

Overview

Observational Studies uses the single anonymized model of peer review. In this commonly used model, the authors do not know the identities of the reviewers, but the reviewers do see the authors' names and affiliations. Authors have an opportunity to recommend reviewers in the Scholastica submission portal, although decisions surrounding reviewer invitations are made at the discretion of the editorial team.

Step-by-step Process

Manuscripts submitted for consideration in a Special Issue or in response to a ACIC Data Challenge announcement undergo editorial review but do not undergo external peer review. All other manuscript submissions follow the following process:

- Assessment by Editor(s)-in-Chief (EIC). The EIC(s) evaluate the manuscript for appropriateness/alignment with the journal's scope. The EIC(s) also judge whether the manuscript is sufficiently original and/or likely to be of interest to the readership. The EIC(s) may reject the manuscript at this stage, or advance it to be considered by an Associate Editor.
- Associate Editor (AE) Assignment. For submissions not rejected at the previous stage, the EIC(s) will assign an AE to manage the submission. An AE is generally expected to proceed with the process of securing external referees, although in some circumstances they may recommend rejection at this stage without review.
- Securing External Referees. The assigned AE solicits external referees (typically two or three) to review the manuscript. Reviewers are asked to provide reports in a timely fashion (generally 6–8 weeks following acceptance of review assignment). Extensions can be granted if needed.
- AE Evaluation. Once reviews have been submitted, the AE reviews and considers the submitted reports. At this stage, the AE may elect to supply additional comments, or—especially in the case of conflicting recommendations from the referees—consult with the EIC(s) and/or invite an additional independent referee to assess the manuscript. The AE ultimately drafts an internal decision recommendation for EIC review.
- EIC Evaluation. The EIC(s) review all referee reports and the internal decision recommendation drafted by the AE. At this stage, the EIC(s) may elect to supply additional comments, or consult with the AE in the event that there are concerns about the recommendation. The internal decision recommendation is followed in the vast majority of cases, but the final decision is made by the EIC(s). Final decisions include “Accept,” “Revise & Resubmit,” and “Reject.”

Final Decisions

If the manuscript receives a final decision of “Accept,” authors must submit all files (.tex file and all associated source files) and an Authorship Agreement form via Scholastica (this can be done by creating a Discussion). While manuscripts undergo light copyediting, authors should carefully read through their manuscript to correct any mistakes before final submission.

If a manuscript receives a decision of “Revise & Resubmit,” the authors are asked to resubmit their manuscript within six months of receiving the decision (extensions can be granted if needed). Upon resubmission, the authors should include a letter with point-by-point responses to each individual referee and/or editorial comment/request.

The EIC(s) may in rare circumstances reject a manuscript and advise authors that the journal may be willing to consider the manuscript as a new submission if very substantial revisions are made. The EIC(s) will supply a rationale for this decision in such cases. All other decisions of “Reject” are final.