

Specialty chief editor guidelines

Welcome to Frontiers' community of editors.

The following guidelines provide you with practical information about your role as a specialty chief editor and our peer review process and platform.

Please feel free to contact the journal team directly using their field editorial office email address if you have any queries.

Last update: 15 February 2022



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 YOUR ROLE AS A SPECIALTY CHIEF EDITOR

As a specialty chief editor and expert in the field, you are responsible for:

- Defining the scope of your section, with the guidance of the Launch team or Journal team
- Identifying and contacting potential board members
- Assessing and providing feedback on research topic proposals
- Supporting the strategic growth of your section
- Acting as an escalation point for associate editors and the editorial office

1.2 YOUR FRONTIERS TOOLS

1.2.1 LOOP

Loop is the first research network integrated into all journals and academic websites – making researchers discoverable across the boundaries of publishers and organizations. Loop maintains a very simple mission: increase the visibility of authors and increase the readership of their work within their communities as well as to the public. In addition, Loop enables scientists to stay up to date with new research and connects them with their peers. You are able to communicate with your fellow researchers on Loop using the private messaging feature.



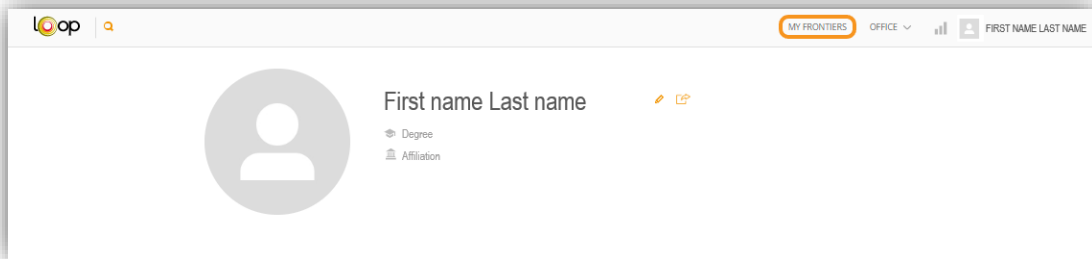
We identified three key profile features that, when added, result in 4x more profile views and 6x more publication views:

- Confirmed publications
- Profile picture
- Brief bio

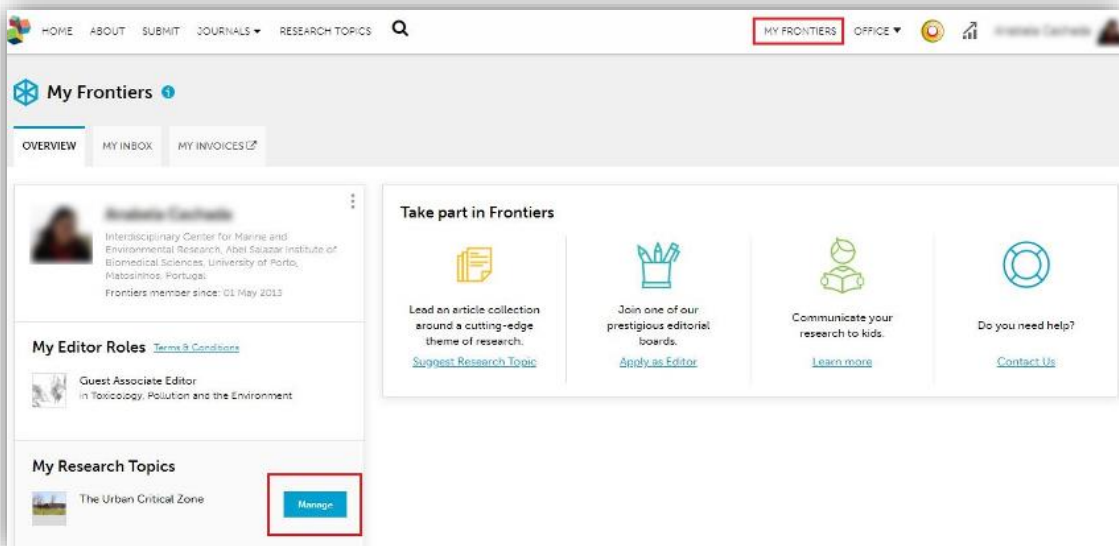
To maximize your readership and impact, we encourage you to take a few minutes to complete or update your Loop profile. To create a Loop account or access your already-existing account, please click on the following link. To edit your bio and profile picture click the pencil beside your name.

1.2.2 My Frontiers

From your Loop profile you will gain access to My Frontiers. My Frontiers is a centralized platform where you can oversee your submissions, editing assignments and Research Topics.

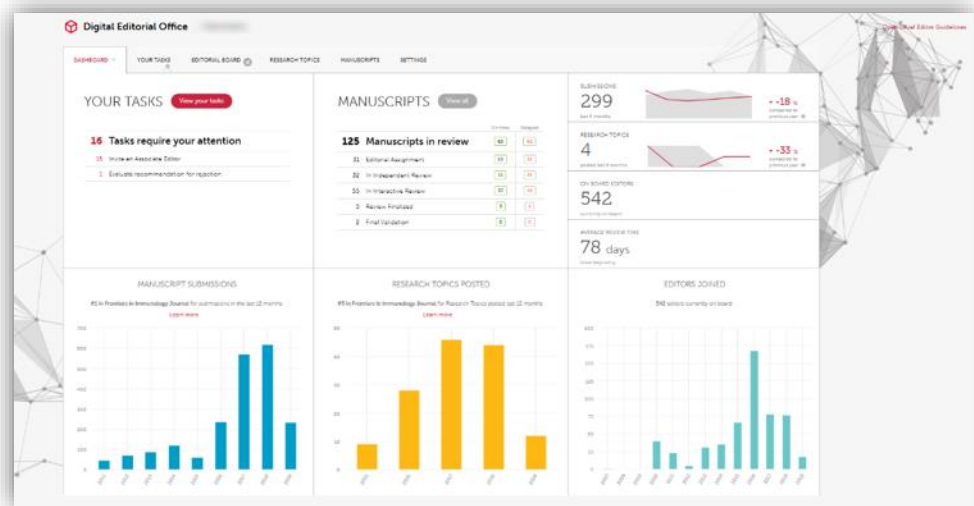


Once you access myfrontiers you will have different tabs and boxes giving you an overview of your submissions, assignments, and achievements. If you are also a board member, please refer to the editorial board role guidelines which will provide information on any additional tabs.



1.2.3 The Digital Editorial Office (DEO)

The Digital Editorial Office provides you with an overview of the manuscripts under review or published in your specialty, as well as with a list of pending tasks that require your attention. To access the Digital Editorial Office, log into your account, visit your specialty's homepage, and select “Digital Editorial Office” in the top bar.



