

Associate editor guidelines

Welcome to Frontiers' community of editors.

The following guidelines provide you with practical information about your role as an associate 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: November 2024



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1 ASSOCIATE EDITORS

The primary role of associate editors is to oversee and manage the peer-review process of submitted manuscripts.

Associate editors are also expected to contribute to the strategic direction of the section by helping to expand the editorial reviewer board and co-editing or nominating a high-profile Research Topic around an influential scientific theme.

When joining our community of associate editors, please familiarize yourself with these guidelines and the Frontiers tools mentioned below. .

1.1 YOUR FRONTIERS TOOLS

1.1.1 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.



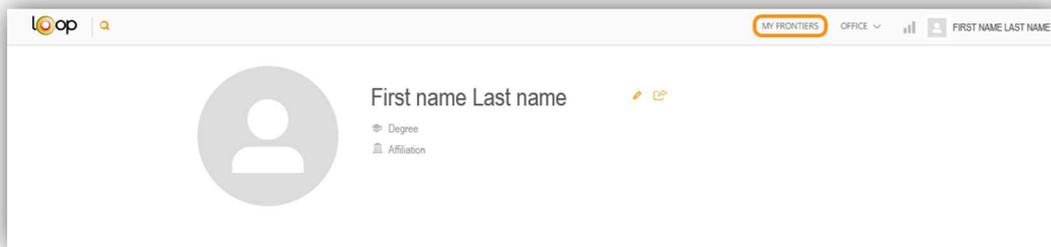
We identified two key profile features that, when added, result in 4x more profile views:

- 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.

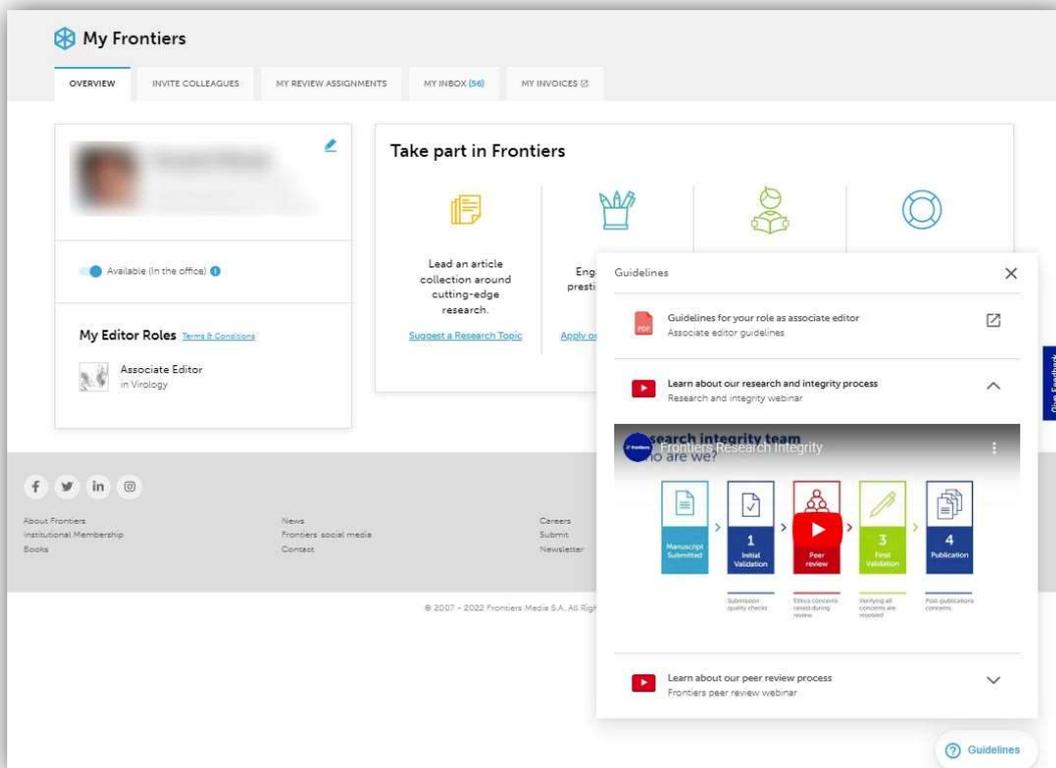
1.1.2 My Frontiers

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 My Frontiers, you will have different tabs and boxes giving you an overview of your submissions, assignments, and achievements.

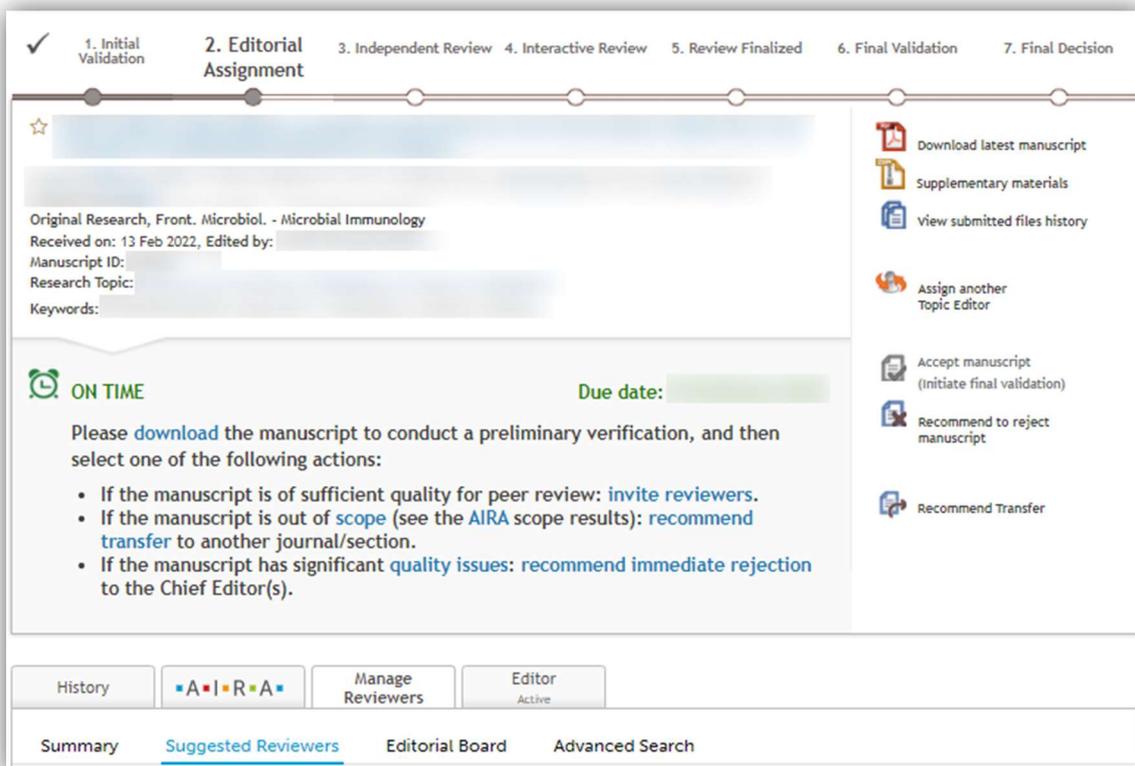
Please watch the video linked in the platform to get a clear view of your role in peer review at Frontiers.



Please note that the video is not available in China. For those editors based in China, please request a .zip file from the Peer review team.

1.1.3 Review forum

The Review Forum is a tool developed in-house to unite authors, reviewers and the handling editor – and the specialty chief editor if necessary – 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 '2. Editorial Assignment' stage of the review process. At the top, a progress bar shows seven steps: 1. Initial Validation (checked), 2. Editorial Assignment (current), 3. Independent Review, 4. Interactive Review, 5. Review Finalized, 6. Final Validation, and 7. Final Decision.

The main content area includes a star icon, a blurred title, and the following text:

- Original Research, *Front. Microbiol.* - Microbial Immunology
- Received on: 13 Feb 2022, Edited by: [blurred]
- Manuscript ID: [blurred]
- Research Topic: [blurred]
- Keywords: [blurred]

A green clock icon indicates the manuscript is 'ON TIME'. A 'Due date:' field is present with a blurred date. Below this, instructions state: '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 vertical menu of actions is available:

- 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', 'A | R | A' (highlighted), 'Manage Reviewers', and 'Editor Active'. Below these are links for 'Summary', 'Suggested Reviewers' (underlined), 'Editorial Board', and 'Advanced Search'.

