

Guidelines for *Urban Agriculture & Regional Food Systems* Associate Editors

Overview

Manuscript processing involves the following activities:

- **Admin** – Inspects the manuscript according to an established checklist and either returns it to the author for corrections or assigns it to the editor.
- **Editor** - Determines if the writing is suitable for peer review. Manuscripts written with poor English, to the extent that the author's meaning is unclear, should be returned to the author by the editor. The message to the author will include a recommendation to obtain professional assistance to correct the manuscript. If the manuscript is acceptable, it is assigned to an associate editor (AE). The editor also screens manuscripts that fall outside the generally defined scope of *Urban Agriculture & Regional Food Systems*. The Editor evaluates recommendations from AEs and makes the final decision on all manuscripts.
- **Associate Editor** – This editorial board member is responsible for arranging reviews, managing the revision process, if warranted, and, ultimately, submitting to the Editor a recommendation to release the manuscript to the author or accept it for publication.

Urban Agriculture & Regional Food Systems relies upon its editor, AEs, and reviewers to provide timely and useful reviews, and editorial decisions, as a professional courtesy to authors and readership. Please make every effort to process manuscripts in accordance with the timelines presented here.

AE INITIATES REVIEW PROCESS

Evaluate Manuscript – It is not unusual for the AE to determine that the manuscript does not qualify for review based on scientific reasons. Scientific papers may not be published in any of the American Society of Agronomy and Crop Science Society of America journals, books or other scholarly publications unless two unbiased professional scientists agree the paper is acceptable. Similarly, reviews from a minimum of two unbiased professional scientists must be obtained to release a manuscript. The two scientists can be the editor and AE or the AE and an outside reviewer. Refer to Chapter 2 of the Editors' Handbook for checklists on scientific content, scientific presentation, and manuscript style. This chapter also provides a checklist for abstracts. These checklists contain criteria to be used in evaluating manuscripts that are being considered for publication in *Urban Agriculture & Regional Food Systems*. Additionally, Chapter 2 provides instructions on managing the review process, including a list of errors that editors should handle with the author and those that can be corrected at headquarters. This is arguably the most important chapter of the handbook and should be read by all editorial board members.

Establish Reviewers – Commitments to review a manuscript should be obtained within **10 days** of the assignment to the AE. Assuming a few of the peers contacted will either decline the invitation or fail to respond, the AE is encouraged to send three or four invitations immediately upon being assigned to a manuscript. The goal should be to obtain at least two commitments to review the manuscript. In addition, the AE should serve as one of the reviewers, unless the subject matter is too far outside their area of expertise. The entire review of the original submission, from assigning a manuscript to the AE to receiving and processing the reviews, should require no more than **30-45 days**.

Preferred Reviewers and Reviewer Accounts – Authors have the option to suggest preferred reviewers. However, the AE is not obligated to ask these individuals to serve as reviewers. To invite a reviewer, this person will need an account in MC. Accounts are based on e-mail addresses, and, because many individuals have two or three e-mail addresses, it is important

to search on a last name before creating an account. If one reviewer has two accounts, it may cause confusion. In those cases, the reviewer has had an account with MC and logged in using the old account. If the AE creates a new account for this user, the reviewer will not find the manuscript, as it will be located in the new account only. Again, accounts are based on e-mail addresses rather than names.

AE MANAGES REVIEWS

After obtaining the required number of reviews, the AE will either return the manuscript to the author for revision or make a release or accept recommendation to the Editor.

Proofread Reviews – The AE is advised to read reviews, and edit them as needed, before sending them to authors. Reviews should not contain personal attacks, either directly or indirectly. We have received complaints when these reviews were inadvertently sent to authors. The AE may also wish to contact the reviewers and explain to them that the comments are inappropriate.

Summarize Reviews – It is helpful to provide the author with a paragraph or two that summarizes the comments offered by the reviewers. These paragraphs should highlight the parts of the manuscript that are particularly deserving of attention during the revision process.

MS-Word Track Changes – Reviewers can and have been using the track changes feature of MS-Word to edit and review manuscripts. This creates a problem with reviewer anonymity. If the reviewer uploads an MS-Word file, MC will convert it to PDF format and strip out the reviewer information. If the reviewer uploads a PDF file, it will frequently contain information that identifies them. This is a complex problem and the AE may have to correspond with the reviewers to solve it.

Late Reviews – If, for example, three individuals agree to submit a review and two of the three reviews are received, the AE has enough reviews to make a recommendation to the TE. If a decision is made on the basis of the first two reviews received, the third reviewer will be unable to submit a review thereafter. This has the potential to create some conflict with reviewers, particularly slow ones. Prior to making a recommendation, the AE should contact reviewers who had not submitted a review, informing them that their review is still needed and must be received by a certain date. If they attempt to submit a review after the designated date, when the AE submits a recommendation in MC, the attempt will be unsuccessful.