You can find the following functions in the DEO:

- Review your pending tasks
- Review your Editorial Board members, including pending invitations
- Research Topics currently live in your section
- Manuscripts currently under review in your section

1.2.5 Your SCE digest

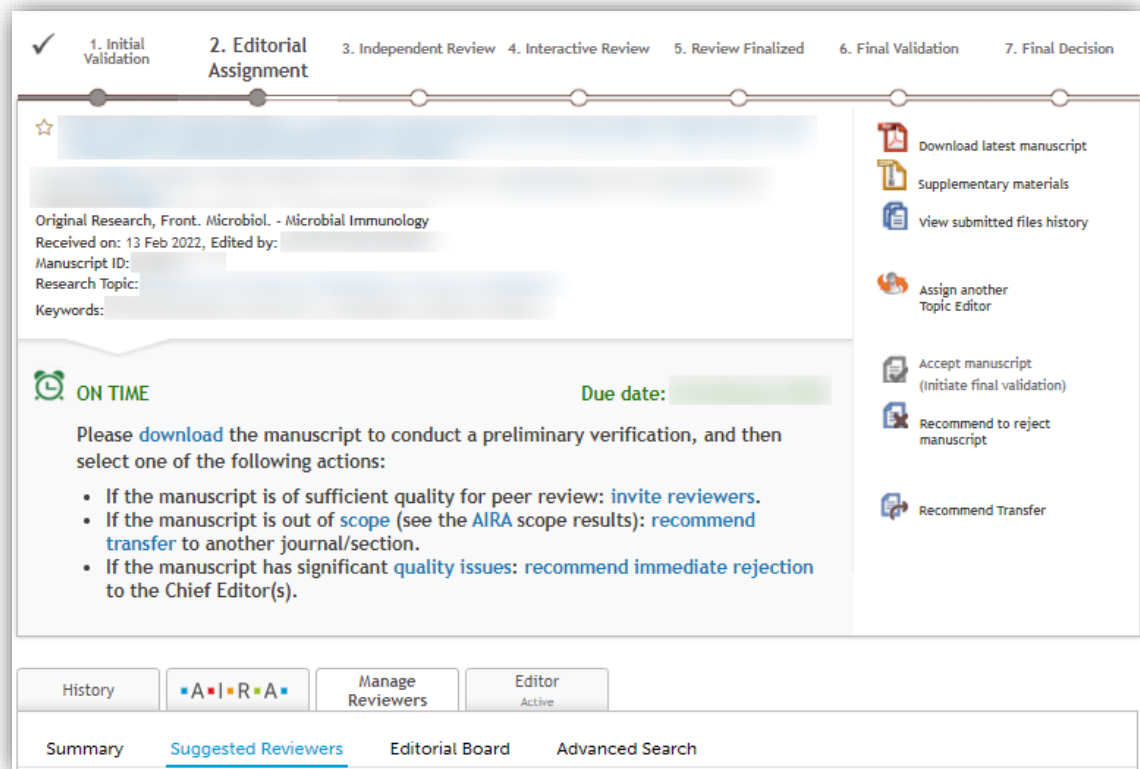
You will receive a bi-weekly Chief Editor digest on Monday and Thursday containing the following information:

1. Your assignments and submissions - A snapshot of all the editorial assignments and submissions related to the individual SCE
2. Specialty summary - Action required - A snapshot of all open tasks including:
 - AE assignments
 - Rejection recommendations
 - RT proposal evaluations
3. Specialty summary - Submissions and reviews - A snapshot, more manuscript-centric, counting: new submissions in the past 7 days, manuscripts in review, flagged manuscripts, delayed manuscripts
4. New submissions in peer-review - list of the new submissions.
5. Review Finalized - list of the manuscripts in review finalized stage (pending handling editor decision).
6. We value your feedback! – a link to the customer satisfaction survey

You can find your historical digests by logging into My Frontiers → My Inbox → Label "Specialty Update".

1.2.6 Review forum

The Review Forum is a tool developed in house to unite authors, reviewers and the handling editor and the specialty chief editor – in a direct online dialogue, enabling quick interactions and facilitating consensus. Editors and reviewers work with the authors to improve their manuscript.



The screenshot displays the Frontiers Review Forum interface. At the top, a progress bar shows seven stages: 1. Initial Validation (checked), 2. Editorial Assignment (active), 3. Independent Review, 4. Interactive Review, 5. Review Finalized, 6. Final Validation, and 7. Final Decision.

Below the progress bar, the manuscript details are shown: "Original Research, Front. Microbiol. - Microbial Immunology", "Received on: 13 Feb 2022, Edited by:", "Manuscript ID:", "Research Topic:", and "Keywords:". A green clock icon indicates the manuscript is "ON TIME". A "Due date:" field is present.

The main instruction reads: "Please [download](#) the manuscript to conduct a preliminary verification, and then select one of the following actions:"

- If the manuscript is of sufficient quality for peer review: [invite reviewers](#).
- If the manuscript is out of [scope](#) (see the [AIRA](#) scope results): [recommend transfer](#) to another journal/section.
- If the manuscript has significant [quality issues](#): [recommend immediate rejection](#) to the Chief Editor(s).

On the right side, a list of actions is available with corresponding icons:

- Download latest manuscript
- Supplementary materials
- View submitted files history
- Assign another Topic Editor
- Accept manuscript (Initiate final validation)
- Recommend to reject manuscript
- Recommend Transfer

At the bottom, there are navigation tabs: "History", "AIRA" (active), "Manage Reviewers", and "Editor Active". Below these are links for "Summary", "Suggested Reviewers" (underlined), "Editorial Board", and "Advanced Search".

2 DEFINE THE SECTION'S IDENTITY

2.1 Write the scope

As specialty chief editor, you will define the scope of your specialty by writing an approximately 500-word mission statement. Please check the specific requirements with your Journal Development team. This text will appear on the 'About' page of your specialty to help authors and readers understand its aim, breadth, and perspective. The composition of the editorial board will reflect this scope as well. This should be completed within the first two weeks.

2.2 BUILD THE BOARD OF ASSOCIATE EDITORS

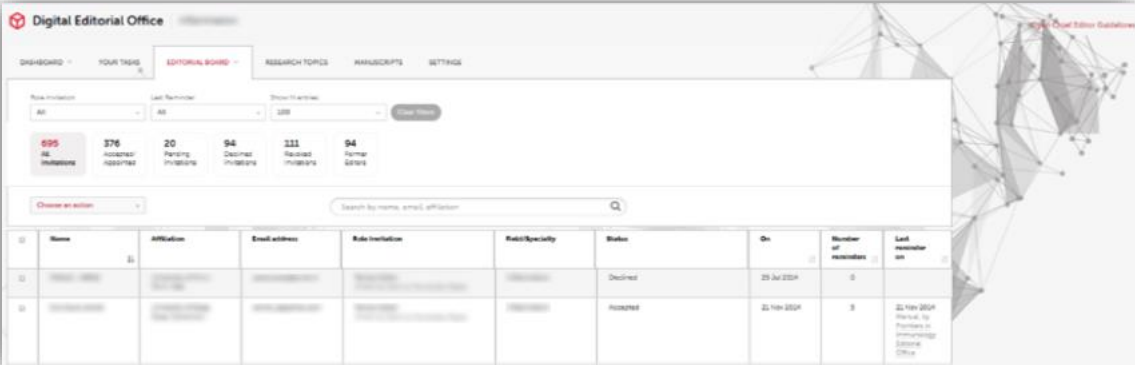
You will be asked to invite associate editors within the first month of your appointment. Associate editors should be experts in the field, (typically Associate Professor level and above, with an established publication record in internationally recognized journals) and their expertise should reflect the scope of your section.

