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Information for editors and reviewers of *Cell Methods*

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The commitment of experts in the evaluation of research articles is crucial for an effective publishing experience. *Cell Methods* relies on internal and external life scientists to rigorously and transparently evaluate the publication materials. Herein, the expert roles and competences are defined. Guidelines are provided for consistent and objective reviewing.

Keywords: editorial advisors, editors, reviewers, evaluations, manuscripts, guidelines

Role definition in editorial process

Editors and advisors

Cell Methods (Marseille, France) relies on the objectivity and rigor of editorial team members including external editorial advisors. The editorial process of the manuscripts is ensured by at least one internal editor of Rviews Press depending on the availability of the editors. The roles in the editorial team are defined following the recommendations of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and Public Knowledge Project (PKP)^{1,2}.

Editor-in-Chief

The Editor-in-Chief defines, coordinates and ensures the editorial process of article publication in *Cell Methods* according to the journal editorial line and in agreement with the missions and vision of Rviews Press. The editor-in-chief is appointed and evaluated by Rviews Press. The editor-in-chief is responsible for building the editorial team by inviting external experts to join the editorial advisory board and may be assisted by managing and section editors in agreement with Rviews Press policies. The editor-in-chief can assume all roles and responsibilities in the editorial team as needed and according to the availability of assisting editors.

The editor-in-chief ensures that:

- Effective efforts are deployed toward the aim and scope of *Cell Methods*.
- The journal strategy is continuously reviewed and redefined to improve the editorial process.



- The external experts are qualified and diverse for playing consistent advisory or reviewer roles.
- The promotion of *Cell Methods* is effective and directed to authors and readers.
- Editorial advisors and reviewers get adequate recognition and credit of their contribution in the editorial process and article improvement.
- All submitted manuscripts are equally considered and evaluated through a transparent and fair manner in line with the journal policies
- All authors are equally considered with no regard to their origin, gender, revenues, belonging to institutions or independency. This is consistent with Rviews Press and the journal policies.
- Accepted articles are timely published, indexed and preserved in long-term plans in the adequate forms on relevant platforms.

The role of editor-in-chief of *Cell Methods* can be assumed by individuals qualified by Rviews Press as holding all the necessary qualifications for getting the journal to a higher level according to the journal objectives and the mission and vision of Rviews Press.

Managing editor

The managing editor of *Cell Methods* ensures the fluidity of the editorial operations and keeps the editors, advisors, reviewers and authors on schedule. The managing editor make sure that a rapid decision is taken regarding the manuscript at any step of the editorial process and can constitutes with the editor-in-chief the intermediate contact between authors, reviewers and section or guest editors.

The roles of managing editor include but are not limited to:

- Outlooking the daily operations
- Serving as intermediate between authors, editors and reviewers
- Making reports to the editor-in-chief about everything related to the journal
- Supervising the assignment of manuscripts to handling editors
- Ensuring decision delivery on schedule
- Improving the fluidity of editorial operation. If needed, survey and necessary actions can be used.
- Proposing names for joining the section editorial board, advisory board and reviewer board.

As for the editor-in-chief, the managing editor role in *Cell Methods* can be played by individuals with the necessary qualifications and suggested by the editor-in-chief to Rviews Press for appreciation. The appointment of the managing editor is finally decided by the editor-in-chief in agreement with the mission and vision of Rviews Press.

Section editor and guest editor

The section editor in *Cell Methods* ensures the handling of submissions, their editorial evaluation, peer reviewing and decides on the acceptance or revision of the manuscript. They report to the editor-in-chief and ensures that all necessary actions are taken for the copy-editing of articles. The section editor and the editor-in-chief decide on the interest of a manuscript for the editorial line of *Cell Methods*, acceptance or rejection of an article.

The roles of section editor are further defined in agreement with the editor-in-chief and include but are not limited to:

- Serving as the main handler of submissions
- Ensuring the progression of manuscript on schedule during the editorial process



- Choosing the qualified reviewers either from the reviewer board or external reviewer
- Proposing thematic or special issues of the journal
- Main contact between the authors, reviewers and the editorial team during the editorial process
- Making decisions during the editorial evaluation and after peer review.
- Reporting special situations of the authors to the editor-in-chief for consideration regarding their finance, position, conflict of interest, ethical concerns etc...

The section editors in *Cell Methods* are individuals with the necessary qualifications for judging the quality, ethics, novelty and relevance of articles in life science. The section editors are suggested by the editor-in-chief to Rviews Press for appreciation. The section editor is appointed by Rviews Press in agreement with the editor-in-chief.

