publication process it did happen initially. It is a very good idea to have templates if possible which saves time in a busy workload but can also be changed to specific situations. Standard templates may also be useful to work with for Reviewers.

25. What is good practice in thanking reviewers for their hard work?

Reviewers play an important part in ensuring the quality of a journal as well as contributing to the scholarship of the articles they review, and need to be thanked for this key role. Some journals acknowledge their reviewers and thank them for their role in a published list at the end of every year, either on the web site or in the final issue of the journal for the year. Some journals also offer access to journal resources to reviewers to help them with their reviewing role and also professional one (such as Scopus for Elsevier journal reviewers).

26. What information should a journal have on its website about the Editor and Editorial Boards and / members?

The journal website should contain profiles of the Editor and its Editorial board members. Indication of the role of the Editor-in-Chief, (Associate) Editor(s) and Editorial Board Members is also essential. A short biography would also be helpful or links to the Editor's workplace profile. This information is important when the Scopus Subject Chairs are reviewing and evaluating a journal, so that they can check if the accuracy of the information and also that the named individuals are fraudulent. It is also important to ensure that Editorial Board members have their place of work identified, contact details and any information or links that identify them as the real person who has agreed to be named on the journal web site and journal issues. It is also important for the Editor to ensure that all Board members names are kept up to date to ensure that there is no misrepresentation of information.

27. Is there a specific rule about allowing authors to have direct communication with an Editor about their paper?

In most instances, the editor should have the unique email address for the journal which comes either direct to them or via their publishing system depending on the inquiry. So authors can send an inquiry either directly or to the Administration editors /managers regarding their articles. This can often be a query about how long will be review process be and when will they get a decision about their article. The Editor responsible for that article can of course reply to the author regarding those type of queries , it is matter of courtesy

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and also helps authors but until the review process is complete and a decision is reached about an article then the editor does not normally have any other contact with that author.

Some potential authors may however contact the Editor with an inquiry as to whether their research would be of interest and value to the journal. Again it is courtesy on the behalf of the editor to respond to such inquires and if often an opportunity to encourage new authors to submit their work.

28. How much editing of an article should the Editor actually undertake?

This is a very difficult question in many ways because the reviewer may well have given feedback to the author directly onto a script, depending on the system that a journal has to allow this. If an editor has a large volume of articles that have been recommended to be revised then it should be the authors' responsibility to ensure that grammar and spelling is correct. The editor of course may highlight in their decision about an article that the authors need to attend to this type of problem.

There should be minimal amount of editing if any. For those authors writing in English as second language some publishers now offer a service for a fee to help authors who do not have English as their first language with this issue.

29. Should articles be submitted via 'hard copy' / paper based submission or via electronic submission?

The trend for the publishing industry is moving toward electronic submission as well as communication. It makes storing information and tracking more efficient plus it is eco-friendly to have less paper. Submitting 'hard copy' (meaning a paper based written / typed article) not only takes a long time in the delivery process and then the subsequent review process but also risks being lost in the mail.

For some journals their publisher has sophisticated electronic submission systems but other new journals or those with less funding have to adopt which ever system helps them at their point in the journal development. Having electronic submission however will make for a quicker review process.

30. How long, should articles in revision be retained on the journal database / records prior to removal?

Different publishers have different time limits prior to removal. However, most if not all will archive the material. This then can be made accessible at a later stage if need be. For journals with large numbers of articles in the submission and review process they have been known to remove them from the system after 2/3 years.

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If authors have not revised their articles in 6 months or so without offering any explanation, then the research reported will begin to be out of date in terms of its evidence –base and after 2 years in the system it will be evident that the author is not going to revise the paper. It is again an Editorial and publisher decision as to how you manage this process. Editors are often disappointed when authors who have had excellent feedback from reviewers do not then pursue their advice for revision.

31. What is meant by ' Academic contribution to the field '?

It is the extent to which the journal makes a unique contribution compared with existing literature/ research evidence in the field. The greater the impact in terms of scientific advancement, societal, environmental and economic the more it can be seen to contribute to the field or discipline it comes from. The academic contribution to the field as it relates to the journal and its content is in essence the combined works of all the articles in that journal. Journal editors look for articles that are innovative and report excellent research and developments in the specialist field. This is not for just one journal issue but the combined effort of all the journal issues over time.

We hope that you have found these FAQ's helpful in your role and we look forward to hearing from you with regards to their value and of course if you have any further FAQ's we can add to this paper.

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