When inviting associate editors, aim for diversity (gender balance, geographical spread, different foci of research within the scope of the specialty).

2.2.1 The editor outreach team

To ensure expansion of the Frontiers editorial boards, our editor outreach team will assist with continuous expansion of the board.

In the Digital Editorial Office, you can see the status of invitations using the different stages shown for accepted, pending and declined invitations.

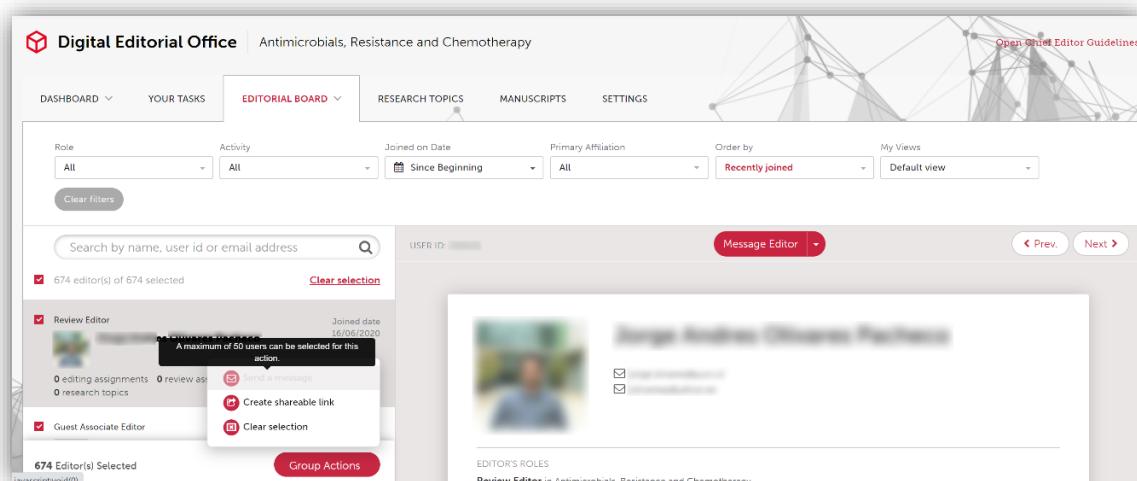
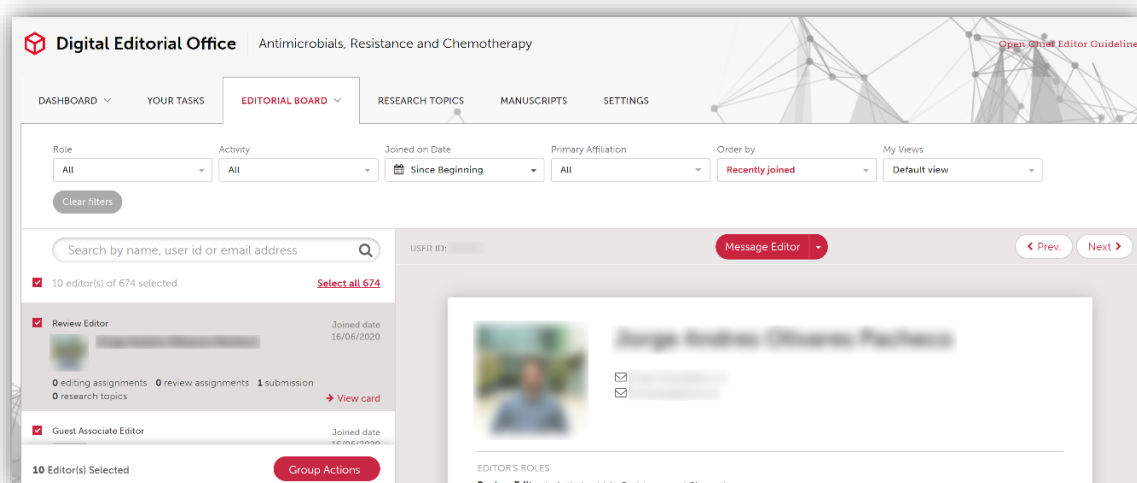


ID	Name	Affiliation	Email address	Role/Invitation	Role/Specialty	Status	On	Number of publications	Last invitation on
1	John Doe	University of X	john.doe@universityx.edu	Associate Editor	Neuroscience	Declined	25 Jul 2024	0	
2	Jane Smith	University of Y	jane.smith@universityy.edu	Associate Editor	Neuroscience	Accepted	25 Nov 2024	5	25 Nov 2024 Invited by Frontiers in Neurology Editorial Office

2.2.2 Contacting Editors on your board

You will be able to get in touch with any Editor on your board by logging into the DEO and navigating to the Editorial Board [Overview](#). You will be able to select the appropriate Editors by searching for them one at a time or utilize the filters to preselect a group of Editors e.g. All associate editors or newly joined. To select everyone on your filtered list, first tick the box to select the 10 first Editors and then “Select all [total number]”. To compose and send your message click “Group Actions” > “Send a message”.

It is important that you establish regular communication with your board to build a collaborative spirit as well as to update them on the performance of the journal and explain policies as needed.



Please note: the maximum number of recipients is 50. If you wish to contact a larger number of Editors, please reach out to your journal team, who will be able to assist you.

2.3 SUBMIT YOUR SPECIALTY GRAND CHALLENGE

The Specialty Grand Challenge is a ~2'000-word editorial-type article and should be submitted within the first two months of your appointment. It will give you the opportunity to highlight some of the biggest challenges and most recent developments in the field, thereby setting the tone for your specialty and giving it character and focus. Specialty Grand Challenges make some of the best initial content for introducing the specialty to the research community.

If you would like an example of a Specialty Grand Challenge, please feel free to get in touch with your Editorial Team. Please see section 5 for contact details.

2.4 SUBMIT TO YOUR SPECIALTY

Submitting your own work to the journal is welcomed and encouraged. Your contributions will serve as an important foundation for the journal, setting a quality standard therein. Please note that your manuscripts will be reviewed according to the same criteria as those from other authors. If you have any questions regarding your own submissions, please do not hesitate to contact your journal team.

