
CONFERENCE COLLABORATION PROGRAMME

Guest Editor Guidelines

The Criterion: An International Journal in English | Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

These guidelines govern the role of all Guest Editors appointed under the RCELL Conference Collaboration Programme. They take effect upon written confirmation of appointment and remain in force until the special issue is published and the editorial record is closed. All appointed Guest Editors are required to read, understand, and comply with these guidelines in full.

These guidelines ensure that special issues produced through conference collaboration maintain the same scholarly and ethical standards as regular journal issues.

1. Purpose and Scope of These Guidelines

These guidelines establish the responsibilities, authority, and ethical obligations of Guest Editors appointed to oversee the peer review and compilation of special issues produced through the RCELL Conference Collaboration Programme.

They exist to protect editorial integrity, ensure consistency with the standards applied to regular journal issues, and provide Guest Editors with a clear operational framework from the point of appointment through to final publication.

The guidelines apply equally to collaborations with The Criterion: An International Journal in English and Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal. Where practices differ between the two journals, distinctions are noted explicitly.

The appointment of a Guest Editor is an act of scholarly trust. It does not constitute delegation of editorial authority. Final decisions on all matters relating to acceptance, rejection, and publication remain with the Editor-in-Chief of the relevant journal.

2. Appointment of Guest Editors

2.1 Eligibility Criteria

Guest Editors must meet the following criteria at the time of appointment. The editorial office reserves the right to withdraw an appointment if any criterion is subsequently found to be unmet.

- Hold a doctoral degree or equivalent scholarly qualification in a field relevant to the proposed special issue theme.
- Hold a current academic or research position at a recognised institution.
- Possess a demonstrable publication record in the relevant field.
- Have no undisclosed conflict of interest with anticipated authors or with the conference organising committee.
- Have no outstanding ethical violations on record with any academic publisher or institution.
- Be willing and available to fulfil the role within the agreed timeline.

2.2 Nomination and Approval Process

Guest Editors are nominated by the conference organiser in the collaboration proposal (Section 6.3 of the Conference Proposal Template). Nomination does not constitute appointment. All nominations are subject to review and approval by the Editor-in-Chief of the relevant journal.

The editorial office may approve, decline, or request an alternative nomination. In cases where a nominated Guest Editor is declined, the editorial office will communicate the reasons and invite the organiser to propose an alternative. The appointment is confirmed only by written communication from the editorial office.

2.3 Number of Guest Editors

Special issues will ordinarily be assigned one or two Guest Editors. In exceptional circumstances, where the scope of the issue or the volume of expected submissions justifies it, a third Guest Editor may be approved at the discretion of the Editor-in-Chief. All Guest Editors share equal responsibility for compliance with these guidelines.

3. Definition of the Guest Editor Role

3.1 The Advisory Function

The Guest Editor's role is advisory and curatorial. Guest Editors bring specialist knowledge of the conference theme and the scholarly community from which submissions will be drawn. They use this knowledge to support — but not replace — the journal's independent editorial and peer review processes.

3.2 Authority and Its Limits

The following table defines precisely what Guest Editors may and may not do. This boundary is not an administrative convention; it is a structural safeguard for the integrity of the peer

review record. Guest Editors may not promise or imply likely acceptance outcomes to authors at any stage.

Guest Editors MAY	Guest Editors MAY NOT
Recommend reviewers for submissions	Select or appoint reviewers unilaterally
Review submitted manuscripts and provide assessments	Access reviewer identities or share author identities with reviewers
Communicate with authors regarding revision requirements, using journal-approved templates	Make independent decisions to accept or reject any submission
Advise on the thematic coherence of the issue	Override or circumvent a reviewer's recommendation
Submit a written editorial introduction for the special issue, subject to editorial approval	Communicate editorial decisions to authors outside the journal's official process
Flag potential ethical concerns to the editorial office	Invite additional authors or papers not submitted through the approved process
Provide context on a submission's relationship to the conference theme when requested by the editorial office	Disclose any aspect of the peer review process to the conference organising committee

4. Editorial Hierarchy and Decision Authority

4.1 The Chain of Authority

The editorial hierarchy for all special issues produced through the Conference Collaboration Programme is as follows. This hierarchy is not negotiable and cannot be modified by agreement between the conference organiser and the Guest Editor.