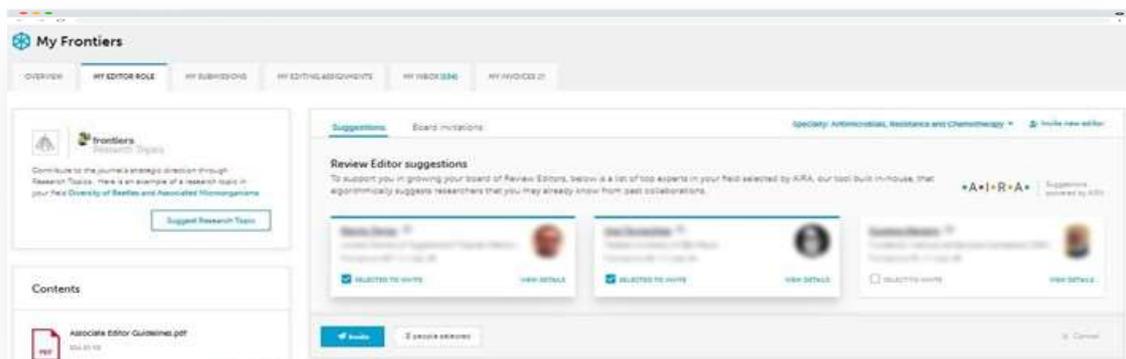
1.2 INVITE REVIEW EDITORS

Review editors form an essential part of our editorial board and serve as a trusted network of experts invited by our board members and editorial teams.

Review editors are established researchers or experts in the field – e.g. readers, lecturers, principal investigators, assistant professors (not necessarily with tenure), or more senior. When inviting potential review editors, aim for diversity in gender balance; geographical spread; and foci of research, within the scope of the specialty.

How to invite review editors?

1. Login to your Frontiers account
2. Enter *My Frontiers* > *My Editor Role*
3. Browse the suggested list of experts in your field to invite
4. Select the contacts you wish to invite and click *Invite*



An official invitation email (with links for the invitee to accept or decline) will be automatically generated, to which you are welcome to contribute a personal message. Invitees who accept will be prompted to create a profile on Loop, after which they will immediately be listed on the editorial board. Please note, to ensure all necessary details are conveyed to those invited, the official invitation text itself cannot be edited. You can see the status of invitations in My Frontiers > My Editor Role.

You can also send the Peer review team a list of peers whom you would like to invite as review editors, and we can contact them on your behalf.

1.3 CO-LEAD A RESEARCH TOPIC

Associate editors contribute to the development of the section by co-leading a research topics - collections of peer-reviewed articles around an influential research theme of their choice. Defined, managed, and led by leading researchers like yourself, such collections unite international experts around emerging topic areas, stimulating collaboration and accelerating research. By inviting top authors to submit to your topic(s) and overseeing the peer-review process of contributing manuscripts, you will build strong foundations for growth and set the high-quality standards expected for the section.

What makes Research Topics unique?

- Research Topic projects are led by you, the researchers: once a topical, appropriate theme is agreed with the journal team, the leading editors determine the scope of their own article collection, and identify key experts as potential contributing authors. This gives you a great opportunity to collaborate with esteemed colleagues from around the world, and/or grow your network, to create a stellar collection of research in your area of expertise.
- With a unique homepage for each project, the collections are fully available online
- Once completed, all articles are downloadable as a free open eBook (see [here](#) for an example), ensuring further dissemination and promotion of your project.
- Any article type can be submitted e.g. Original Research, Review etc.
- Frontiers' Open Science Platform makes managing your collection easy, and increases discoverability, readership and citations.

1.4 CONTACT YOUR EDITORIAL OFFICE

Should you have questions regarding any of the following please see the contact guide below to direct your query to the appropriate party:

Potential conflict of interest, review process, technical platform queries	Peer review team [journal name]. editorial.office@frontiersin.org e.g., microbiology.editorial.office@frontiersin.org
Technical/software issues	support@frontiersin.org
Details of your editorial role, strategic development, general queries	[journal name]. @frontiersin.org e.g., microbiology@frontiersin.org

2 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.

The review process is composed of seven stages: Initial Validation, Editorial Assignment, Independent Review, Interactive Review, Review Finalized, Final Validation and Final Decision. Review editors join the process at the stage of the Independent Review and follow discussions with authors through Interactive Review until they are ready to make their final decision.



2.1 INITIAL VALIDATION

To support you in ensuring the quality of the manuscripts, all submissions undergo standard initial quality checks for:

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

If issues are identified in manuscripts, you are handling, the Research Integrity team will notify you and the authors as part of our standard procedure. No action is required from you unless specifically requested.

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](#).

2.2 ASSOCIATE EDITOR ASSIGNMENT

When submitting a manuscript, authors may select an associate editor from the board whom they believe to be well-suited to edit their manuscript. This “preferred editor” will be invited to handle the peer-review process. Should the preferred editor decline the assignment or not reply after a few days, invitations will be sent to other available associate editors based on their relevant expertise, as determined by our global aggregated database.

The order in which editors are invited is determined by an algorithm that identifies and matches key terms in the current manuscript with text in the editor’s past publications.

When you receive an invitation to edit, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I have the right expertise?
- Can I be objective in my evaluation of the manuscript? (Please consider potential conflicts of interest, see below.)
- Do I have the time to handle the manuscript?

If you are unable to answer yes to all the above questions, please click on the Decline link in the invitation email immediately to avoid receiving reminders and delaying the process for the authors. If your answer is yes to all the above, then you can proceed with accepting the invitation.

2.2.1 Declare potential conflicts of interest

After clicking on the Accept link in the invitation email you will be prompted to answer a list of questions regarding potential conflicts of interest (COI) and will be unable to accept the assignment if one or more COIs apply. Ensure that you do not have a COI with either the authors or the submitted research.

You may always refer to the conflict-of-Interest section of our online [Policies and Publication Ethics policies](#) for a list of potential COIs.

If you think that you are qualified to edit the manuscript but cannot answer yes to all of the above questions, then contact the Peer review team. Some minor COIs are permissible but require a public statement on the published manuscript that must be arranged manually.

2.3 YOUR INITIAL ASSESSMENT

Once you have accepted the assignment, please read through the manuscript and determine whether it should be sent for review or recommended for rejection to the specialty chief editor. Whilst doing so, please consider [our acceptance and rejection criteria](#):

- Does the manuscript have a valid research question and apply correct and transparent methodology?
- Does the research adhere to Frontiers author guidelines, ethical policies and research quality in the field?
- Does the manuscript cover the relevant literature and draw strong conclusions supported by the data presented?

2.3.1 Your initial options

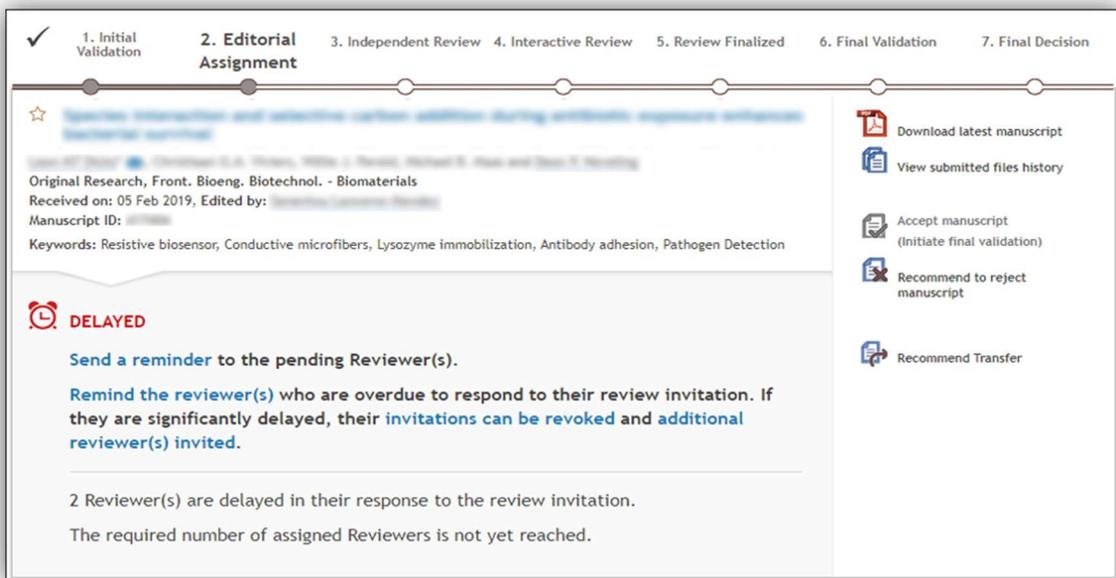
Assess the manuscript within 5 days and start the review process by inviting reviewers	Assess the manuscript within 5 days and recommend it for rejection to the chief editor if our rejection criteria apply	Contact our Peer Review team and ask for more time to assess the manuscript
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If you did not recommend the manuscript for rejection within 5 days and did not contact our Review Operations team to ask for more time to assess the manuscript, **additional automated review invitations will be sent out to the most suitable review editors** from our reviewer board.