2.5 RESEARCH TOPICS

Frontiers Research Topics are collections of ideally at least 10 articles on a focused research area. They create an online dialogue between many research groups about their latest advances, methods and ideas. They are a great opportunity to highlight a research focus or a conference, intensify collaboration, and drive the next developments in your field. As specialty chief editor, you are in a unique position to shape your section to highlight timely themes and so we ask you to suggest a number of topics each year.

Research Topics may be proposed by any experts in the field, who will become guest editors on your board for the duration of the Topic. We recommend that Research Topics be hosted by a minimum of two topic editors, who will be responsible for soliciting contributions from their peers (although submissions are open to all), for selecting contributions based on abstract submissions, as well as for overseeing the review process of submitted manuscripts.

Research Topics result in an encyclopaedic collection of peer-reviewed articles available to everyone both online and as a free, downloadable e-book (see here for an example).

2.5.1 Your Role regarding Research Topics

All Research Topic proposals made to your specialty will be sent to you for review. As the specialty chief editor, you will be able to:

Accept the proposals that are suited to your specialty

- Reject the proposals that are not adequate and provide a reason for the rejection
- Ask Topic Editors to make changes to their proposal before a decision is made.

Research Topics will only be posted online once you have approved them. Where needed, an associate editor from the board may be involved in the Topic, to guide the Topic Editors and oversee the review process of submitted manuscripts. Should you be interested in hosting a Research Topic yourself, let the Editorial Office know.

2.5.2 Editing Research Topic Submissions

Submissions made to a Research Topic will undergo the standard Frontiers review process. Instead of selecting their 'preferred Editor' from the board, however, authors will be asked to indicate the Topic Editor whom they believe to be the most knowledgeable and unbiased for editing their manuscript. This 'preferred Editor' will be assigned to the manuscript directly and will be responsible for overseeing the review process. The Topic Editors are also able to redistribute the assignments among themselves, should this not constitute a conflict of interest.

Should a conflict of interest be identified between the authors and Topics Editors or should any of the Topic Editors be listed as an author on a submission, the manuscript will need to be handled by an associate editor from the board. In such cases, an invitation will be sent to the board, so that the most appropriate, available Editor may be found.

As the specialty chief editor, you may step in anytime. – final say regarding scope and quality lies with you. Even though manuscripts may be a part of a RT, they still need to conform to the scope and standards of the journal.

3 OUR UNIQUE PEER REVIEW

The Frontiers collaborative review process has been designed to validate high-quality scholarly contributions by fostering objectivity, rigor, and iterative collaboration. Associate editors and reviewers are acknowledged publicly on all published articles.

As shown below the review process is composed of seven stages: Initial Validation, Editorial Assignment, Independent Review, Interactive Review, Review Finalized, Final Validation and Final Decision.



While you may step in at any stage of the review process, there are several cases in particular in which the Editorial Office will contact you for assistance or input, so as to facilitate the process. These include, but are not limited to:

- The associate editor assignment - should no associate editor accept to take on a specific manuscript within a reasonable time frame or should a conflict of interest be identified between the authors and handling editor. In such cases, please also ensure that the manuscript presents valid and rigorous work, and fits within the scope of the specialty
- Delays in the review process, should the handling editor become unresponsive
- Potentially problematic manuscripts, as flagged by the handling editor and/or Editorial Office
- Recommendations for rejection.
- Post publication concerns that are brought to the Editorial Office's attention (for example; suspected image manipulation, data falsification, plagiarism).
- Approving institutional contact in cases of author misconduct
- Approving post publication notices such as retractions and expressions of concern.

3.1 SUBMISSION

When submitting a manuscript, authors are requested to select between 1-3 associate editors from the board whom they believe to be both knowledgeable and unbiased in editing their manuscript. If available, these suggested editors will be automatically invited to handle the review process.

3.2 INITIAL VALIDATION

To support you in ensuring the quality of the manuscripts, all submissions undergo standard initial quality checks by the Research Integrity team. All submissions are pre-screened for:

- Textual overlap with and similarity to published material
- Potential image or data manipulation
- Language quality
- Adherence to editorial policies
- Adherence to ethical standards
- Potential conflicts of interest

When such issues are encountered, authors are usually contacted, and they work with the Research Integrity team to resolve the flags. Sometimes, the Research Integrity team may seek the advice of the specialty chief editor whilst performing quality checks. For example, advice may be sought regarding scope or resubmissions of previously rejected manuscripts.

Once all issues are resolved, the peer review process will be initiated. As the specialty chief editor, you will be notified by email of submissions made to your specialty that has passed our initial quality checks.

For more information on the Frontiers Research Integrity policies and the activities of our Research Integrity team visit <https://www.frontiersin.org/about/author-guidelines> and watch our webinar on [youtube](#) or [bilibili](#).

3.3 ASSOCIATE EDITOR ASSIGNMENT

Following initiation of peer review, manuscripts are sent to a relevant associate editor on the board or directly assigned to a topic editor if within a research topic.

Should the preferred associate editor decline the assignment or fail to reply promptly, an invitation will be sent to the rest of the associate editors on board, so that the most appropriate, available editor may be found.

Once an associate editor accepts an assignment, they will be given 7 days to look over the manuscript and ensure that:

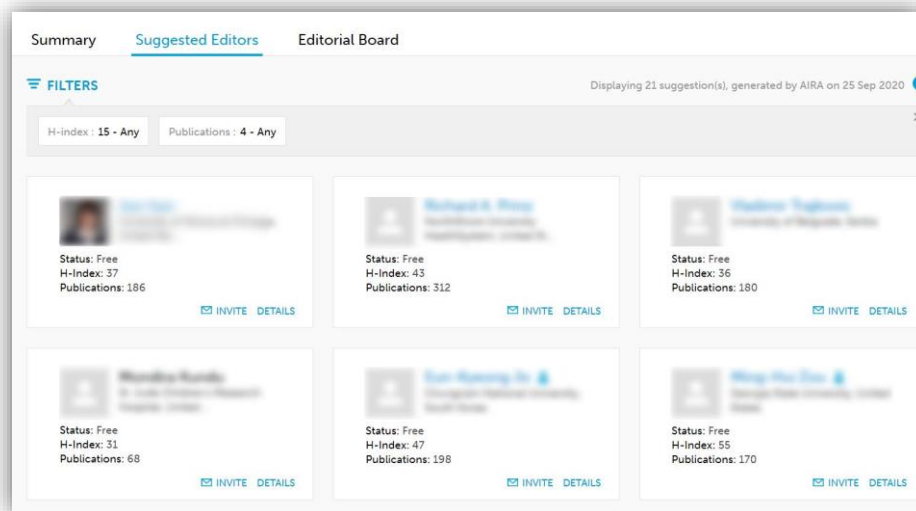
- They do not have any conflict of interest with the authors or the submitted research (see our Review guidelines for more details: <https://www.frontiersin.org/about/review-system>)
- The manuscript fits within the scope of the specialty
- The authors have chosen the correct article type

The handling associate editor will also be asked to validate the quality of the research in the manuscript and determine whether it should be sent for review or recommended for rejection.

