
SPIRAL Academic Press

A Division of SPIRAL With Fredah LLC

EDITORIAL HANDBOOK

The Operational Manual for Editors, Reviewers, and Staff

VERSION	ISSUED	STATUS
1.0	January 2026	Active

This handbook is the operational reference for all editorial personnel of SPIRAL Academic Press. It governs the conduct of editors, the management of peer review, production workflows, author communications, and the standards of scholarly quality expected of all Press publications. It is to be read in conjunction with the Institutional Charter and the Publication Ethics Code.

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1. Introduction and Purpose

This Editorial Handbook is the primary operational reference for all individuals involved in the editorial functions of SPIRAL Academic Press — including the Editor-in-Chief, Journal Editors, Associate Editors, Guest Editors, Peer Reviewers, and Editorial Office Staff.

The handbook translates the principles established in the Institutional Charter into concrete procedures, timelines, and standards. It is a living document, subject to revision as the Press grows and as best practices in scholarly publishing evolve. All personnel are expected to be familiar with the sections relevant to their roles.

Relationship to Other Documents. This handbook operates alongside two companion documents: the Institutional Charter (which establishes the Press’s mission, governance, and foundational principles) and the Publication Ethics Code (which provides detailed guidance on research integrity, misconduct, and ethical obligations). In the event of conflict between this handbook and the Charter, the Charter governs.

1.1. Scope of Application

This handbook applies to all journals, book series, conference proceedings, and institutional repositories published under the SPIRAL Academic Press imprint. It applies to all editorial personnel regardless of whether they are employed, contracted, or serve in a voluntary capacity.

1.2. Handbook Governance

The Managing Editor is responsible for maintaining this handbook, proposing revisions, and ensuring that all editorial personnel have access to the current version. Revisions require approval by the Editor-in-Chief. Major revisions (affecting core peer review procedures or ethical standards) require notification to Editorial Board members.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1. Editor-in-Chief

The Editor-in-Chief (EIC) is the senior editorial officer of the Press. The EIC is responsible for:

- Setting and maintaining the scholarly direction and quality standards of all Press publications.
- Appointing and overseeing Journal Editors and Editorial Board members.
- Making final decisions on appeals of editorial decisions.
- Representing the Press in its relationships with indexing bodies, scholarly societies, and the wider academic community.
- Ensuring that all editorial processes comply with the Institutional Charter and this handbook.

The EIC exercises independent editorial judgment and is not subject to direction from the Publisher in matters of individual manuscript decisions.

2.2. Journal Editors

Each journal of the Press has a designated Journal Editor (or Co-Editors) who is responsible for:

- Managing the full editorial workflow for manuscripts submitted to their journal.
- Selecting appropriate peer reviewers and managing the review process.
- Making editorial decisions (accept, major revision, minor revision, reject) based on reviewer recommendations and their own scholarly judgment.
- Communicating decisions to authors in a timely, constructive, and professional manner.
- Maintaining the integrity of the double-blind review process.
- Identifying and commissioning special issues in consultation with the EIC.

Journal Editors are expected to handle manuscripts within the target timelines specified in Section 4 of this handbook.

2.3. Associate Editors

Associate Editors support Journal Editors in managing manuscript volume. They may be assigned manuscripts for initial assessment, reviewer selection, and recommendation, with final decisions resting with the Journal Editor.

2.4. Guest Editors

Guest Editors are appointed to manage special issues or thematic collections. They operate under the authority of the Journal Editor and must adhere to all procedures in this handbook. Guest Editors may not handle manuscripts from their own institution or from authors with whom they have a professional relationship that could create a conflict of interest.

2.5. Peer Reviewers

Peer Reviewers are external experts who provide confidential scholarly assessments of manuscripts. Reviewers are expected to:

- Accept review invitations only for manuscripts within their area of expertise.
- Declare all conflicts of interest before accepting an assignment.
- Complete reviews within the agreed timeframe (typically 21 days).
- Provide constructive, specific, and evidence-based assessments.
- Maintain strict confidentiality regarding manuscript content and the review process.
- Treat authors with professional respect regardless of their assessment of the work.

2.6. Editorial Office Staff

The Managing Editor and editorial office staff are responsible for manuscript tracking, author and reviewer communications, production coordination, and compliance monitoring. Staff do not make editorial decisions on manuscript content.

3. Manuscript Submission and Initial Assessment

3.1. Submission Requirements

Authors must submit manuscripts through the designated submission portal or, during the founding period, by email to submissions@spiralacademicpress.org. All submissions must include:

1. A manuscript file formatted according to the journal's Author Guidelines (double-spaced, 12pt serif font, line numbers, no author identifying information in the manuscript body).
2. A title page (submitted separately) containing: manuscript title, all author names, affiliations, ORCID identifiers, corresponding author contact details, word count, and a declaration of conflicts of interest.
3. An abstract of 150–250 words.
4. Five to eight keywords.
5. A cover letter addressed to the Journal Editor, describing the significance of the work, confirming that it is original and not under review elsewhere, and identifying any prior related publications by the authors.
6. An ethics statement where applicable (for research involving human participants, animal subjects, or sensitive data).

