# MATERIALS TODAY PROCEEDINGS

Guest Editor Guide

The following document aims to provide an essential overview of the management of conference proceedings, linking guest editors to key resources and guidelines, in particular for managing ethical issues. Please read this document in its entirety and retain it as a resource while you manage the conference proceedings.
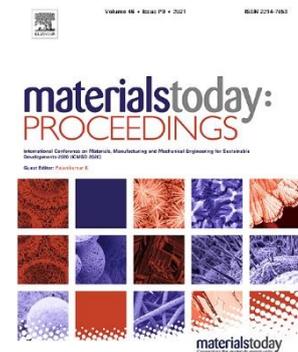
Acceptance of the proposal

Once a proposal has been accepted, you will have been sent an acceptance letter which sets out the next steps, key contacts and various pieces of essential information. Please keep that letter to hand.

Contract

Once a proposal has been accepted for publication, our conference proceedings team will be in touch to prepare a contract. This stipulates key responsibilities for both the conference organiser/guest editor and Elsevier, details the number of papers anticipated and timelines. A draft will be sent to you for review, after which we send the contract for signature via Docusign. An institutional email address must be used for the signature of the contract: we will not send this to gmail/yahoo/Hotmail accounts.

Editorial Manager

All guest editors are required to make use of editorial manager to run peer review on the proceedings issue. Please note the following:

- Please ensure you have registered for an account on Editorial Manager: https://www.editorialmanager.com/matpr/default.aspx. The default account is an author/reviewer account.
- As we approach the date you have indicated for the first submission, we will open a dedicated portal for your conference proceedings using the short name indicated in your proposal form. In the event we already have a conference in operation using the same acronym, we will choose another appropriate short title and notify you of this.
- At the same time, your accounts will be upgraded to provide editorial access to this portal. The nominated managing guest editor will be assigned all submissions, and will be responsible for assigning these papers on to co-editors as required.
- If you require assistance using Editorial Manager, please refer in the first instance to our training page (here). If you still require assistance, please contact matpr@elsevier.com.

Peer Review

Submitted manuscripts must be reviewed in order to be included in the conference proceedings. The fact that the author has presented at the conference is not enough to guarantee inclusion in the issue.

1. **Initial review of papers by the Managing Guest Editor**
   Each conference is required to appoint a guest editor: all manuscripts are sent to them in the first instance. They should review all papers for the basic ethics requirements listed below, as well as fit with the conference scope, before moving on to external peer review or assigning it to another editor to handle the review. If the paper does not pass these initial

checks, it should be rejected. If there are other practical problems, such as failure to use the journal template, excessive/insufficient length (min 3 pages, max 10), very poor English and grammar, the paper can be returned to the author for further work before proceeding to the next stage.

2. **Review by external reviewers**
   Each paper should be reviewed by a minimum of two reviewers in addition to the guest editor. These may be members of the conference committee if the expertise is appropriate or can be independently sourced. Please ensure that the expertise of the reviewers appropriately matches the topic of the paper.

3. **Making a decision**
   Once the reviews have been received, you should make a decision that is consistent with the findings of the reviewers. We anticipate that each paper should have a minimum of 1 round of revision in order to incorporate corrections and suggestions.

Standard of peer review

It is important to ensure that the peer review meets a suitable standard. So called 'horoscope' reviews (i.e. which could be applied to any paper) are not acceptable, and reviews should not focus solely on matters like formatting. They should engage with the substance of the research, and assist the authors in clarifying matters of presentation of data, or methodology, for example.

Note: weaker reviewers often request authors to refer to an arbitrary list of their own manuscripts: this is not good practice and it is incumbent on the guest editor to guide authors appropriately in the decision letter.

Ethics

The ethical management of conference proceedings is perhaps the single most important responsibility of a guest editor. Elsevier takes publication ethics extremely seriously, and will undertake spot checks on all guest edited issues in MT Proceedings, as well as investigating any issues that are either reported or uncovered. Where required, we make corrections to the academic record.

1. **Ensure paper is from a conference participant**

All manuscripts reviewed for conference proceedings *must* have been included in the original conference. Any manuscript submitted which was not a part of the original conference should be desk rejected. A decision option is available: 'Reject – author not at conference', which provides a templated letter.

2. **Plagiarism Reports**

You must review the plagiarism report for all manuscripts. Editorial manager has iThenticate embedded in the system, so each submitted manuscript receives a report and a percentage score (which is visible from the main menu). Anything above 30% will be highlighted in red as worthy of particular investigation, but all reports should be reviewed – you should not just look at the number.