Occasionally, a guest editor role can be assigned to an external expert by the managing editor in agreement with the editor-in-chief to assemble manuscripts treating a given subject in a special issue. For this specific special issue, the guest editor takes on all the roles and responsibilities of a section editor. In agreement with the editor-in-chief, she/he can be discharged of some functions and responsibility according to her/his availability.

Editorial advisor

Cell Methods relies also on external experts in life science who agreed to advise the journal in the development of its editorial line to reflect the current needs in fundamental and clinical research fields, advance the strategic positioning decided by the editor in chief and progress the mission of Rviews Press. The editorial advisors are solicited by the section editors or the editor-in-chief to be advised on a manuscript, an issue as well as editorial line development. Editorial advisors can also make spontaneous proposals and suggestions to section editors or to the editor-in-chief regarding articles, issues and editorial line. As for all roles in the editorial process of *Cell Methods*, the editorial advisors are recognized, and they are credited of their contributions in the most relevant manner. The execution of this measure is ensured by the editor-in-chief.

The role of the editorial advisor is further defined by the editor-in-chief and include but is not limited to:

- Advising on manuscripts, issues, editorial lines, reviewing and other part of the editorial process
- Make proposal aiming at supporting the effort and objectives of *Cell Methods* and Rviews Press
- participate in the evaluation of article during editorial process

The editorial advisors are qualified experts in the fields of life science as appreciated by the editor-in-chief and Rviews Press. They are suggested by section editors or the editor-in-chief to Rviews Press for appreciation and approval. The editorial advisors are named by Rviews Press.

External peer reviewer

Cell Methods (Marseille, France) also relies on the contributions of external experts in fields of life science to serve as peer reviewers. The peer reviewers are part of our esteemed and valued community that evaluates and proposes improvements of the quality of the published materials in *Cell Methods*. The peer reviewers are solicited by the section editor or the editor-in-chief to evaluate a manuscript on schedule with objectivity, rigor, transparency and fairness anonymously, and under confidentiality. If the manuscript is accepted after improvement suggested by the peer reviewer, it is proposed to the reviewer to include her/his name in the endorsed article in a dedicated section.

The roles of the peer reviewers are precisely defined by the soliciting section editor and include but are not limited to:



- Evaluating the manuscript following the review guidelines (see below)
- Provide clear comments and feedback on the quality, timeliness and relevance of articles
- Communicate its appreciation in the form of a report in English
- Promote the novelty or discuss the limitation of an evaluated manuscript

The peer reviewers are qualified external scientists (early or advanced in career, institutional or independent) with strong attention to detail, knowledge in fields of life science and the current technical and research trends, experience in reviewing scientific manuscripts, written communication skills and capability of punctuality and working under pressure. Each review in *Cell Methods* is awarded of a certificate, incentives in form of publishing credit or cash for independent experts in agreement with the editorial office and the mission of Rviews Press to promote sustainable implication and recognition of all players in the development of knowledge acquisition.

Initial editorial evaluation

The initial editorial evaluation aims at checking whether the submitted manuscript is of interest for *Cell Methods* and ensuring its compliance with the journal quality and ethical standards. This initial evaluation of the submission is consistent with the policies and procedures of *Cell Methods* regarding new submissions. The assigned section editor or the editor-in-chief oversee the initial editorial evaluation which is the most stringent step of manuscript selection. The editor ensures that the timeline defined in *Cell Methods* policies is respected. A rapid but motivated decision is made by the editor who informs the author about the decision regarding the submission. This decision can be rejection, acceptance or pursuing with the necessary rounds of peer reviewing followed or not by revisions and editorial improvements as well as copy-editing. Implication of managing editors is advised to ensure the delivery of a motivated decision on schedule to the authors. The approach for the initial evaluation and decision on new submissions is coordinated and supervised by the editor-in-chief. If needed, an editorial advisor can be solicited to advise on specific points on the manuscript before the initial decision.

Reviewing for *Cell Methods*

The peer review process is an excellent opportunity for an external trusted expert to evaluate, appreciate, and provide comments on new manuscripts accepted for review in *Cell Methods*. These manuscripts that passed the initial editorial evaluation step are in-principle of interest for *Cell Methods* but may need to be further externally evaluated for technical, ethical and contextual aspects as well as the timeliness of their publication in regard to the current standards in life science and subdomains. This is also a good opportunity to suggest improvement of the manuscript to the highest quality standards in the field thanks to the reviewer feedback.