What to do if...

a. You deem a manuscript out of scope

If you believe a manuscript is not within scope of the section it was submitted to, please let the Peer Review team know by recommending the manuscript for transfer by clicking "Recommend Transfer" button on the right-hand side of the page.



The screenshot displays the Frontiers manuscript review interface. At the top, a progress bar shows seven stages: 1. Initial Validation (checked), 2. Editorial Assignment (current stage), 3. Independent Review, 4. Interactive Review, 5. Review Finalized, 6. Final Validation, and 7. Final Decision. Below the progress bar, the manuscript title is partially visible: "Specific interactions and selective carbon addition during antibiotic exposure enhance...". The authors listed are "Liang et al." and the journal is "Original Research, Front. Bioeng. Biotechnol. - Biomaterials". The manuscript was received on 05 Feb 2019 and edited by "Frontiers Editorial Board". The manuscript ID is partially visible. The keywords are: Resistive biosensor, Conductive microfibers, Lysozyme immobilization, Antibody adhesion, Pathogen Detection. On the right side, there are five action buttons: "Download latest manuscript", "View submitted files history", "Accept manuscript (Initiate final validation)", "Recommend to reject manuscript", and "Recommend Transfer". The main content area shows a "DELATED" status with a clock icon. Below this, there is a section titled "Send a reminder to the pending Reviewer(s)." with a sub-section "Remind the reviewer(s) who are overdue to respond to their review invitation. If they are significantly delayed, their invitations can be revoked and additional reviewer(s) invited." Below this, it states "2 Reviewer(s) are delayed in their response to the review invitation." and "The required number of assigned Reviewers is not yet reached."

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

INFO!
You can recommend transfer of this manuscript if it is out of the scope of this Journal or Specialty section. You may suggest an alternative Journal or Specialty section that has a closer fit to the manuscript's subject area. Please provide a reason for this transfer recommendation. This will be validated by the editorial office, and the authors will be contacted.

Destination Journal

Article type

Original Research

Research Topic

Select...

Reason *

Please provide a reason to recommend this transfer (min 20 characters)...

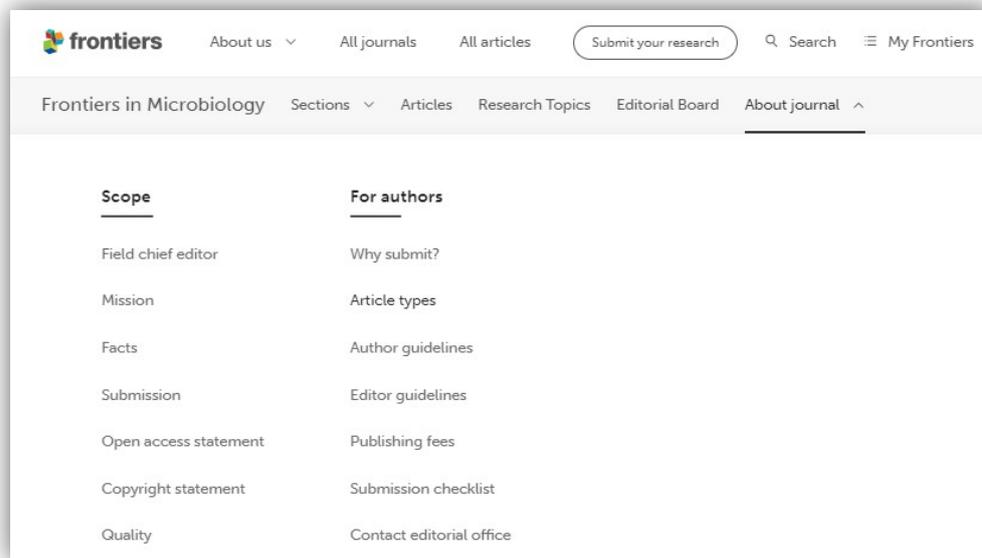
Once a suggestion is provided, no further action is to be required from your side. The Peer Review team will follow up with the authors to complete the necessary transfer.

b. You believe a manuscript was submitted as the wrong article type

If you believe an unsuitable article type was selected at submission, please do not recommend the manuscript for rejection.

Different journals may accept different article types. You can find a list of all our journals in the detailed [journal list page](#).

Click on the journal title that is relevant to you and navigate to "Article types" under "For authors" via the "About journal" drop-down menu.



If you believe a better article type is available, please contact the Review Operations team who will be able to handle changing the article type.

c. You have concerns about the manuscript not meeting our editorial policies

If you believe the manuscript might be in breach of our author guidelines or editorial policies, please do not recommend the manuscript for rejection. Instead, get in touch with the Research Integrity team who will be able to provide advice on the case.

If you are unable to fulfil your role as the associate editor for your manuscripts in the review process, please note that you can withdraw from your assignment at any stage of the process. Ideally you would handle a manuscript from submission to decision, but we appreciate that schedules can change unexpectedly.

You can complete this action by selecting the corresponding button "Withdraw from assignment" on the right-hand side of the review forum. You will have the option to suggest an alternative editor who might be suitable to take over this assignment.

✓ 1. Initial Validation 2. Editorial Assignment 3. Independent Review 4. Interactive Review 5. Review Finalized 6. Final Validation 7. Final Decision

☆ **Manuscript title will be displayed here**

*Author 1**, *Author 2*, *Author 3*, *Author 4* and *Author 5*

Article Type, Frontiers Journal Name – Specialty Section
 Received On: Date Edited by: Editor Name
 Manuscript ID: #####
 Research Topic: [Hyperlink to Your Research Topic](#)
 Keywords: Keyword 1, Keyword 2, Keyword 3, Keyword 4, Keyword 5, ...

 **ON TIME**

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).

 Download latest manuscript
 View submitted files history
 Assign another Topic Editor
 Accept manuscript (Initiate final validation)
 Recommend to reject manuscript
 [Withdraw from assignment](#)
 Initiate Transfer

Withdraw from the editing assignment [X]

Select the reason*

I do not have time right now
 I wish no longer participate in further revisions
 There is a conflict of interest
 Others

Provide the comment

Should you wish to provide us with a suggested editor for this manuscript, please fill the form below

Search for a colleague

[Q]

Full Name Email

 [X]



You are about to withdraw from the review process in which case you will not be able to further access the review forum. Continue?

Cancel **Withdraw**

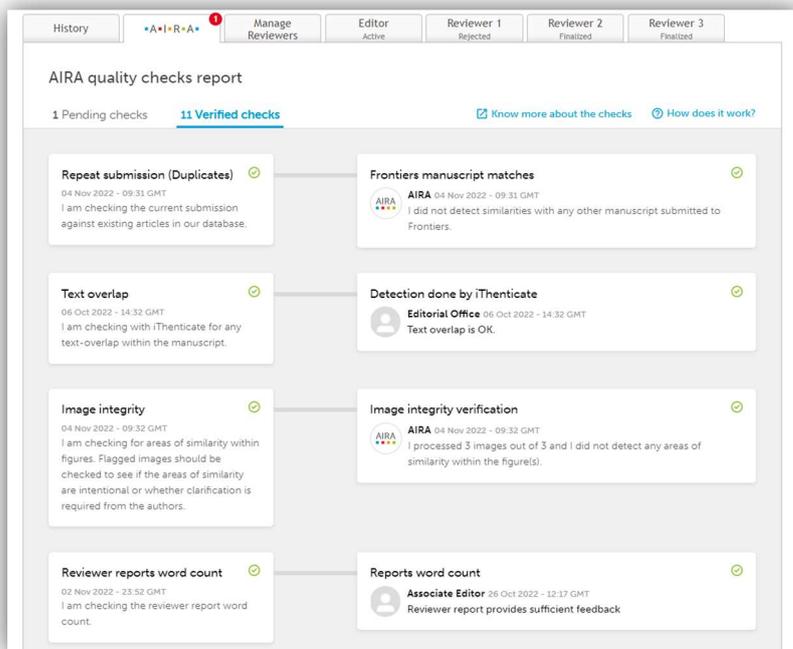
2.4 AIRA – ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE REVIEW ASSISTANT

Frontiers peer review incorporates powerful artificial intelligence (AI) technology to safeguard both manuscript and peer-review quality more efficiently. AIRA assists editors, reviewers, and internal teams by analyzing, interpreting, and communicating the quality of submitted manuscripts.

Its algorithms quickly and accurately evaluate submitted manuscripts against a set of quality measures, including, but not limited to:

- Ethics guidelines
- Inclusion of human images
- Text overlap
- Language quality
- Scope verification
- Duplicate submissions
- Controversial topics
- Commercial conflicts
- Data availability verification

If you identify an issue in the manuscript regarding the quality checks, you can communicate this to the authors and ensure that the concerns will be addressed during review. For major concerns, please contact the Peer Review team.