Level	Role	Authority
1 — Highest	Editor-in-Chief	Final and binding decision authority on all editorial matters. No decision may override the Editor-in-Chief.
2	Editorial Board / Managing Editors	Advise on policy application, manage workflow, and escalate unresolved issues to the Editor-in-Chief.
3	Independent Peer Reviewers	Provide expert scholarly assessment of submitted manuscripts. Reviewer recommendations carry significant weight but are advisory.
4 — Advisory	Guest Editor(s)	Provide thematic context, recommend reviewers, and advise on issue coherence. Do not hold decision authority.

Where a Guest Editor disagrees with an editorial decision, the appropriate course of action is to raise the matter in writing with the editorial office. Guest Editors may not take unilateral corrective action, communicate their disagreement to authors, or disclose the matter to the conference organising committee.

4.2 Guest Editors Who Are Also Authors

A Guest Editor who submits a paper to the same special issue must declare this at the point of submission. The manuscript will be handled entirely by the editorial office and assigned to independent reviewers without Guest Editor involvement. The Guest Editor's advisory role in relation to that specific paper is suspended for the duration of its review.

5. Peer Review Integrity

5.1 Double-Blind Review Requirement

All submissions to a special issue undergo the same double-blind peer review process applied to regular journal submissions. This means that reviewer identities are not disclosed to authors, and author identities are not disclosed to reviewers. This requirement applies without exception.

Guest Editors must not disclose, imply, or attempt to determine reviewer identities at any stage. They must not share information about the identity of authors with any reviewer, even if the author's identity is known to them through the conference.

5.2 Reviewer Selection and Independence

The editorial office holds responsibility for the final selection and assignment of peer reviewers. Guest Editors may recommend reviewers with appropriate expertise, but all recommendations are subject to the following conditions:

- Recommended reviewers must have no current or recent supervisory, institutional, or co-authorship relationship with the submitting author.
- Recommended reviewers must not be members of the conference organising committee.
- Recommended reviewers must not have attended, presented at, or been associated with the conference in a capacity that could create bias.
- The editorial office may decline any recommendation without explanation.
- The editorial office may assign reviewers independently of any Guest Editor recommendation.
- The editorial office may appoint additional reviewers where necessary to preserve independence or disciplinary balance.

5.3 Review Standards

Papers submitted to a special issue are held to the same scholarly standards as papers submitted to a regular issue of the journal. The special issue context does not lower the

threshold for acceptance. The volume of papers required to fill an issue does not justify accepting work that would otherwise be declined.

Guest Editors must not communicate acceptance expectations to authors, either directly or by implication. Statements such as 'most papers from the conference will be published' or 'we expect the review to be straightforward' constitute misrepresentation of the editorial process and may result in the termination of the collaboration.

5.4 Handling Disagreement with Review Outcomes

Where a Guest Editor considers that a reviewer recommendation is clearly inconsistent with the scholarly quality of a submission, the appropriate course of action is to submit a written representation to the editorial office detailing the basis for concern. The editorial office will consider this representation and may commission an additional independent review. The Editor-in-Chief's subsequent decision is final.

6. Conflict of Interest

6.1 Disclosure Requirement

Guest Editors must disclose all actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest to the editorial office at the point of appointment and as they arise during the special issue process. Failure to disclose a conflict of interest may result in the immediate termination of the Guest Editor's appointment and, where appropriate, in the withdrawal of the collaboration agreement.

6.2 What Constitutes a Conflict of Interest

For the purposes of these guidelines, a conflict of interest exists where a Guest Editor has a relationship with a submitting author or with the content of a submission that could — or could reasonably be perceived to — compromise impartial oversight. The following are indicative, not exhaustive:

- Current or recent co-authorship with the submitting author (within the preceding five years).
- A supervisory relationship, whether as supervisor or supervisee, current or recent.
- A close personal or familial relationship with the submitting author.
- A financial interest in the subject matter of the submission.
- A history of public disagreement or dispute with the submitting author that could bias assessment.
- Any relationship that a reasonable external observer would consider likely to influence editorial judgement.