Cell Methods as a journal of Rviews Press promotes the recognition of peer reviewing as a contribution to the published material. Thus, the reviewer role is of importance and is endowed with responsibility in regard to the evaluated and/or endorsed articles. The editor takes into consideration the suggestions of the reviewers and objectively decide the most appropriate and relevant action for the technical, scientific and editorial improvement of the manuscript. The final decision to accept or reject a submission belongs to the editor.

Manuscripts submitted for publication in *Cell Methods* will have up to 6 unrelated reviewers. They may consist of a maximum of **2** long-time established researchers (appointed scientist in an institution/company), **2** early-career scientists (student or early post-doc) and **2** independent scientists (not appointed by an institution, working for themselves).



In principle a minimum of **two** reviewer endorsements including that of the handling editor is required for formal acceptance in-principle of a manuscript.

Below are outlined some guidance for helping the reviewer during the peer review process.

No conflict of interest

Before accepting to review a manuscript, the reviewer should ensure that she/he is not tied to the submission, or the results presented in the manuscript. She/he should not be working under the supervision or hierarchically responsible of the author. Working in the same domain or field in life science is not considered as a conflict of interest. But working on a subject that can be scooped by the submission is considered as conflict of interest by *Cell Methods*. If the reviewer is not sure, the editor should be informed about any suspicion of conflict of interest by exposing the situation. The editor will decide whether it may appear as conflict of interest or not. The reviewer will declare absence of conflict of interest for reviewing a manuscript for *Cell Methods*. This is consistent with *Cell Methods* aims and the mission of Rviews Press to promote transparency, responsibility and fair scholarly publishing experience.

On-schedule reviewing

Today information spreads very fast especially in the era of social media. Consistently, researchers, institutions and funding agencies encourage rapid and timely publication and public access to resulting materials of funded research. This is a requisite for ensuring the visibility of their effort toward knowledge acquisition. As all life scientists, the reviewers of *Cell Methods* are conscious of that fact. Thus, reviewers should ensure to be able to evaluate the manuscript and deliver the feedback report on time as scheduled and agreed. The invitation by the editor to review should formally include a deadline for submitting the review report. If needed, this schedule can be extended in agreement with the editor. As the deadline approaches, an automatic reminder will be sent to the reviewer for completing the feedback report.

Anonymity and confidentiality

Anonymity

The reviewers of manuscript for *Cell Methods* are anonymous and remain anonymous during all the editorial process. This is important to *Cell Methods* to avoid all pressure and ensure independent conduct during the external evaluation of the submission. However, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, *Cell Methods* may propose to the reviewer to include her/his name to the endorsed article in a dedicated section. This is an innovative initiative of *Cell Methods* in line with the mission of Rviews Press to encourage the recognition of the contributions and responsibility of editors and reviewers in the scholarly publishing community. The reviewer can of course opt out the association of her/his name with the published materials after motivated decision in agreement with the editor. But this might represent an exception. *Cell Methods* does not publish the review reports which remain confidential even after the article publication. However, reviewers can decide to write a Correspondence or a News and Views article free of charge to aliment discussion on and around the published material.

Confidentiality

All manuscripts are confidential if they are in the editorial process until formal acceptance and publication in *Cell Methods*. Thus, reviewers should keep confidential all the materials at their disposal for the evaluation of a submission. After reviewing, all materials should be kept confidential until a decision is made about the submission. The reviewer can keep the material for their record if they can ensure the



confidentiality. Otherwise, they should be destroyed and never shared with any other person including collaborators and colleagues.

The reviewer can suggest to the editor a colleague or collaborator because of expertise, availability or opportunity of learning (e.g. a student looking for experience in manuscript evaluation). But the reviewer should not directly share with anybody including but not limited to students under her/his supervision, colleagues or collaborators. In addition, should not use the data of the reviewed manuscript for their own purposes unless they are officially asked by the editor to contribute a News and Views article to be published with the reviewed article. If accepted and published, the data and article distributed by *Cell Methods* in Open Access under the CC BY³ license can be used by anyone including the authors, editors and reviewers.

Evaluation based on editorial policies

The reviewers are asked to be familiar with the editorial policies of *Cell Methods*⁴. The reviewers are mainly solicited for further evaluation of the technical, ethical, transparent and scientific aspects of manuscripts. The review solicitation is a formal proof of the interest of *Cell Methods* for the subject and the manuscript.

The aim of the reviewing process is to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the manuscript in order to help the editor and the author to understand what is accomplished and what is needed to be addressed for proposing an article of the highest quality and ethical standards for publication (Figure 1). The participation of reviewers is highly appreciated in this constructive improvement and development of an impactful publication.