What should you be looking for?

For a primer on understanding an iThenticate Similarity Check, go here. This tips and tricks document may also be of use.

The score alone should not be overestimated: there are legitimate reasons why a score may be high, for example a pre-print may have been detected, and would need to be excluded from your evaluation. Of particular concern are high overall scores which derive from one single source that is

not a pre-print: this is a strong indication of large scale plagiarism. Papers where this is identified **should *not* be given an opportunity to revise their work**, but immediately rejected, with a note to the author that the work is being rejected for plagiarism.

It is worth scanning the full document in the report: iThenticate marks up in bright colours the different sources throughout the text, so it is clear to see. Often, a high plagiarism score may be built up by using paragraphs from a range of different papers in order to build a paper. Works like this should also be rejected immediately.

On other occasions, usually when the score is nearer 30%, you may find that the author has borrowed phrases from author's work, but it is nonetheless clear that the bulk of the work is original and their own. You may wish in cases such as this to provide a copy of the iThenticate report to the author to help them correct places where they have used other authors' phrasing or to provide guidance on areas where additional focus is needed. We recommend asking the journal manager for a further iThenticate report in these cases, as editorial manager does not automatically repeat the plagiarism check for revised texts.

Self-plagiarism

Reusing your own work is potentially a problem. If the work has already been published, you may not be able to republish portions of the work without prior permission from the publisher, or if you are reusing data and results, then this is treated in the same manner as plagiarism of work by other authors, and is likely to lead to a retraction or a correction.

If as guest editor you are uncertain as to how to proceed, you are welcome to contact the editorial office for advice. Please contact matpr@elsevier.com for the quickest response times.

3. Duplicate Submission Checks

Editorial Manager checks submitted manuscripts against other manuscripts submitted to the same journal. It looks at the article title, the authors, and the abstract. It is important to check this, as it can be a very useful tool for identifying authors that repeatedly resubmit work to the journal that has previously been rejected, or authors that have submitted to a range of conferences (which suggests they were not present at the events), or sometimes authors who are slightly modifying papers. A high score can come from entirely legitimate reasons, for example where an author was given a reject and resubmit decision. A guide on using this tool is available here.

4. Authorship Issues

There are clear guidelines outlining who merits authorship on a paper, and it is the collective responsibility of the authors to agree this list prior to submission. Changes to the list of authors (either addition or removal) should only be done with the agreement of each involved party in writing. The journal manager can help with this.

Sometimes academics will write making a complaint that a paper has stolen their work – perhaps from a PhD or preparatory research. These issues can not necessarily be detected via plagiarism checking tools, as the work may not be published. In these instances, we must investigate, and you should notify Elsevier of this problem, as we will monitor this and assist/run the investigation where required. In some cases the only solution is for the paper to be referred back to the universities where it was written, but we may need to post an expression of concern on affected papers while this issue is resolved.

As of July 2021, **no author may contribute any more than two papers to a conference proceedings**: you may wish to amend your conference abstracts call accordingly, or manage expectations for the publication of the conference proceedings.

For other ethical issues, please refer to our ethics resources pages here.

Timelines

When preparing the proposal, you will have been asked to indicate how long you need the editorial portal to be open for, and when it should close. When we approach the closing date, we will be in touch to confirm that the portal can be closed or if an extension is required. You can also let us know if you require an extension. We will usually agree to this, provided there is a sensible reason for the extension.

Requesting Additional Papers

Your contract stipulates the number of papers agreed for the conference proceedings. On occasion, it is necessary to increase this number. We will usually agree to this provided that the reasoning is clear, however we will expect you to provide justification for the increase, particularly if you are asking for a large increase.

Concluding the issue

Once all papers have been finalised, the special issue is now ready for completion. The journal manager will then remove your editorial access, and allocate the conference to the next available publication issue. Before we publish the final issue, we under take a number of final checks:

1. Guest editors must provide us with a copy of the finalised conference timetable (ideally online). This should clearly indicate each paper that was given at the conference.
2. Guest editors must complete the peer review overview document that was provided along with the original acceptance of the proposal. This collates all the peer review reports received for *accepted* papers.
3. Our editorial office will make checks on the accepted papers, in order to ensure that:
    a. no plagiarised papers have been accepted;
    b. no papers have been accepted without peer review;
    c. authors have not published more than 2 papers each in the issue;
    d. papers are all in scope;
4. If all these checks are passed, then the issue will be finalised and published.

Contacts

Journal Production Office: matpr@elsevier.com

Journal Editorial Office: mtproceedings@elsevier.com