6.3 Recusal Procedure

Where a conflict of interest exists in relation to a specific submission, the Guest Editor must declare this to the editorial office immediately upon identifying it. The Guest Editor will be

recused from all involvement with that submission. The manuscript will be handled entirely by the editorial office. The existence of the recusal will be recorded in the editorial record but will not be disclosed to the author or to the reviewer.

7. Guest Editor Responsibilities by Phase

The following table maps Guest Editor responsibilities across the full lifecycle of the special issue. It defines what is expected at each stage and distinguishes between actions that are the Guest Editor's responsibility and those that belong to the editorial office.

Phase	Responsible Party	Action / Responsibility
Pre-Submission	Guest Editor	Confirm readiness to fulfil the role. Complete conflict-of-interest disclosure. Review journal scope and submission standards. Advise conference organisers on the author invitation process using only journal-approved language.
Pre-Submission	Editorial Office	Issue formal appointment letter. Share submission portal details and author guidance. Confirm the special issue timeline.
Submission Open	Guest Editor	Respond to editorial office queries regarding the thematic relevance of specific submissions. Flag any ethical concerns regarding submissions to the editorial office.
Submission Open	Editorial Office	Receive and log all submissions. Conduct plagiarism screening. Conduct initial editorial suitability check. Assign to peer review.
Peer Review	Guest Editor	Recommend suitable reviewers with relevant expertise. Provide contextual input on submissions if requested by the editorial office. Recuse from any submission involving a conflict of interest.
Peer Review	Editorial Office / Reviewers	Assign and manage independent double-blind reviewers. Collect and assess reviewer reports. Make preliminary recommendations to the Editor-in-Chief.
Decision	Editor-in-Chief	Issue final editorial decisions on all submissions: Accept, Minor Revision, Major Revision, or Reject.
Post-Decision	Guest Editor	Provide thematic assessment of the accepted papers as a coherent collection. Draft an editorial introduction to the special issue for approval by the Editor-in-Chief.
Post-Decision	Editorial Office	Communicate all decisions to authors. Manage revision and resubmission processes. Conduct copy-editing and proofing.

Publication	Editorial Office	Assign DOIs. Compile and publish the special issue. Issue publication confirmation to the Guest Editor and conference organiser.
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8. Communication Protocols

8.1 Author Communications

All formal communications with authors regarding editorial decisions, revision requirements, and publication timelines must be issued by the editorial office through the journal's official communication channels. Guest Editors must not issue, forward, or informally relay editorial decisions to authors.

Guest Editors may communicate with authors regarding non-editorial matters — for example, in their capacity as conference organisers — but must not discuss the review status, outcome, or timeline of any specific submission in that context. All public announcements referencing the collaboration or special issue must be approved by the editorial office prior to publication.

8.2 Communication with the Conference Organising Committee

Guest Editors must not disclose any aspect of the peer review process, submission status, or editorial deliberations to the conference organising committee. The information to which the organising committee is entitled is limited to the following: confirmation that the collaboration is proceeding, the expected timeline for the special issue, and the final published issue itself.

If a Guest Editor is also a member of the conference organising committee — which is common — the boundaries above apply to their editorial role in its entirety. The dual role does not create an entitlement to share review information within the committee.

8.3 Use of Journal Templates

Where communication templates are provided by the editorial office for use with authors — for example, invitation letters or submission guidance — Guest Editors must use the approved versions and must not alter their content. Requests for modifications to templates must be submitted to the editorial office for approval before use.

8.4 Primary Point of Contact

Each Guest Editor appointment designates a single Primary Guest Editor who serves as the official point of contact with the editorial office. Where two Guest Editors are appointed, they must agree on a Primary Guest Editor at the commencement of their appointment and notify the editorial office accordingly.