3.2. Initial Editorial Assessment

Upon receipt, the Editorial Office conducts an initial check within three business days to confirm that the submission is complete, falls within the journal's scope, and meets minimum formatting requirements. Submissions that fail this check are returned to authors with instructions for resubmission.

Following the initial check, the Journal Editor conducts a substantive desk review within seven business days to assess whether the manuscript merits external peer review. Grounds for desk rejection include: insufficient scholarly contribution, clear methodological flaws, scope mismatch, or failure to meet basic standards of academic writing.

Authors of desk-rejected manuscripts receive a brief explanation and, where appropriate, suggestions for alternative journals.

3.3. Plagiarism Screening

All manuscripts that pass the initial check are screened for plagiarism and text overlap using the Press's designated screening tool. Manuscripts with a similarity index above 20% (excluding references) are flagged for editorial review. Manuscripts with evidence of wholesale copying are rejected and the matter referred to the Publication Ethics Officer.

4. Peer Review Process

4.1. Double-Blind Review Standard

All original research articles, theoretical papers, and systematic reviews published in Press journals undergo double-blind peer review. Authors must not include identifying information in the manuscript body. Editors must not reveal author identities to reviewers or reviewer identities to authors.

4.2. Reviewer Selection

Journal Editors select reviewers based on demonstrated expertise in the manuscript's subject area, methodological approach, and theoretical framework. Editors should seek reviewers from diverse geographic and institutional backgrounds. Editors should not select reviewers who:

- Are co-authors of the submitting authors on any publication in the past five years.
- Share a current institutional affiliation with any submitting author.
- Have a personal relationship with any submitting author that could bias their assessment.
- Have publicly expressed a strong opinion on the specific claims of the manuscript.

A minimum of two independent reviewers must be secured for each manuscript.

4.3. Review Invitations and Timelines

Stage	Target	Maximum
Initial check by Editorial Office	3 business days	5 business days
Desk review by Journal Editor	7 business days	14 business days
Reviewer invitation response	5 business days	7 business days
Peer review completion	21 days	30 days
Editorial decision after reviews	10 business days	14 business days
Author revision period (major)	60 days	90 days
Author revision period (minor)	21 days	30 days
Re-review of revised manuscript	14 days	21 days
Final decision after revision	7 business days	10 business days

4.4. Review Criteria

Reviewers are asked to assess manuscripts against the following criteria:

1. **Scholarly significance:** Does the manuscript make a meaningful contribution to the field?
2. **Originality:** Is the work original and does it advance beyond existing literature?
3. **Methodological rigor:** Are the research design, methods, and analysis appropriate and sound?
4. **Theoretical grounding:** Is the work appropriately situated in relevant theory and prior research?
5. **Clarity and quality of writing:** Is the manuscript clearly written and logically organized?
6. **Ethical compliance:** Does the research appear to have been conducted ethically?

Reviewers provide a structured report addressing each criterion and a recommendation: Accept as submitted; Minor revisions required; Major revisions required; Reject (with encouragement to resubmit after substantial revision); or Reject (not suitable for this journal).

4.5. Editorial Decisions

Journal Editors make decisions based on reviewer recommendations and their own scholarly assessment. Editors are not bound by reviewer recommendations but must provide a reasoned explanation when departing significantly from them.

Decision letters must be sent within the target timelines above. Decision letters must:

- Clearly state the decision.
- Summarize the key reasons for the decision.
- Include the full reviewer reports (anonymized).
- For revision decisions, specify which revisions are required and which are optional.
- Specify the revision deadline.

4.6. Appeals

Authors who believe an editorial decision was based on a factual error, a misunderstanding of the work, or a procedurally flawed review process may submit a written appeal to the Editor-in-Chief within 30 days of the decision. Appeals must specify the grounds for appeal and provide supporting evidence. Appeals based solely on disagreement with the scholarly assessment of reviewers will not be considered. The EIC's decision on appeals is final.

5. Production and Publication

5.1. Accepted Manuscripts

Upon acceptance, the Editorial Office notifies the author and initiates the production workflow. Authors are required to:

- Submit a final, clean manuscript file with all revisions incorporated.
- Complete and return the Author Agreement form (confirming originality, granting publication rights, and confirming CC BY 4.0 licensing).
- Provide high-resolution figures (minimum 300 DPI) as separate files.
- Confirm all author information, ORCID identifiers, and affiliations.

5.2. Typesetting and Proofing

The Press typeset accepted manuscripts in accordance with its house style. Authors receive a proof for review. Authors are expected to return corrected proofs within seven business days. Authors may correct typesetting errors and factual inaccuracies at the proof stage; substantive changes to content are not permitted at this stage without editorial approval.

5.3. DOI Assignment and Metadata

Each published article is assigned a Digital Object Identifier (DOI) through Crossref. Metadata — including title, authors, affiliations, abstract, keywords, ORCID identifiers, funding information, and license — is deposited with Crossref at the time of publication.

5.4. ISSN Registration

Each journal is registered with ISSN International and assigned both a print ISSN and an electronic ISSN. These identifiers are displayed on all journal pages and in article metadata.

