



AAPT Paper Selection Process

This document is intended to provide a description of the process AAPT uses to select papers for the Annual Meeting, Journal, and RMPD Special Issue.

Paper Submission

- Authors submit papers to the AAPT paper submission site (hosted by Acamedics) by the posted deadline. Usually this is defined as August 1st.
- Papers should be in the format provided by AAPT which includes the requirement that the paper not exceed 35 pages *in that format* (note that this is different than 35 pages in 8.5x11 format). Papers that are overly long may be rejected outright.

Peer Review

- The AAPT Secretary-Treasurer initially chooses five reviewers for each paper using the following guidelines:
 - For each paper designated for ISI publication through the RMPD, at least one reviewer is chosen from the RMPD Editorial Board. For AAPT Journal papers, this requirement is waived.
 - When possible, reviewers are chosen who are experienced in the area(s) covered by the paper content.
 - A maximum of two papers are assigned to each reviewer.
 - Care is taken not to assign reviewers to papers in which there could be a conflict of interest (e.g., professors are not assigned to papers submitted by former students, reviewers are not asked to review a paper by a former co-worker, etc.).
- After initial selection of the reviewers, the list is submitted to the AAPT Board of Directors and the RMPD Guest Editors (for 2014 – Jo Daniel, Rey Roque, and Richard Kim) for feedback. Based on the feedback, the list of reviewers is modified.
- After the list of reviewers is finalized, the AAPT Office Manager accesses the paper management site and assigns reviewers. Each reviewer is then sent a system e-mail requesting that he/she serve as a reviewer for a specific paper. This process is generally started in mid-late August.
- Reviewers are instructed to login to the paper submission site and access the assigned paper. Reviewers should indicate if they will or will not perform the review. A sample of the paper review request page is attached.
- If a reviewer declines to conduct a review, then the Secretary-Treasurer assigns an alternate reviewer, if possible.
- Reviews are generally requested to be completed by the first of October.
- Reviewers are asked to download and complete the appropriate reviewer form (attached) which includes three parts:

- Part A includes a series of general questions about the paper including whether it should be published,
- Part B includes space for the reviewer to include comments about the paper. These may include questions, constructive criticism, and suggestions for improvement.
- Part C includes a numerical ranking for the reviewer to complete in thirteen weighted categories. Reviewers provide a 0-5 ranking in each category. Individual categories are weighted from 3 (for the “Conciseness” and “Composition” categories) to 20 (for the “Significance” category). The score and weighting are used to derive a final weighted score from 0-100.
- Every effort is made to obtain at least three valid reviews for each paper. (Note: for 2014, 80% of papers had 3 or more peer reviews provided)

Paper Selection

- One AAPT Board member is assigned to each paper to evaluate and summarize the reviews and rankings provided by each reviewer and to provide an independent evaluation of the paper in cases where there is significant variation in rankings and/or review comments.
- At the October meeting of the Board of Directors, the Board meets to discuss the submitted papers and set the program for the Annual Meeting. Papers are placed in descending order by the score provided by the peer reviews and are discussed in turn. The RMPD Guest Editors also participate in this discussion – with emphasis on those papers designated for the RMPD journal.
 - Generally speaking, papers with an average score of 80 and above are accepted and papers with an average score of 65 and below are rejected.
 - For each paper, the review comments are considered in relation to the score. Review comments are critical to helping the Board decide which papers to accept. It is not unusual to see a relatively high score with critical comments or a relatively low score with positive comments.
 - For each paper, the responsible Board member provides a discussion of the peer reviews and an assessment of the scoring and comments
 - The disposition of the paper (AAPT or RMPD journal) does not in any way affect the acceptance/rejection decision.
- Based on the discussions during the meeting, the Board elects to accept or reject the first paper on the list and then moves on to the next paper.
- The number of papers accepted is dependent solely on the quality of the papers submitted. If the Board cannot agree that the paper should definitely be published, then it will not be accepted. Generally, the Board seeks to have 19-20 papers for presentation and publication. This number can increase if the Board feels that there are more than 20 good quality papers that should be published. In this instance, one or more papers may be designated for publication only (identified in the meeting program as “by title only”).
 - The selection of which paper(s) to designate as “by title only” is not based on the average score. In other words, the lowest scoring paper does not automatically become a paper that is designated as “by title only”. Rather, the decision is based on a number of factors – not the least of which is how the topic will fit within the remainder of the meeting program and if it will have appeal to a broad audience.

- After the papers have been discussed and the acceptance decisions made, the Board reviews the title/scope of each accepted paper and begins the process of placing the papers into groups with a similar focus. These groups then become the Technical Sessions for the Annual Meeting.
- A Board Member is assigned to serve as the Chair for each technical session. The Board member will then have responsibility for communicating with the authors of the papers in their technical session.
- The AAPT Office Manager and Secretary-Treasurer work together to send an e-mail to the corresponding author of each paper indicating whether the paper was accepted. If accepted, the author is notified that the AAPT Session Chair will contact them with reviewer comments and further details.
 - The AAPT staff provides reviewer comments to authors of papers that were not accepted.
- The AAPT Office Manager collates the reviewer comments and provides a document to the Board Member responsible for each accepted paper. No specific scores are provided to the author, primarily because these are of little meaning unless evaluated in the context of all papers submitted.
- The Board Member responsible for each accepted paper contacts the author and provides the reviewer comments and instructions on submittal of a revised draft paper.
 - Authors are asked to consider the comments and make appropriate revisions to the paper. Revised papers are due back to the AAPT paper submission site by mid-December.

Mike Anderson
Secretary-Treasurer
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