History | **A** | **R** | **A** | **1** | Manage Reviewers | Editor Active | Reviewer 1 Rejected | Reviewer 2 Finalized | Reviewer 3 Finalized

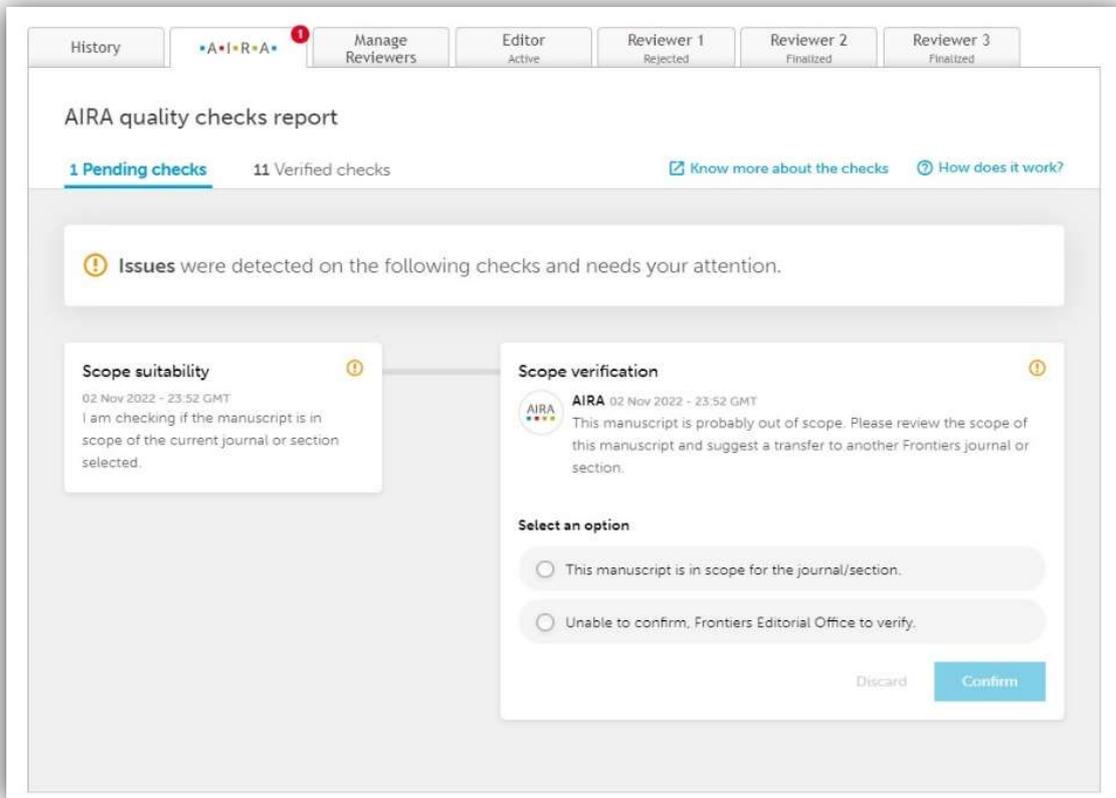
AIRA quality checks report

1 Pending checks | **11 Verified checks** | [Know more about the checks](#) | [How does it work?](#)

- Repeat submission (Duplicates)** ✓
04 Nov 2022 - 09:31 GMT
I am checking the current submission against existing articles in our database.
- Frontiers manuscript matches** ✓
AIRA 04 Nov 2022 - 09:31 GMT
I did not detect similarities with any other manuscript submitted to Frontiers.
- Text overlap** ✓
06 Oct 2022 - 14:32 GMT
I am checking with iThenticate for any text-overlap within the manuscript.
- Detection done by iThenticate** ✓
Editorial Office 06 Oct 2022 - 14:32 GMT
Text overlap is OK.
- Image integrity** ✓
04 Nov 2022 - 09:32 GMT
I am checking for areas of similarity within figures. Flagged images should be checked to see if the areas of similarity are intentional or whether clarification is required from the authors.
- Image integrity verification** ✓
AIRA 04 Nov 2022 - 09:32 GMT
I processed 3 images out of 3 and I did not detect any areas of similarity within the figure(s).
- Reviewer reports word count** ✓
02 Nov 2022 - 23:52 GMT
I am checking the reviewer report word count.
- Reports word count** ✓
Associate Editor 06 Oct 2022 - 12:17 GMT
Reviewer report provides sufficient feedback.

AIRA has several indicators which are interactive for associate editors. Upon logging into the Review Forum, you will be prompted if there any AIRA checks that require your attention on that submission. These indicators are listed below:

- Scope Suitability
- Image Integrity
- Ethics guidelines (Animal and Human studies statement verification, and identifiable images and information)
- Review Report quality (only applicable once a reviewer has submitted their initial report)
- Reviewer Behaviors (only applicable once a reviewer has submitted their initial report)



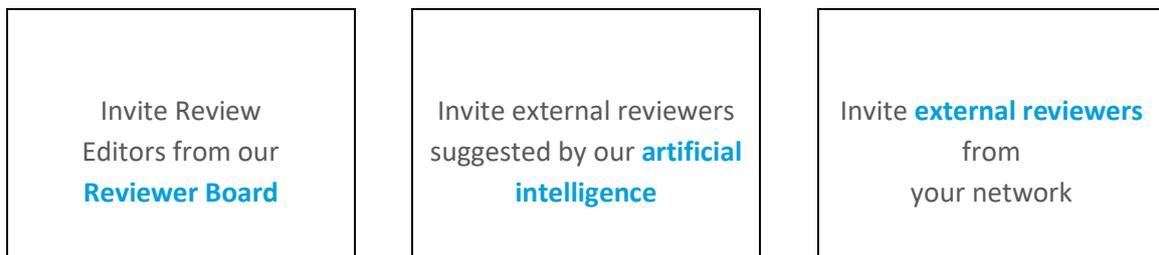
The screenshot shows the AIRA quality checks report interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with tabs for History, Manage Reviewers, Editor Active, Reviewer 1 Rejected, Reviewer 2 Finalized, and Reviewer 3 Finalized. Below the navigation bar, the title "AIRA quality checks report" is displayed. Underneath the title, there are two tabs: "1 Pending checks" (selected) and "11 Verified checks". To the right of the tabs, there are two links: "Know more about the checks" and "How does it work?". A yellow warning icon is followed by the text "Issues were detected on the following checks and needs your attention." Below this, there are two check cards. The first card is titled "Scope suitability" and has a timestamp of "02 Nov 2022 - 23:52 GMT". The text inside the card reads: "I am checking if the manuscript is in scope of the current journal or section selected." The second card is titled "Scope verification" and also has a timestamp of "02 Nov 2022 - 23:52 GMT". It features the AIRA logo and the text: "This manuscript is probably out of scope. Please review the scope of this manuscript and suggest a transfer to another Frontiers journal or section." Below the text, there is a section titled "Select an option" with two radio button options: "This manuscript is in scope for the journal/section." and "Unable to confirm, Frontiers Editorial Office to verify." At the bottom right of the card, there are two buttons: "Discard" and "Confirm".

2.5 INVITING REVIEWERS

If no issues are identified in the initial assessment of the manuscript, you will be asked to invite reviewers within 5 days of accepting to handle the manuscript. When inviting reviewers take into consideration the following:

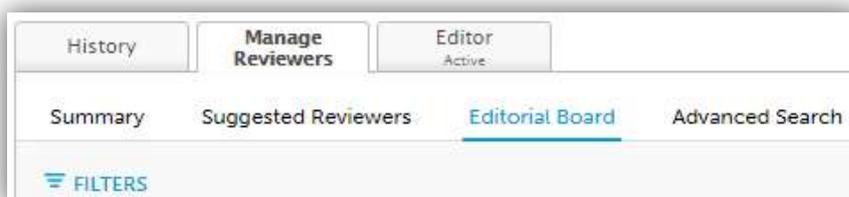
- They should hold a PhD with post-doctoral experience or have several years of equivalent professional or academic experience
- They should have the expertise necessary to assess the methods, results, and conclusions of the manuscript. This can be verified by checking that they have recent publications on the topic relevant to the manuscript. In some cases, reviewers with different areas of expertise may be needed to ensure that all aspects of the manuscript are peer-reviewed.
- They should be diverse in age, gender, and geographic location.
- Their affiliation should be recognized and verifiable.
- To prevent reviewer fatigue, please do not invite the same reviewer to review multiple submissions at the same time.