AE REQUESTS REVISION

When the AE recommends revision, the manuscript goes back to the author, who is given two months to submit the revision. Extensions to this two month period are generally granted upon request. When the author uploads the revision, the manuscript goes into the queue ‘Complete AE Checklist’.

If the AE would like to get additional reviews on the revision, it can be done at this point. In communications with the authors, the AE should not convey the impression regarding the approval or release of the manuscript. The AE must remain as neutral as possible.

Repeated Reviews – Rather than allowing a manuscript to go back and forth several times between author-reviewer-associate-editor, it might be appropriate to recommend release for a borderline manuscript and encourage resubmission. Try to prevent cycling manuscripts through the system numerous times with authors. As mentioned in the Editors’ Handbook (Chapter 2), if a second revision is necessary, in most cases the associate editor should evaluate the revision without sending it to reviewers.

Only Authors May Revise Manuscripts – In MC, all revisions must be approved by the authors. If the AE makes minor changes/suggestions to a manuscript, the revised manuscript must be sent back to the author for approval. Only the author can upload revisions to the manuscript. This keeps the entire editorial process inside MC and also ensures that *Urban Agriculture & Regional Food Systems* obtains the proper files for publication.

Response to Reviewers’ Comments – For each comment offered by a reviewer, the author should indicate if it was accepted or rejected in the revision. If the latter, the author is expected to justify that decision. This detailed response from the authors is very helpful in evaluating the revision.

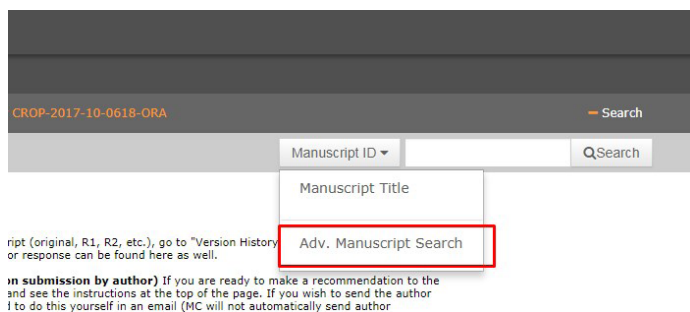
AE RECOMMENDS RELEASE OF A MANUSCRIPT

Please accompany a recommendation of acceptable for publication or release to the author with a brief justification for this recommendation. This is particularly helpful when recommending release. In MC, space is provided to enter one or two paragraphs justifying a recommendation.

Features Of Manuscript Central

Advanced vs. Quick Search – On the AE dashboard there is a search box on the right-hand side of the page. The default is a quick search. An easy way to find a single manuscript is to use wildcards (*) with parts of the manuscript ID number. For example, *0123* will find manuscripts UA-201X-02-0123-ORA and its revisions. Otherwise, open any version and go to the “Manuscript Information” tab, then scroll down to the “Version History” box. To access the details for a particular version, click on the magnifying glass of the desired version under “Switch Details.”

To set up an advanced search, change the 'Manuscript ID' field to 'Adv. Manuscript Search' in the quick search bar.



To see all the manuscripts that have been assigned to the AE, the AE's last name can be entered in the appropriate box. Then select the search button at the bottom of the page. Results can be saved by selecting "Export to CSV."

Supplemental Material – Supplemental material needs to be reviewed along with the manuscript. Files containing supplemental material can be accessed via the 'Supplemental Files' icon, which is located next to the 'Original File' icon in MC. If the supplemental files are not intended for publication, the author may state that in the cover letter.

Audit Trail – Remember to access the audit trail, which is one of the left-hand tabs on the manuscript view. It shows the editor everything that has taken place regarding this manuscript.

Reviewer Scores – Fill out the reviewer scores when the reviews are received. This can be done when the reviews are read. They may prove to be very helpful.

Back Button – Never use the browser back button on the MC site. Please use the buttons available on the page to navigate the site.

Resources

Challenges with MC – If problems are being experienced with MC, there are two options for assistance: (i) use the online help, available in the upper right hand corner of the screen or (ii) contact the Admin or Managing Editor at headquarters (ADM is listed after the AE, and Editor for each manuscript). For questions pertaining to scientific content or other editorial processes, contact either the Editor.

Unavailable to Handle Manuscripts – Associate editors can indicate dates during which they will be unavailable by clicking on their username at the top of the screen and navigating to 'Username and Password'. During that period, 'n/a' will appear next to the name in dropdown lists and in reviewer selections.

Record Retention – If there are manuscript-related records outside of those contained in MC, and if the manuscript has been published, they can be discarded about three months after publication. Records of released manuscripts should be retained for two years after the release date. See Chapter 1 of the Editors' Handbook for more information.