When a manuscript is recommended for rejection, as specialty chief editor, you make the final decision on the manuscript. When doing so, please bear in mind that, at Frontiers, it is the validity and rigor of the research that should be evaluated, not its potential impact. Before reviewers are invited, rejection is only justified if the manuscript is poorly written (at a standard that will severely impact the ability of the reviewers to assess it), if it contains significant objective errors, or if the standards of research quality or ethics are insufficient. Please find more information here: <https://www.frontiersin.org/about/review-system>

3.3.1 One-off external Editor assignment







If after significant efforts, a handling editor cannot be found within the Editorial Board, appropriate external editors can be invited to handle such manuscripts. As specialty chief Editor, you can invite external editors by using the Suggested Editors subtab (under the Manage Editors tab) in the Review Forum. Candidates are listed based on the confirmed publications and their relevancy to the manuscript.

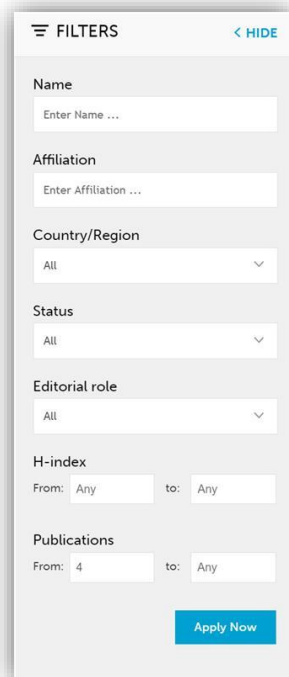


Summary **Suggested Editors** Editorial Board

FILTERS Displaying 21 suggestion(s), generated by AIRA on 25 Sep 2020

H-index: 15 - Any Publications: 4 - Any

 Status: Free H-Index: 37 Publications: 186 INVITE DETAILS	 Status: Free H-Index: 43 Publications: 312 INVITE DETAILS	 Status: Free H-Index: 36 Publications: 180 INVITE DETAILS
 Status: Free H-Index: 31 Publications: 68 INVITE DETAILS	 Status: Free H-Index: 47 Publications: 198 INVITE DETAILS	 Status: Free H-Index: 55 Publications: 170 INVITE DETAILS



FILTERS [HIDE](#)

Name
Enter Name ...

Affiliation
Enter Affiliation ...

Country/Region
All

Status
All

Editorial role
All

H-index
From: Any to: Any

Publications
From: 4 to: Any

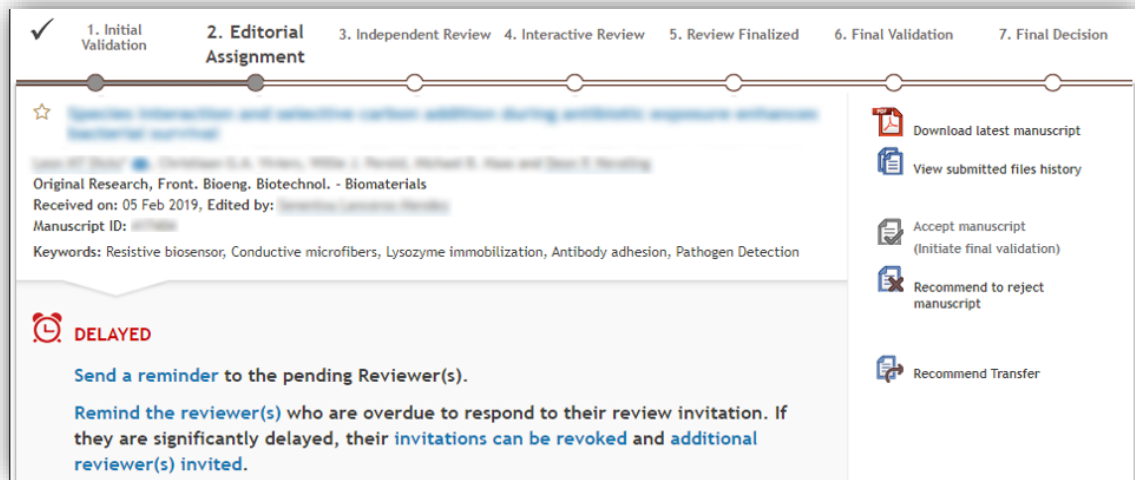
[Apply Now](#)

It is possible to filter candidates based on their h-index and the number of publications, among other criteria.

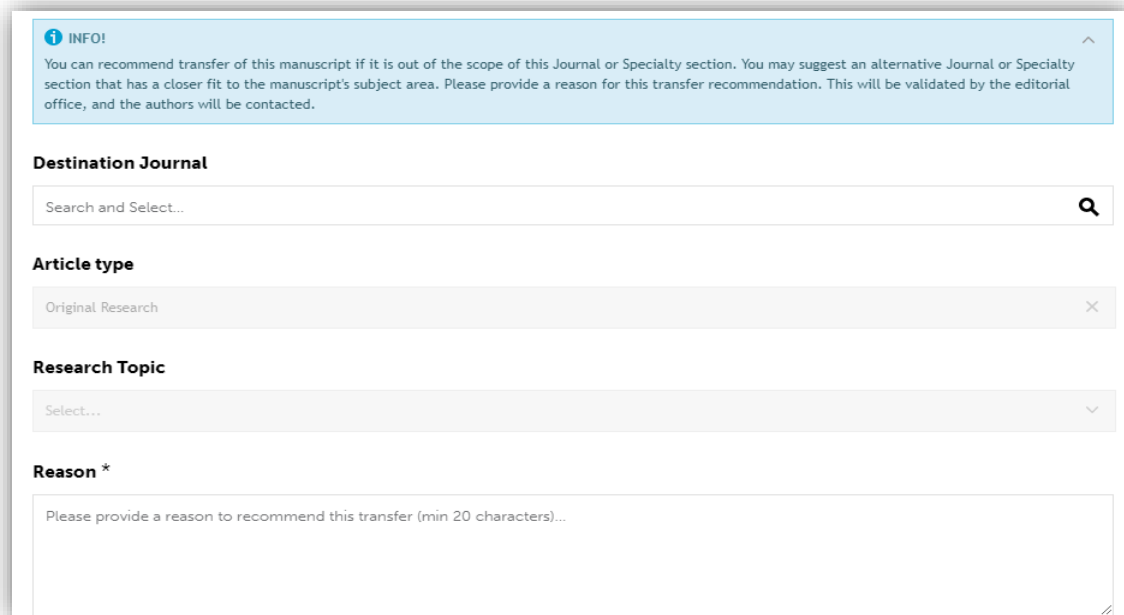
This will also be utilized by the Review Operations team, without further involvement by the Specialty Chief Editors for their individual approval in each case. External editors will be selected based on the specialty section criteria for the associate editor role, to ensure quality and expertise relevance.