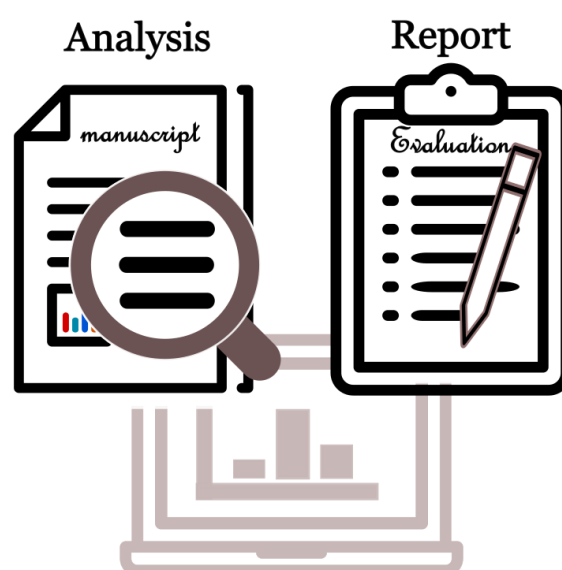


Figure 1: Reviewing a *Cell Methods* submission

Reviewing for *Cell Methods* consists in analysing and evaluating the manuscript to eventually make proposal of improvement if necessary

Therefore, we ask that the reviewer be objective, impartial and rigorous during the evaluation process and be courteous in their report. Indeed, we are all supporting the same goal: improve communication



of scientific discoveries as well as the published contents. We are all learning to do better. Courtesy and kindness are advised common sense for the conduct of authors, editors and reviewers.

Reporting the review

The review report consists of different parts including but not limited to:

- The summary of the understanding of the reviewer about the manuscript. This is only fact report (no appreciation of the reviewer). This can include few bullets point to highlight the message.
- The general comment of the manuscript
- The strength and weaknesses of the manuscript seen by the reviewer
- The timeliness in current context in the field
- Comment on specific points that the reviewers want to emphasize
- Major concern and suggestion of improvement
- Minor concerns and suggestions of improvement
- Necessity of editorial scientific copyediting, artwork editing and correction for English to make the article accessible and understandable

Several aspects of the manuscript of *Cell Methods* are appreciated by the reviewer. They include:

- The impact on our understanding of the topic and the field in life science
- The importance in the current context
- Quality appreciation relative to high ranked publications in the field
- Quality appreciation relative to common quality standard in the field
- The supporting published data or references
- Impacts on technical advances
- Impact on technological developments
- Impact on the knowledge application in science and clinic
- Impact on human progress
- Scientific relevance
- Technical relevance
- Relevance of the used statistics
- Ethical compliance
- Readiness for immediate publication
- Readiness for publication after minor revision
- Readiness for publication after major revision

The reviewer may provide a numeric estimate of appreciation to these points: 1: Very strong, 2: strong, 3: satisfactory, 4: somewhat satisfactory and 5: Poor

The reviewer is advised to make suggestions to improve the manuscript in that specific aspect towards the highest level of appreciation.

This is the basis for making a relevant and effective reporting of the manuscript reviewing for *Cell Methods*. The report can be filled online in the platform of *Cell Methods* or a word/PDF document with the reviewer comments can be uploaded. The numeric appreciations should be filled in the reviewer space of our platform or through a confidential link provided by the editor after acceptance for reviewing.

The reviewer is kept in loop and informed about the decision on the manuscript and eventual submission of a revised version if he agreed to consider the evaluation of revisions. If accepted, it will be suggested



to the reviewer in associate his name with manuscript and publish it in a dedicated section of the article in agreement with the journal policies.

Incentives and gratification for reviewers

Common encouragement to review

After the report of a review, *Cell Methods* will systematically grant the reviewer with a certificate of review, voucher and credit for future publication opportunity in *Cell Methods* or in a journal of Rviews Press.

Special case of independent researchers and early scientists

Cell Methods may also propose incentives in form of cash gratification as an encouragement in line with the mission of Rviews Press to promote the strong implication and recognition of independent researcher and early-career scientist in research evaluation as well as knowledge acquisition.

Declaration of interests

Adama Sidibé is the Editor-In-Chief of *Cell Reviews*, *Cell Methods* and *Cell Methods*, all journal of Rviews Press, Marseille, France.

Adama Sidibé is the founder of Rviews Press.

This document provides the guidance for editors, advisors and reviewers of manuscripts submitted to *Cell Methods* for publication.

Declaration concerning generative AI use

The author declares that no generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used to make this manuscript.

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3. Creative Commons Deed - Attribution 4.0 International - Creative Commons. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/?ref=chooser-v1>.
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