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



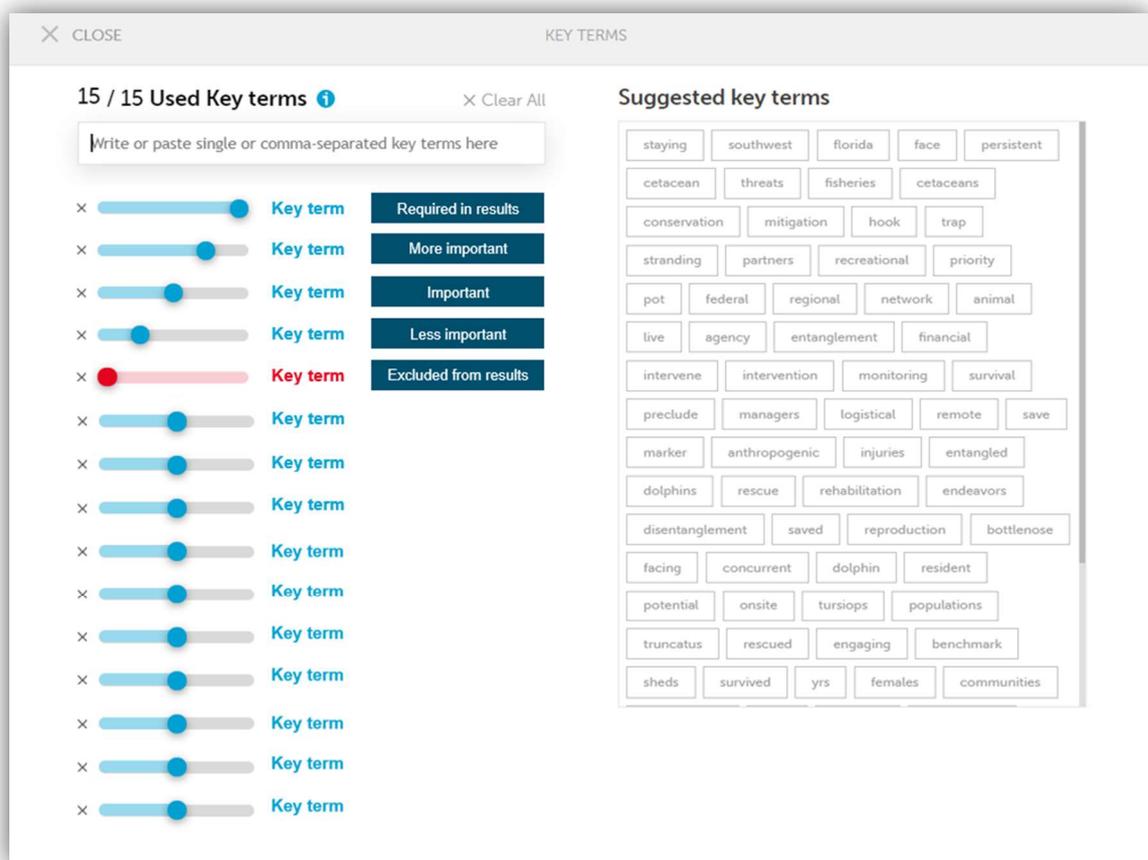
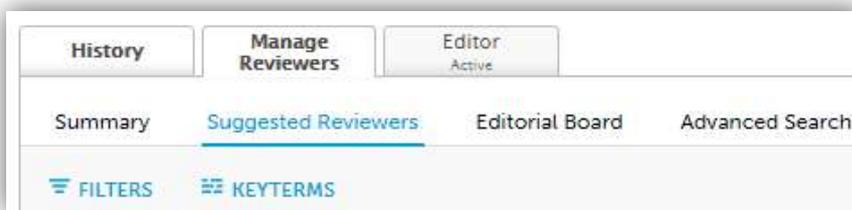
2.5.1 Review editors from our editorial board

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



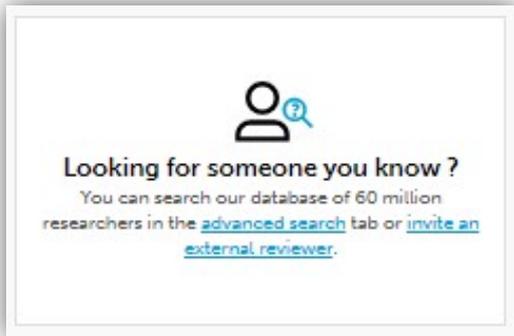
2.5.2 Suggested external reviewers

- 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.



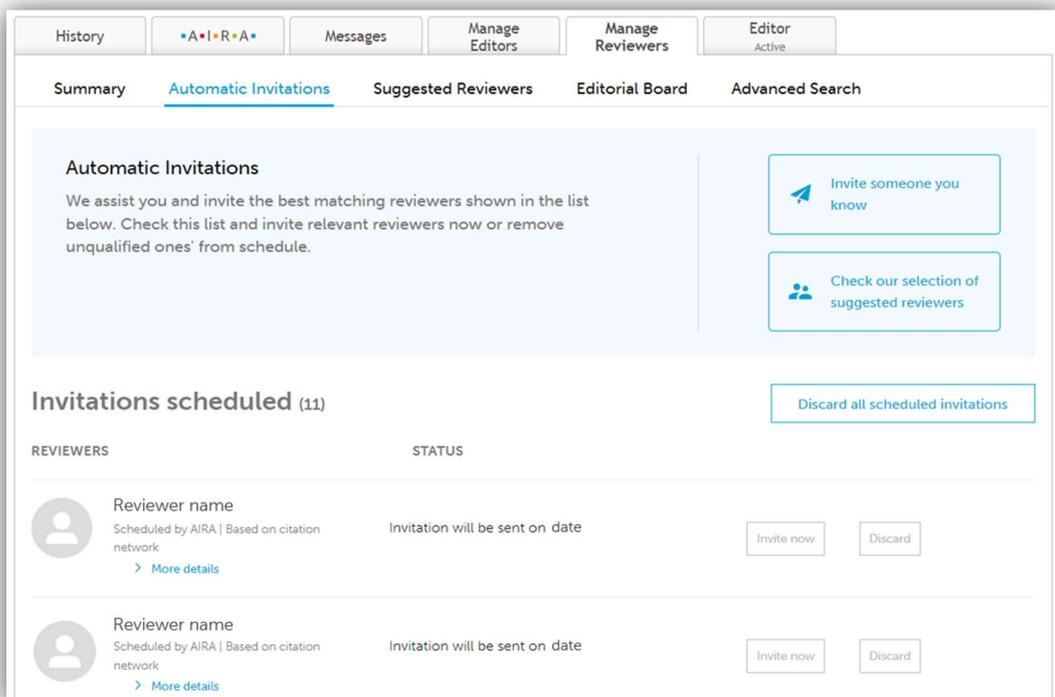
2.5.3 External reviewers from your personal network;

- Select the “Manage Reviewers” tab
- Select “Invite an external reviewer”
- Fill out the relevant information (name and email address details)



If reviewers are not invited within five days of you accepting the editing assignment, invitations to our editorial board review editors will be sent out in batches over the coming days.

To give you clarity on who will be invited, you can review the scheduled system invites and leave them as planned, or either invite these candidates right away or discard them from the scheduled invitations. If you would like to postpone these automatic invitations by three days, invite a minimum of three reviewers within three days.



The screenshot shows the 'Manage Reviewers' interface. At the top, there are tabs for 'History', 'Messages', 'Manage Editors', 'Manage Reviewers', and 'Editor Active'. Below these are sub-tabs: 'Summary', 'Automatic Invitations', 'Suggested Reviewers', 'Editorial Board', and 'Advanced Search'. The 'Automatic Invitations' section contains a message: 'We assist you and invite the best matching reviewers shown in the list below. Check this list and invite relevant reviewers now or remove unqualified ones' from schedule.' To the right are two buttons: 'Invite someone you know' and 'Check our selection of suggested reviewers'. Below this is a section titled 'Invitations scheduled (11)' with a 'Discard all scheduled invitations' button. A table lists the scheduled reviewers:

REVIEWERS	STATUS
 Reviewer name Scheduled by AIRA Based on citation network More details	Invitation will be sent on date <input type="button" value="Invite now"/> <input type="button" value="Discard"/>
 Reviewer name Scheduled by AIRA Based on citation network More details	Invitation will be sent on date <input type="button" value="Invite now"/> <input type="button" value="Discard"/>