3.3.2 Out of scope submissions

Should you receive a manuscript for assessment that you deem as out of scope, please do not reject the manuscript. Instead, let the Editorial Office know by recommending the manuscript for transfer by clicking “Recommend Transfer”.



You will be able to provide a reason for suggesting the transfer (mandatory) as well as suggest an alternative journal and/or section (optional).



Once a suggestion is provided, no further action is to be required from your side. The Editorial Office will follow up with the authors to complete the needed transfer.

3.4 INITIAL ASSESSMENT BY THE HANDLING EDITOR

Once the editor has accepted the assignment, it is subjected to an initial assessment- an editor may either decide to send the manuscript out for review or recommend it for immediate rejection to the specialty chief editor. Manuscripts may only be rejected without peer-review for the following reasons:

- An objective error (i.e. An error that is generally recognized by the community)
- Language errors that render the research incomprehensible
- Substantially below standard research quality
- Lack of appropriate ethical considerations and/or non-compliance with ethical standards

Should the manuscript be suitable for review, the handling editor will be asked to secure reviewers (minimum of 2 for the full-length article types, but they may of course assign more), either selected from the editorial board or invited externally among experts in the field. If reviewers have not been assigned within 7 days, invitations will be sent to the most relevant review editors from the editorial board. The following sections will explain step by step how to proceed in the next stages of the peer-review process once you get invited to review a manuscript.

3.4.1 Out of scope submissions

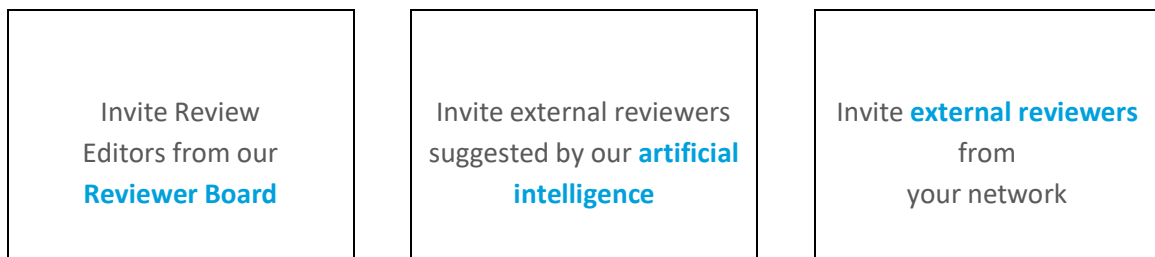
Should an associate editor or topic editor receive a manuscript for assessment that they deem as out of scope for the section or their Research Topic, they will be able to let the Editorial Office know by recommending the manuscript for transfer as described in section 3.3.2.

3.5 REVIEWER ASSIGNMENT

If no issues are identified in the initial assessment of the manuscript, the handling editor will be asked to invite reviewers within 7 days of accepting to handle the manuscript. When inviting reviewers they should take into consideration the following:

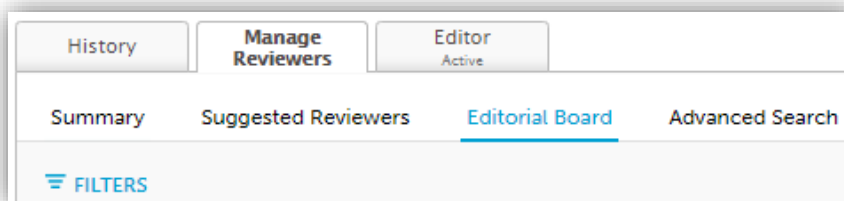
- They should hold a PhD with post-doctoral experience or have several years of professional or academic experience
- Diver in age, gender, and geographic location
- Their affiliation should be recognized

Frontiers offers different resources to find suitable experts to review manuscripts.



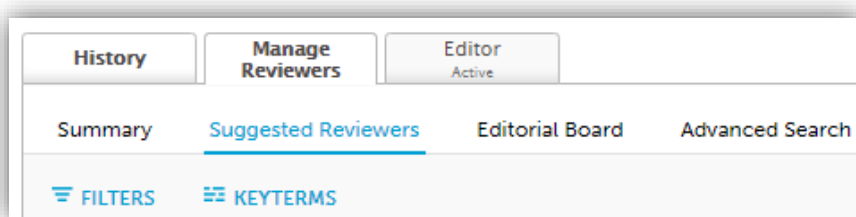
3.5.1 Review editors from our Editorial Board

- Select the “Manage Reviewers” tab
- Select Editorial Board
- Select Filters to search through the review editors by name, institution, keyword etc.



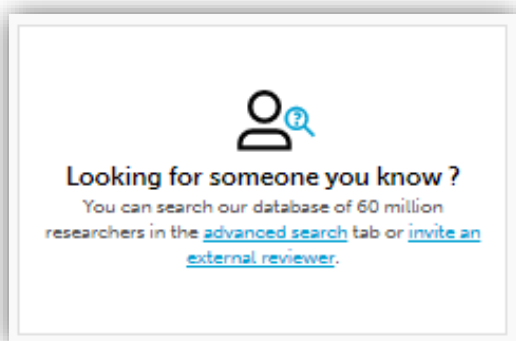
3.5.2 Suggested external reviewers

- Select the “Manage Reviewers” tab
- Select “Suggested Reviewer” sub-tab
- Please check the “Keyterms” and adapt them as you wish to ensure the suggested reviewers have the appropriate experience
- Select “Filters” to search through the Reviewers by name, institution, keyword etc.



3.5.3 External reviewers from your personal network

- Select the “Manage Reviewers” tab
- Select “Invite an external reviewer”
- Fill out the relevant information



3.6 INDEPENDENT REVIEW

During the Independent Review phase, the reviewers assess the manuscript according to a review questionnaire. Once reviewers are assigned, they are expected to fill out this review questionnaire within 10 days. The review questionnaires vary depending on the article type and have been designed to facilitate the work of the reviewers as well as to focus on objective issues and the validity of the manuscript.

Reviewers can, of course, request an extension. If they do so, please let the Editorial Office know so that they can update the system accordingly. Note that reviewers can grant themselves a one-off extension of 5 days without contacting the Editorial Office.

At this stage, reviewers conduct their review independently and do not have access to any comments made by the other parties. The status of each review report is shown in the “Manage Reviewers” tab, where it is also possible to send reminders to delayed reviewers. A reviewer’s submitted report is stored in their dedicated tab.

Upon completion of their review report, the reviewer will submit a recommendation to the editor to assist in guiding your decision.

