19 November 2023

Checklist for handling editors

Initial submission

IMPORTANT: It is utterly important that manuscripts not likely to reach up-to-standards are filtered early by desk rejection. This saves efforts for editors and reviewers, and time for authors who are likely to eventually publish the manuscript elsewhere.

Only manuscripts with high potential for acceptance should go for reviewing.

The rejection email template provides a detailed checklist helping to give objective explanations to the authors. Add your personal comments if necessary.

Is the scope relevant (about traffic safety)?	If not, reject.
Is it readable (language)?	If not, reject.
Is it sloppy written/formatted?	If not, reject, in exceptional cases request updates.
Is the research quality 'great enough' to be potentially publishable? (see quality criteria)	If not, reject.
Plagiarism report OK?	Inform Editor-in-chief about plagiarism suspicions immediately. If found match is acceptable (own thesis, project report), make sure authors mention it in the 'Acknowledgements' (See instructions)
Formal requirements fulfilled: • Cover letter? See instructions • CRediT statement? See instructions • Declaration of competing interests? See instructions • Funding? See instructions • Photos and short bio for all authors? See instructions	If not, request updates before proceeding to review.

Review

IMPORTANT: The *TSR* aims as the **final decision** to be taken after the **first round of revisions**. It is expected that by then it becomes evident for the editor whether the paper is 'publishable in general' (despite minor imperfections) or it is not likely to improve to meet the standards of the journal. In both cases, little is to be gained by extending the process with additional reviews. In rare cases, for example if substantial changes have been made to the original text, the second review round might be initiated.

Do you believe paper can be published?	If not, reject it yourself, save reviewers' efforts.
Do not invite reviewers who submitted last report less than 3 month ago.	Prevent 'reviewer burnout'.
Adding new reviewer, make sure to provide **many** competence keywords	This helps other editors.
Choose the right Review Form ('first review round', 'subsequent review round')	
If no response within a week, make contact through other channels, or invite another reviewer promptly.	'Sleeping' review request probably went to Junk, waiting longer will not solve this.
Always send 'Thank you' message upon receiving a review.	
Aim at taking accept/reject decision in one review round. Initiate second round in exceptional cases.	Save time for authors and efforts for reviewers.
Do not aim at fully satisfying/agreeing with every reviewer.	It is YOUR decision.

Reviewer recommendations defined

- **Accept Submission**. The manuscript has now relevant contents and the quality high enough to be published in the journal.
- **Revisions Required.** The manuscript still requires some *minor* changes, but you trust the authors and the editor to solve this without initiating another round of reviewing.
- **Resubmit for Review.** The manuscript requires *major* changes and additional round of reviewing is necessary to make sure it has been sufficiently improved.
- **Resubmit Elsewhere.** The manuscript has some potential for publication, but its scope/quality does not match the expectations of the *TSR* journal. The authors should try submitting their work elsewhere.
- **Decline Submission.** The scope/quality of the submitted work is a way beyond the expectations of the *TSR* journal and the situation is not likely to improve after a revision.
- **See Comments.** Use this option if you cannot decide on the recommendation—but make sure to explain yourself in the comments to the editor.

Quality criteria

Problem formulation	+ clear, well-defined, relevant - unclear, unfocused, not about road safety, driven by data/method availability - not a ‘real problem’ (prevents accidents that never occur anyway) - mere ‘exercise’ in advance mathematical methods
Practical value	+ reading it makes us better equipped to save lives - ignoring connection to ‘how can we use it?’
Novelty	+ new ideas, concepts—even if the dataset is small + new evidence—have we learnt a new valuable fact about a known phenomenon? - trivial findings with no advancement - ‘consultancy report’
Method	+ clear, legitimate, appropriate + clear advancement of methodology (without losing focus on safety) - methodology not sound or not well-described - too complex when could be solved with simpler methods - ‘sandbox’ for statisticians, no connection to reality
Interdisciplinarity	+ expertise from multiple fields used to address safety issues + parallels/connections to other fields (can we learn from them?) - outside of safety domain—study of traffic flow, software, law, etc.
Literature review	+ sufficiently thorough to outline state-of-the-affairs + identification of knowledge gaps, unaddressed aspects, etc. - mere listing of others’ works, no clear ‘red thread’ or conclusions
Visualizations	+ graphs and tables concise, clear, not repetitive, readable - messy graphs, excessive information, unreadable (text size, structure, colours, resolution)
Discussion	+ put results in bigger perspective; thorough, many-faceted, enlightening - retells results; trivial arguments; poor connection to reality
Conclusions	+ concise, clear, relevant - repetitive, wordy, irrelevant, trivial; not based on results - endorsement of commercial products