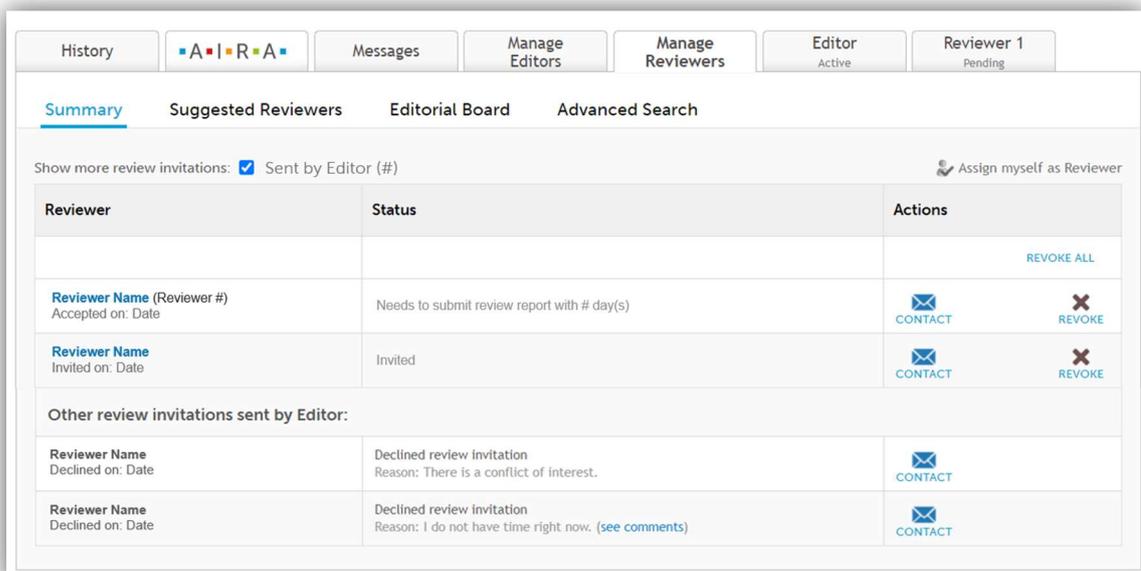
2.6 INDEPENDENT REVIEW

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 request an extension if they need more time to complete the review questionnaire. They can grant themselves a one-off extension of 5 days directly on the review forum, or you can extend their deadline via the “Grant extension” button on the right-hand side of the review forum. If they need a more substantial extension, please let the Peer Review team know.



At this stage, reviewers conduct their reviews 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.


 A screenshot of a web interface for managing reviewers. At the top, there are several tabs: "History", "A | R | A", "Messages", "Manage Editors", "Manage Reviewers" (which is active), "Editor Active", and "Reviewer 1 Pending". Below the tabs, there are sub-tabs: "Summary" (active), "Suggested Reviewers", "Editorial Board", and "Advanced Search". The main content area shows a table of review invitations. Above the table, there is a filter "Show more review invitations: Sent by Editor (#)" and a link "Assign myself as Reviewer". The table has three columns: "Reviewer", "Status", and "Actions".

Reviewer	Status	Actions
		REVOKE ALL
Reviewer Name (Reviewer #) Accepted on: Date	Needs to submit review report with # day(s)	CONTACT REVOKE
Reviewer Name Invited on: Date	Invited	CONTACT REVOKE
Other review invitations sent by Editor:		
Reviewer Name Declined on: Date	Declined review invitation Reason: There is a conflict of interest.	CONTACT
Reviewer Name Declined on: Date	Declined review invitation Reason: I do not have time right now. (see comments)	CONTACT

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
- Recommend rejection

If the reviewer indicates that the manuscript can be accepted, they can endorse the article in the Independent Review stage and finalize their review. Doing so will close any further discussion for that reviewer. 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, following the Authors' revisions.

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.

You will be notified once an independent review report has been submitted. The authors also receive a copy of these comments in an email. Reviewers are expected to provide rigorous and in-depth reports. Your next step is to assess their quality, ensure that they are comprehensive, thorough, and carry out an appropriate action. To assess the review reports, we recommend that you ask yourself the following questions:

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

Based on the potential scenario, here are your options

The reviewer recommends revisions to the authors

<p>You think the manuscript has potential for publication: Activate the Interactive Review Forum and select the necessary level of revisions: Minor, Moderate, or Substantial</p>	<p>You wish to recommend rejection: Post your reasoning in the Editor tab and click on the “Recommend Rejection” button to activate the review forum with Major concerns</p>	<p>Invite more reviewers to take a more informed decision</p>
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The reviewer withdrew recommending rejection

<p>You wish to recommend rejection: Post your reasoning in the Editor tab and click on the “Recommend Rejection” button to activate the review forum with Major concerns</p>	<p>Invite more reviewers to take a more informed decision</p>
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You consider the review report too brief/not sufficiently rigorous/inappropriate/out of scope and you cannot make an informed decision

<p>Contact the reviewer via the Review Forum to ask for additional feedback</p>	<p>Consider revoking the reviewer and invite a further reviewer</p>	<p>Inform the Peer review team</p>
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2.6.1 Activating the Interactive Review Forum

If you are satisfied that at least two review reports are complete and adhere to the criteria above, you may grant the authors access to the Interactive Review so that they can submit their responses and revisions for the reviewers. This is done by clicking the “activate the interactive review” button. Please 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 you will need to reach the minimum requirement of 2 reviewer endorsements to recommend acceptance of the manuscript. These review reports will allow you to make an informed decision on the manuscripts.

Reviewers may state that they do not wish to review a revised version of the manuscript and therefore, their review may be finalized during the independent review stage. Authors are still advised to provide a response to all reviewers (including any recommendations for rejection) in the Editor's tab.

Note: In the interest of maintaining a timely review process, if a Reviewer requests revisions and does not immediately endorse the paper, the Interactive Review Forum will be automatically activated five days after the required number of review reports have been submitted.

2.6.2 Recommending rejection specifically during the independent review

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

1. If you 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, and the review continues

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 authors' rebuttal and think the manuscript can remain in review.
 - Confirm your recommendation for rejection by clicking on "Recommend to reject manuscript". Note that your previous recommendation for rejection comments will be preserved in the Editor tab.
5. If, after seven days, the authors do not respond, the recommendation for rejection will be sent directly to the Specialty Chief Editor and no action is required from you.

Please note at Frontiers, we believe in the mission to make science open. In practical terms, this means ensuring that **VALID** papers are entered into the review process and are rejected in line with Frontiers' ethos which does not consider **the perceived novelty or impact** of the article.



You can see further details on our acceptance and rejection criteria below:
<https://www.frontiersin.org/about/peer-review>

2.6.3 Invite more reviewers

If you wish to invite more reviewers, please refer to the section 0 (“Inviting Reviewers”) of these guidelines.

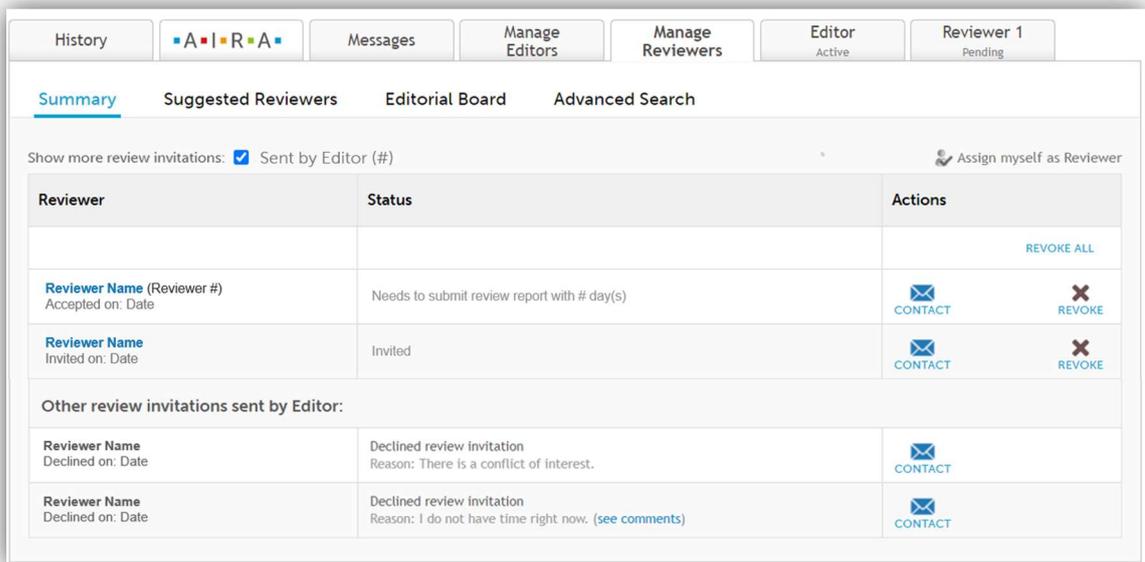
2.6.4 Contacting the reviewers or the Peer Review team

There are two channels that you can use to communicate with participants of the review process:

- During the independent review: please send a message to either the authors or a reviewer via the review forum with the Peer Review team in copy; to do so, please click on the little blue envelope next to the corresponding author’s name or the reviewer's name in the "Manage Reviewers" sub-tab
- During the Interactive Review and Review Finalized phases: you can leave comments for the authors either in the Editor tab or a specific reviewer tab. The reviewers will also be able to see these comments; please remember that Frontiers operates a single-blind peer review model, therefore please do not post any identifying or sensitive information in this tab that might compromise the reviewers' anonymity.
- Please note that the Peer Review team will not be notified about comments posted in the Review Forum. If you would like to get in touch with the Peer Review team, please proceed to do so via email (see section 1.4).