Recommendations to the editor:

- Minor revisions - Manuscript can be accepted
- Revision is required
- Substantial revision is required

Should the reviewer indicate that the manuscript can be accepted, they can endorse the article in the Independent Review stage and finalize their review. If you would like the authors to respond directly to the reviewer, you can reactivate the reviewer’s tab, once the article enters the Interactive Review or Review Finalized stage. This will require the reviewer to then reconfirm their decision on the manuscript.

If you receive the required number of reviewers endorsing the manuscript in the Independent Stage, the article will directly move to the Review Finalized stage for your final decision.

The handling editor will be notified once an independent review report has been submitted. Reviewers are expected to provide rigorous and in-depth reports. The next step is for the handling editor to assess their quality, ensure they are comprehensive and thorough and carry out an appropriate action.

- ✓ Is the reviewer’s feedback objective and constructive?
- ✓ Is the reviewer’s feedback appropriate, sufficiently rigorous, comprehensive and in scope?
- ✓ Is the reviewer’s identifying fundamental flaws that cannot be addressed via revisions?

Based on the potential scenario, here are the handling editor's options

The reviewer recommends revisions to the authors

The manuscript has potential for publication:

Activate the Interactive Review Forum and select the necessary level of revisions: **Minor**, **Moderate**, or **Substantial**

Recommend rejection:

Activate the Interactive Review Forum by activating the review forum with **Major concerns**

Invite more reviewers to take a more informed decision

The reviewer withdrew recommending rejection

Recommend rejection:

Activate the Interactive Review Forum by activating the review forum with **Major concerns**

Invite more reviewers to take a more informed decision

You consider the review report too brief/not sufficiently rigorous/inappropriate/out of scope and you cannot make an informed decision

Contact the reviewer via the Review Forum to ask for additional feedback

Consider **revoking the reviewer and invite a further reviewer**

Inform the Editorial Office

3.6.1 Activating the Interactive Review Forum

If the handling editor is satisfied that at least two review reports are complete and adhere to the criteria above, they may grant authors access to the review reports by clicking “activate the interactive review”. They will be prompted to select the appropriate level of revisions (minor, moderate or substantial) and enter a personal message, that will accompany the automatically generated message detailing the necessary action.

Please note that it is possible to activate the Interactive Review forum with only one Review Report submitted HOWEVER the handling editor will need a minimum of two Reviewers' endorsement to accept the manuscript for publication. These review reports will allow them to make an informed decision on the manuscripts.

Should the completed review report endorse the manuscript as is a second review report will be required to move forward.

3.6.2 Recommending rejection specifically during the independent review

If the handling editor would like to recommend rejection during the independent review, follow these steps:

1. If they have not already done so, provide feedback to the authors in the Editor tab regarding your decision to recommend rejection
2. Click on “Recommend to reject manuscript” in the review forum in the right-hand column.
3. The authors will be informed of the recommendation and any active reviewers will be made inactive on the assignment. The authors will then have 7 days to submit a rebuttal and/or upload a revised manuscript. During this time, any outstanding reviewer invitations will also be revoked, however they can be re-invited if a rebuttal is successful
4. If the authors respond, please take one of the following actions:
 - Re-invite the previous reviewers or new reviewers if you are convinced by the author's rebuttal and think the manuscript can remain in review.
 - Confirm your recommendation for rejection by clicking on “Recommend to reject manuscript”. Note that the previous recommendation for rejection comments will be preserved in the Editor tab.
5. If, after 7 days, the authors do not respond, the recommendation for rejection will be sent directly to you as the specialty chief editor to confirm rejection.

3.6.3 Invite more reviewers

If the handling editor wishes to invite more reviewers, please refer to the [section 3.5](#) (“Inviting Reviewers”) of these guidelines.

3.6.4 Contacting the reviewers or the editorial office

Should you need to contact the handling editor or any of the participants of the review process, two channels exist:

- During the independent review: please send a message to either the authors or a reviewer via the review forum with the Editorial Office in copy; to do so, please click on the little blue envelope next to the author’s name. You will then be able to select and change the recipient.
- At the point of making the review reports available – you can leave comments for the authors in the Editor tab. The reviewers will also be able to see these comments; accordingly, please refrain from posting any identifying or sensitive information in this tab. Please note that the Editorial Office will not be notified about comments posted by the handling editor. If you would like to get in touch with the Editorial Office, please proceed to do so via email.

3.6.5 Revoke a reviewer

The handling editor can directly revoke a reviewer by clicking on the red cross next to their name, in the “manage reviewers ‘tab”. They may add a personal note explaining why this action had to be taken. Please note that if the minimum number of active reviewers is not met and they wish to continue with the review process, they will be required to secure a replacement reviewer.

3.7 INTERACTIVE REVIEW

Once the handling editor has activated the interactive review forum, they, the authors and the reviewers will be able to see all the comments in each Reviewer's and Editor's tabs. At this stage, authors are prompted to respond to reviewers' comments in the Review Forum and to upload a revised version of their manuscript.

If the authors require an extension for their resubmission, they may grant themselves a single 10-day extension via the review forum; more significant extensions must be approved by the handling editor, and the Editorial Office will update the review forum accordingly. Please note that our system automatically notifies participants when a new comment or revised manuscript is submitted.

Both you and the handling editor can add comments in the interactive review forum at any time.

- Click on the "Add Comment" icon below the relevant comment that has been posted in the reviewer's tab
- Enter comments in the Editor tab

Once you have entered your comments, please ensure that you click "Submit all Comments".

During the interactive review stage, we ask you to ensure that the dialogue between the reviewers and the authors is constructive, professional and timely. To ensure this, please pay attention to the following:

Are the reviewers providing an expert opinion and critical evaluation?

- ✓ Have there been multiple rounds of revisions, beyond what is necessary or feasible?
- ✓ Should a dispute arise at this stage, you will need to act as a mediator or invite new reviewers for additional opinions.

During the interactive review stage reviewers can either:

- Endorse – if they are satisfied with the changes made and have no further requests and you will be notified of this via email.
- Recommend rejection – if they disagree with the manuscript's contents or consider that it cannot be further improved.
- Withdraw – if they are no longer available, the manuscript develops beyond their expertise or personal circumstances prevent them from continuing with the review. If a reviewer withdraws or recommends rejection, they become inactive and you will be notified.

The reasons for a reviewer's recommendation or withdrawal are accessible in the review forum in their tab and will be visible at the top of the report in red font. These reasons are only visible to you and the handling editor – the authors or reviewers will not have access to these. This is also the case if a reviewer withdraws or recommends rejection without submitting a report. If appropriate, the handling editor may forward these comments to the authors, with due care for preserving the anonymity of the reviewer. These reviewers will remain anonymous regardless of the final decision for the manuscript.