5.5. Indexing and Discoverability

The Press submits all journals for indexing in major academic databases including DOAJ, Google Scholar, BASE, and CORE. Authors are encouraged to deposit accepted manuscripts in institutional repositories and disciplinary preprint servers.

6. Special Issues and Conference Proceedings

6.1. Special Issues

Special issues on focused themes may be proposed by Editorial Board members, Guest Editors, or the Journal Editor. Proposals must be submitted to the EIC and include: a rationale for the theme, proposed Guest Editors, a call for papers, a proposed timeline, and an anticipated article count.

Special issues undergo the same peer review standards as regular issues. Guest Editors may not publish their own work in issues they edit.

6.2. Conference Proceedings

The Press may publish proceedings from academic conferences and symposia aligned with its subject areas. Conference proceedings are published as standalone volumes with their own ISBN and, where applicable, ISSN. All papers in conference proceedings undergo peer review unless explicitly designated as extended abstracts, in which case the editorial review process is clearly disclosed.

7. Corrections, Retractions, and Expressions of Concern

The Press maintains a transparent and prompt policy for addressing errors and misconduct in published work.

Corrections are issued when a published article contains errors that do not affect the conclusions of the work. Corrections are published as separate notices linked to the original article.

Expressions of Concern are issued when the Press has received credible information suggesting potential problems with a published article that cannot be immediately resolved — for example, when an investigation is underway.

Retractions are issued when a published article is found to contain fabricated data, plagiarized content, duplicate publication, or other serious violations that invalidate the findings. Retractions are published as formal notices and the original article is marked as retracted. Retracted articles remain accessible in the archive with clear retraction notices.

All corrections, expressions of concern, and retractions are handled in accordance with COPE guidelines and are reported in the Press's annual transparency report.

8. Confidentiality and Conflicts of Interest

All editorial personnel must maintain strict confidentiality regarding submitted manuscripts, reviewer identities, and editorial deliberations. Manuscripts under review must not be shared with or discussed with third parties. Reviewers must not use information from manuscripts under review for their own research prior to publication.

All editors and reviewers must disclose any relationship with submitting authors that could create a real or perceived conflict of interest. Editors who have a conflict of interest with a submitted manuscript must recuse themselves and assign the manuscript to another editor.

9. Reviewer Recognition and Development

The Press recognizes the essential contribution of peer reviewers to scholarly quality. The Press maintains a reviewer acknowledgment system and publishes an annual list of reviewers who have contributed to each journal (with reviewer consent). The Press provides feedback to reviewers on the quality and usefulness of their reviews as part of its commitment to reviewer development.

10. Appendices

10.1. Appendix A: Manuscript Formatting Requirements

Manuscripts submitted to SPIRAL Academic Press journals must conform to the following formatting requirements:

- **Word processor:** Microsoft Word (.docx) or LaTeX (.tex with compiled PDF).
- **Font:** 12pt Times New Roman or similar serif font.
- **Spacing:** Double-spaced throughout, including references.
- **Line numbers:** Continuous line numbers throughout the manuscript.
- **Margins:** 1 inch on all sides.
- **Page numbers:** Bottom center.
- **Abstract:** 150–250 words, unstructured unless journal guidelines specify otherwise.
- **Keywords:** 5–8 keywords, listed after the abstract.
- **References:** APA 7th edition unless journal guidelines specify otherwise.
- **Figures and tables:** Embedded in the manuscript body for review; high-resolution files submitted separately upon acceptance.
- **Anonymization:** No author names, affiliations, or identifying acknowledgments in the manuscript body.

10.2. Appendix B: Reviewer Report Template

Reviewers are asked to structure their reports as follows:

Summary of the Manuscript (2–4 sentences): Briefly describe what the manuscript does and claims.

Major Concerns: List and explain significant issues that must be addressed before the manuscript can be considered for publication. Number each concern.

Minor Concerns: List and explain smaller issues of presentation, clarity, or completeness.

Recommendation: State your recommendation (Accept / Minor Revisions / Major Revisions / Reject with encouragement / Reject).

Confidential Note to Editor (optional): Any information for the editor's eyes only.

10.3. Appendix C: Decision Letter Templates

Accept: “We are pleased to inform you that your manuscript [TITLE] has been accepted for publication in [JOURNAL NAME]...”

Minor Revisions: “Thank you for submitting your manuscript [TITLE] to [JOURNAL NAME]. The reviewers have found merit in your work and recommend minor revisions before a final decision can be made...”

Major Revisions: “Thank you for submitting your manuscript [TITLE] to [JOURNAL NAME]. The reviewers have identified significant concerns that must be addressed before we can make a final decision...”

Reject with Encouragement: “Thank you for submitting your manuscript [TITLE] to [JOURNAL NAME]. After careful consideration, we are unable to accept the manuscript in its current form. However, we believe the topic is important and encourage you to consider a substantial revision...”

Desk Reject: “Thank you for your submission to [JOURNAL NAME]. After initial review, we have determined that the manuscript does not fall within the scope of the journal / does not meet our minimum submission requirements...”