2.6.5 Revoke a reviewer

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



Reviewer	Status	Actions
		REVOKE ALL
Reviewer Name (Reviewer #) Accepted on: Date	Needs to submit review report with # day(s)	CONTACT REVOKE
Reviewer Name Invited on: Date	Invited	CONTACT REVOKE
Other review invitations sent by Editor:		
Reviewer Name Declined on: Date	Declined review invitation Reason: There is a conflict of interest.	CONTACT
Reviewer Name Declined on: Date	Declined review invitation Reason: I do not have time right now. (see comments)	CONTACT

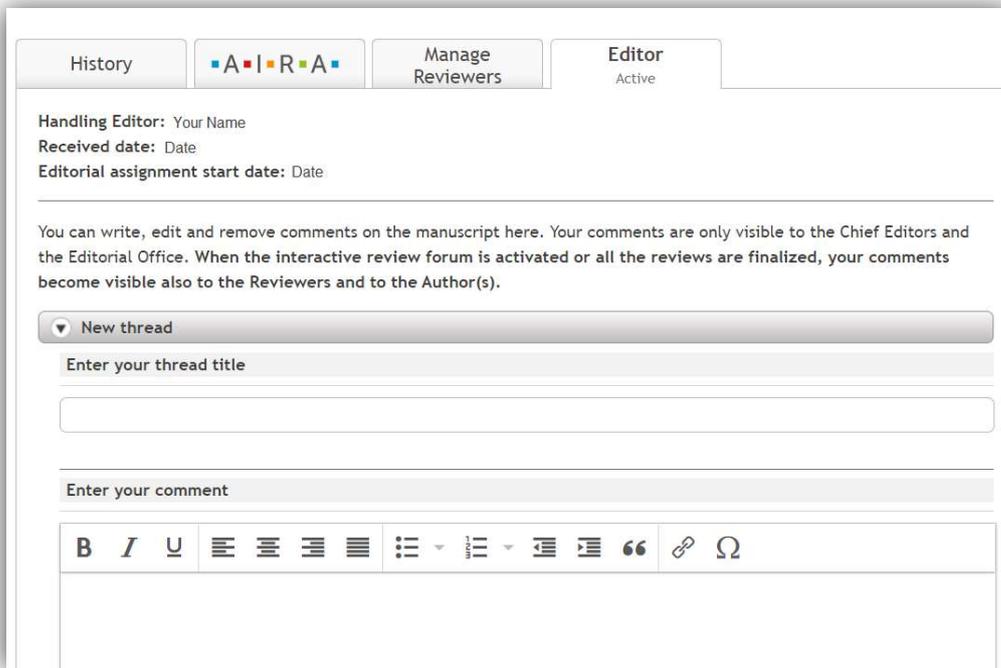
2.7 INTERACTIVE REVIEW

Once you have activated the interactive review forum, you, 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 you, and the Peer Review team will update the review forum accordingly. Please note that our system automatically notifies participants when a new comment or revised manuscript is submitted.

You can add comments and files 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



The screenshot displays the 'Editor' tab of the interactive review forum. At the top, there are navigation tabs: 'History', 'A|R|A', 'Manage Reviewers', and 'Editor Active'. Below the tabs, the interface shows the following elements:

- Handling Editor: Your Name
- Received date: Date
- Editorial assignment start date: Date
- A text area for writing comments, with a note: "You can write, edit and remove comments on the manuscript here. Your comments are only visible to the Chief Editors and the Editorial Office. When the interactive review forum is activated or all the reviews are finalized, your comments become visible also to the Reviewers and to the Author(s)." Below this note is a 'New thread' button.
- An input field for 'Enter your thread title'.
- An input field for 'Enter your comment'.
- A rich text editor toolbar with icons for Bold (B), Italic (I), Underline (U), Bulleted List, Numbered List, Indent, Outdent, Link, and Unlink.

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 take the following actions:

<p>Endorse for publication: If they are satisfied with the revisions and have no further requests.</p> <p>Their review is Finalized.</p>	<p>Request further revisions: If they are not yet satisfied with the revisions, they can request additional changes.</p> <p>Their review remains Active.</p>	<p>Recommend rejection or withdraw: If they feel the content cannot be improved further or are no longer available to participate in the review.</p> <p>Their review becomes Inactive.</p>
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You will be notified by email when one of the above actions take place.

The reasons for a reviewer's recommendation to reject 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 Chief Editors – 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, you 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.

If a reviewer withdraws or recommends rejection, you may consider one of the following actions:

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

What to do if...

a) You have a split decision between the reviewer reports

If you have a split decision/recommendation between the reviewers and you need further guidance as to how to proceed with the review process, please get in touch with the Peer Review team.

b) You have secured the required number of endorsements for the paper to be eligible for acceptance but there are still active reviewers on the manuscript

Please note that you will not be able to provisionally accept the manuscript for publication if any other appointed reviewer is still due to act. You can either remind the Reviewer to act or relieve them from their role by clicking on the revoke button next to their name (on the "Manage Reviewers - Summary" sub-tab).

2.8 REVIEW FINALIZED

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

You 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 according to our [acceptance and rejection criteria](#):

:

- ✓ Are the reviews appropriate and of high quality?
- ✓ Has the final version of the 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?

If all reviewers have recommended acceptance of the manuscript, here are your options

<p>Ready for publication: Recommend acceptance of the manuscript</p>	<p>Insufficient assessments: Post feedback in the Editors tab, or invite more reviewers to take a more informed decision</p>	<p>Premature endorsement/ final manuscript not uploaded: Reactivate reviewer's review (see section 2.8.2)</p>
<p>Remaining concerns: Request further revisions by posting in the editor tab any unaddressed issues raised by withdrawn reviewers or your own additional comments (see section 2.8.3)</p>	<p>Remaining concerns: If the authors are unwilling or unable to address the remaining concerns, recommend rejection of the manuscript</p>	

2.8.1 Recommendation to accept the manuscript

Should you find the manuscript suitable for publication, please proceed with recommending acceptance. You can do so by clicking “Accept manuscript” icon on the right-hand side in the forum. Your final decision recommendation will then be reviewed and approved by the Specialty Chief Editor.



Accept manuscript
(Initiate final validation)

Please note that if the manuscript is accepted, your name will appear on the article as the handling editor. You thereby publicly certify the paper as a valid scholarly contribution. Do not recommend acceptance of a manuscript if there are concerns raised that have not been addressed – you are responsible for safeguarding the publication record in your role as editor. To request any outstanding revisions from authors, use your dedicated Editor tab in the Review Forum.

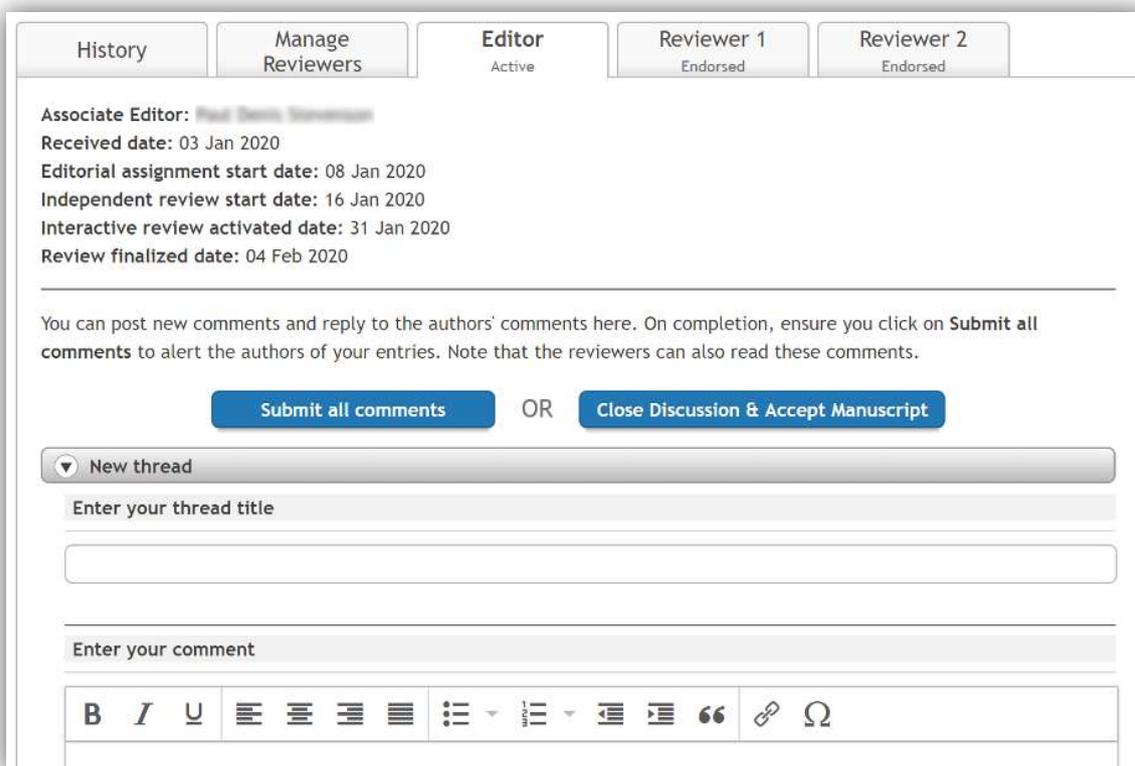
2.8.2 Re-activate a reviewer's review

If a reviewer endorses publication but you believe there are outstanding issues and you would like the reviewer to re-engage, you may reactivate their review by clicking on the “Re-activate review” icon next to the reviewer’s name. We recommend you highlight to the reviewer where you would like their input.