Please note that even if two reviewers endorse, the handling editor will not be able to provisionally accept the manuscript for publication if any other appointed reviewer is still due to act.

If a reviewer withdraws or recommends rejection the handling editor may consider one of the following actions:

- Invite additional reviewers if they either do not agree with the recommendation or require further input
- Recommend rejection based on the reviewer's comments.

3.8 REVIEW FINALIZED

Once all reviewers have finalized their review (through two endorsements), the handling editor will be asked to take the final decision on the manuscript.

The handling editor should read the final version of the manuscript, and consider all reviewer comments and author responses, whilst applying your own judgement and expertise. Please consider the following points:

- ✓ Are the reviews appropriate and of high quality?
- ✓ Has the final manuscript been submitted?
- ✓ Does the manuscript propose a suitable research question and hypothesis, supported by relevant theory?
- ✓ Do the authors apply a correct and transparent methodology?
- ✓ Are the study, design and materials clearly laid out?
- ✓ Is the language and presentation clear and adequate?
- ✓ Are figures and tables in line with scientific norms and standards?
- ✓ Do the authors follow Frontiers' Author Guidelines on editorial and ethical policies?
- ✓ Is the manuscript grounded in existing literature through sufficient referencing and does it offer an appropriate coverage of the relevant literature?

All reviewers have endorsed the manuscript, here are the handling editor's options

Ready for publication:
Provisionally accept
the manuscript

Insufficient assessments:
Post feedback in
the Editors tab, or Invite
more reviewers to take
a more informed decision

Premature endorsement:
Reactivate reviewer's
review

Remaining concerns:
Request further revisions
by **posting in the Editor**
tab any unaddressed
issues raised by
withdrawn reviewers or
your own additional
comments

Remaining concerns:
If the authors are
unwilling or unable to
address the remaining
concerns, **recommend**
rejection of the
manuscript

3.8.1 Provisionally accept the manuscript

Should the handling editor find the manuscript suitable for publication, they can proceed with acceptance. They can do so by clicking "Accept manuscript" icon on the right-hand side in the forum.



Accept manuscript
(Initiate final validation)

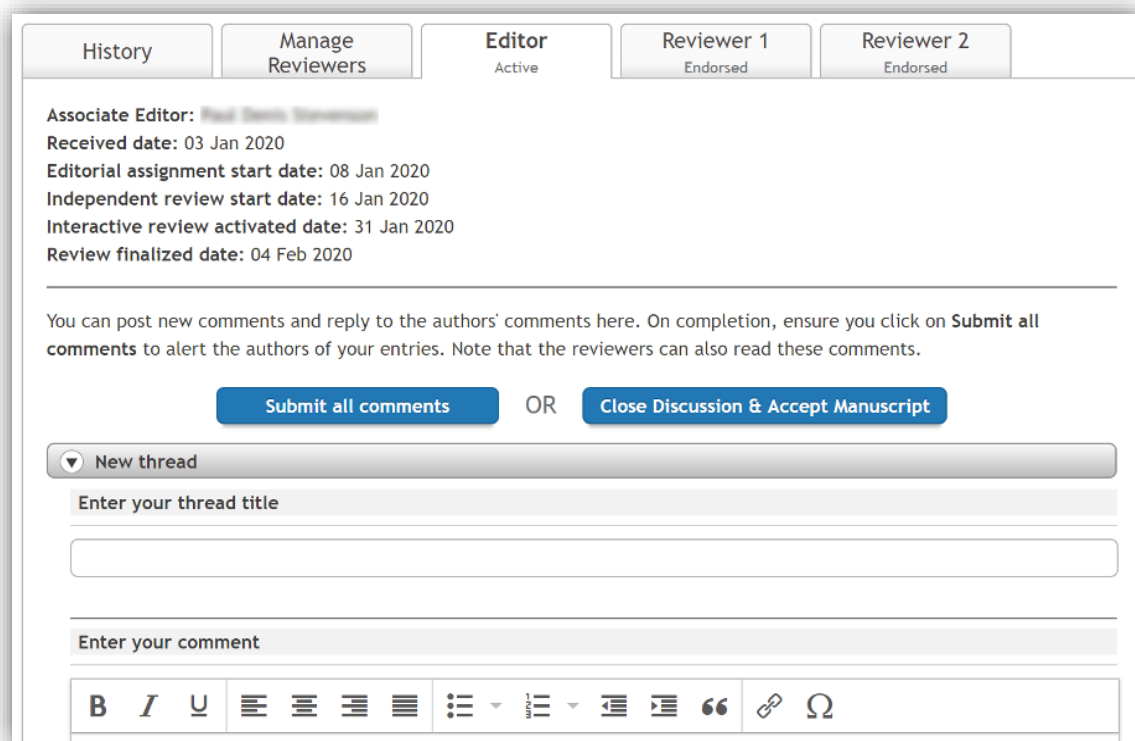
3.8.2 Re-activate a reviewer's review

Should a reviewer endorse publication prematurely and the handling editor believe there are outstanding issues, they may reactivate their review by clicking on the “Re-activate review” icon next to the reviewer’s name.

We encourage them to ensure that the reviewers have read the revised version and are happy with it before they endorse the publication of the manuscript.

3.8.3 Post comments in the Editor tab

If there are pending comments in the manuscript that were not addressed, the handling editor can request the final changes in the Editor tab before accepting the final version of the manuscript.



The screenshot shows the 'Editor' tab of the Frontiers submission interface. At the top, there are tabs for 'History', 'Manage Reviewers', 'Editor' (Active), 'Reviewer 1' (Endorsed), and 'Reviewer 2' (Endorsed). Below the tabs, the 'Associate Editor' is listed as 'Paul Davis, Neuroscience'. A timeline of dates is provided: 'Received date: 03 Jan 2020', 'Editorial assignment start date: 08 Jan 2020', 'Independent review start date: 16 Jan 2020', 'Interactive review activated date: 31 Jan 2020', and 'Review finalized date: 04 Feb 2020'. A message states: 'You can post new comments and reply to the authors' comments here. On completion, ensure you click on **Submit all comments** to alert the authors of your entries. Note that the reviewers can also read these comments.' Below this message are two buttons: 'Submit all comments' and 'Close Discussion & Accept Manuscript', separated by 'OR'. A 'New thread' button is also present. Below the buttons is a text input field for 'Enter your thread title'. Below that is a larger text input field for 'Enter your comment'. At the bottom, there is a rich text editor toolbar with icons for bold (B), italic (I), underline (U), bulleted list, numbered list, decrease indent, increase indent, link, unlink, and a link icon.

3.9 FINAL VALIDATION

The final validation stage includes final quality checks by the Editorial Office, to ensure that the manuscript is ready to enter production and starts immediately upon selection of the “Accept manuscript” option. The Editorial Office will contact you in the following days to confirm that production has been initiated, or if there are any outstanding concerns.