We encourage you to ensure that the reviewers have read the revised version and are happy with it before they endorse the publication of the manuscript. Please note that the Specialty Chief editor may also re-active peer review during acceptance validation.

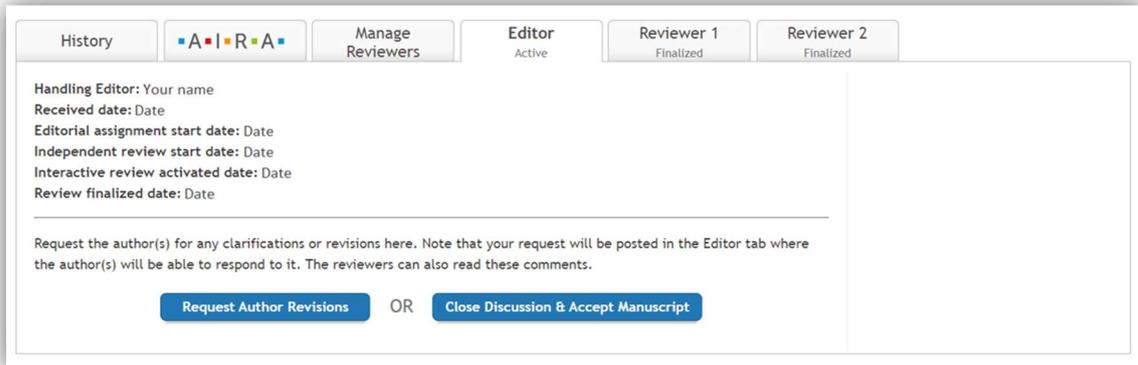
2.8.3 Post comments in the Editor tab

If there are pending comments in the manuscript that were not addressed, or if you would like to request additional minor revisions from authors, they can do so by providing comments in the Editor tab before recommending acceptance. You can also attach pdf files to provide further insight to your comments.



The screenshot displays the 'Editor' tab of a manuscript review interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs: 'History', 'Manage Reviewers', 'Editor' (Active), 'Reviewer 1' (Endorsed), and 'Reviewer 2' (Endorsed). Below the tabs, the 'Associate Editor' is identified as 'Paul Davis' with a link to their profile. Key dates are listed: '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 horizontal line separates this information from a text block that reads: '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 text are two blue buttons: 'Submit all comments' and 'Close Discussion & Accept Manuscript', with 'OR' between them. A 'New thread' dropdown menu is visible, followed by a text input field for 'Enter your thread title'. Below that is another 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, link, unlink, quote, and a link icon.

If the Authors have not uploaded a revised manuscript, you can request that the authors revise their manuscript in the Editor tab via the button "Request Author Revisions".



The screenshot shows a web interface for manuscript management. At the top, there are several tabs: "History", "A | R | A", "Manage Reviewers", "Editor" (which is active), "Reviewer 1" (Finalized), and "Reviewer 2" (Finalized). Below the tabs, the "Editor" section contains the following text:

Handling Editor: Your name
Received date: Date
Editorial assignment start date: Date
Independent review start date: Date
Interactive review activated date: Date
Review finalized date: Date

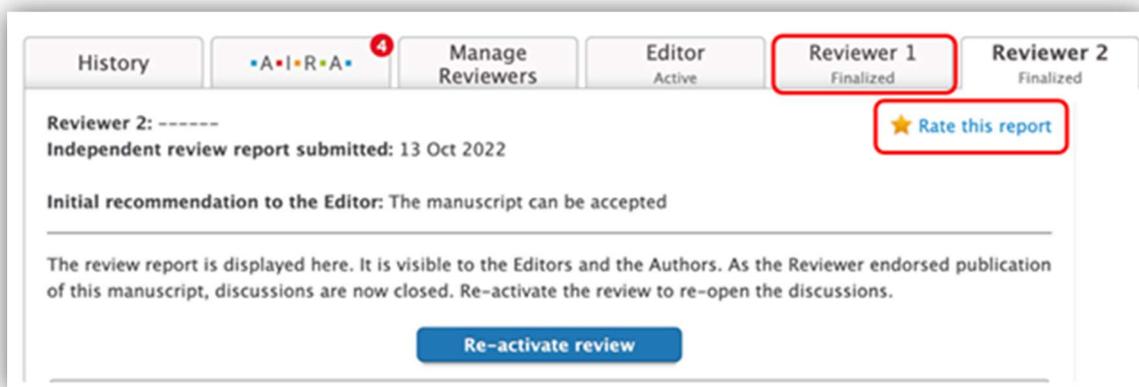
Request the author(s) for any clarifications or revisions here. Note that your request will be posted in the Editor tab where the author(s) will be able to respond to it. The reviewers can also read these comments.

At the bottom of the section, there are two buttons: "Request Author Revisions" and "Close Discussion & Accept Manuscript", separated by the word "OR".

2.9 RATING THE QUALITY OF THE REVIEWER REPORTS

All handling editors are requested to rate the quality of the reviewers' reports. They can do so any time after the review report has been submitted but this must be completed before provisionally accepting the manuscript for publication. This uses a 5-star rating from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) for full review-type articles only.

You will be able to access the review rating task by navigating to the Reviewers tab and selecting the task 'Rate this report' located on the top right-hand corner.



The rating can be modified right up until a final decision has been made by the editor to Accept or Reject the manuscript. The ratings will not be disclosed to the author or reviewer.

For further details and guidance on the rating system, please click [here](#).

2.10 FINAL VALIDATION

The final validation stage includes final quality checks by the Peer Review team, to ensure that the manuscript is ready to enter production and starts once the Specialty Chief Editor has approved the accept decision. The Editorial Office or the Specialty Chief Editor will contact you if there are any outstanding concerns.

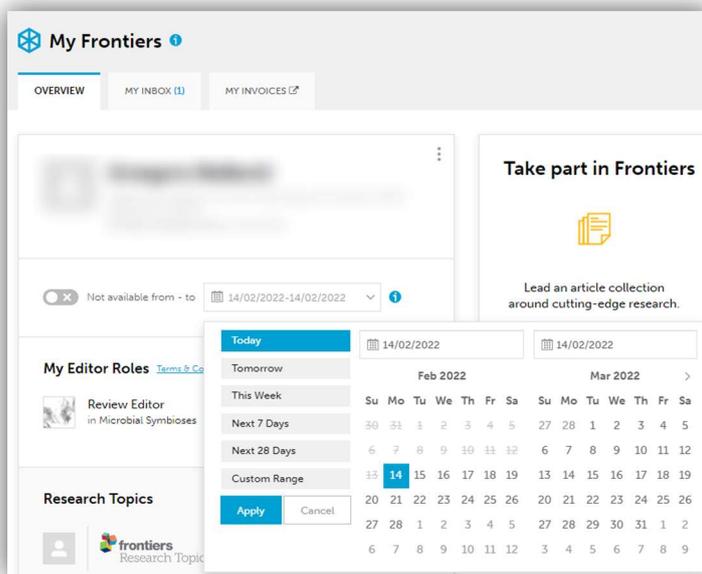
3 FAQ

3.1 WRONG REVISION LEVEL SUGGESTED/PREMATURE ACCEPTANCE

Upon activating the interactive review, you will be asked to indicate a revision level. Should you select the wrong option by mistake or provisionally accept a manuscript prematurely, please contact the Peer Review team as soon as possible.

3.2 SETTING YOURSELF OUT OF OFFICE

If you are going to be unavailable for a short time, you can set your status as “Out of office” in My Frontiers for up to 28 consecutive days. For the time that you are unavailable, you will not receive any new automatic Invitations to review. However, associate editors will still be able to personally invite you to review.



Notifications regarding any ongoing assignments or pending invitations will remain.

Should you be unavailable for longer than 28 days please contact your journal team for guidance.