9. Ethical Obligations

9.1 Alignment with COPE Guidelines

All Guest Editors are required to conduct themselves in accordance with the guidelines published by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), including the COPE Core Practices and the Core Practices for Editors. Familiarity with these guidelines is a condition of appointment. The guidelines are available at publicationethics.org.

9.2 No Publication Guarantees

Guest Editors must not, under any circumstances, guarantee, imply, or suggest to any conference participant that their paper will be accepted for publication. This prohibition applies in all contexts: in person at the conference, in written communications, in social media, and in any other medium. The phrase 'we hope to publish as many of the conference papers as possible' or similar formulations are understood as implicit guarantees and are prohibited.

9.3 Confidentiality

All information arising from the peer review process — including reviewer identities, the content of reviewer reports, editorial deliberations, author revisions, and decision rationales — is strictly confidential. This obligation of confidentiality does not expire upon the conclusion of the special issue process.

9.4 Misconduct Reporting

If a Guest Editor becomes aware of potential research misconduct — including plagiarism, data fabrication, duplicate submission, or undisclosed authorship — in connection with any submission or published paper, they must report this to the editorial office immediately. Guest Editors must not investigate suspected misconduct independently or contact the author concerned without the editorial office's instruction.

9.5 Consequences of Ethical Breach

A breach of these ethical obligations may result in one or more of the following actions, at the discretion of the Editor-in-Chief:

- Formal warning issued to the Guest Editor.
- Immediate termination of the Guest Editor appointment.
- Suspension or termination of the associated collaboration agreement.
- Retraction of published papers where a breach is found to have compromised the integrity of the review record.
- Notification of the Guest Editor's employing institution where the breach is of sufficient severity.

10. The Editorial Introduction

10.1 Purpose and Scope

Guest Editors of approved special issues are invited to submit a scholarly editorial introduction to accompany the published issue. The editorial introduction frames the intellectual context of the special issue and situates the accepted papers within the broader scholarly conversation. It is not a summary of conference proceedings.

10.2 Requirements

- Length: 1,000–2,000 words.
- Format: Standard journal manuscript format as specified in the RCELL Manuscript Submission Standards.
- Content: Intellectual rationale for the theme; overview of the field; brief orientation to the accepted papers and their collective contribution.
- Citation style: MLA 9th Edition, consistent with journal policy.
- Submission deadline: As agreed with the editorial office, typically no later than four weeks following the final acceptance decisions for the issue.

10.3 Editorial Approval

The editorial introduction is subject to editorial review and approval by the Editor-in-Chief. It may be returned to the Guest Editor with requests for revision. The introduction does not undergo external peer review but is held to the same standards of scholarly writing and accuracy as published research articles. The editorial office reserves the right to decline an editorial introduction that does not meet these standards or that is submitted after the agreed deadline.

11. Timeline Expectations and Compliance

11.1 Agreed Timeline

The editorial office and Guest Editor(s) will agree a project timeline at the point of appointment. This timeline will specify key milestones including the submission opening date, submission deadline, target date for completion of peer review, revision deadline, and target publication date. Both parties are expected to adhere to the agreed timeline.

11.2 Delays and Non-Compliance

Where a Guest Editor is unable to meet an agreed timeline obligation, they must notify the editorial office as early as possible. The editorial office will assess whether the timeline can be revised or whether it is necessary to reassign responsibilities. Repeated or unresponsive non-compliance may result in the termination of the Guest Editor appointment, with the special issue proceeding under direct editorial office management.

11.3 Withdrawal of Guest Editor

A Guest Editor who needs to withdraw from the role for any reason must notify the editorial office in writing with as much advance notice as possible. The editorial office will determine,

in consultation with the conference organiser, whether an alternative appointment is feasible or whether the special issue will proceed under direct editorial management. The withdrawing Guest Editor remains bound by the confidentiality obligations in Section 9.3.

12. Attribution and Recognition

Guest Editors of published special issues will be credited as Guest Editors on the published issue. This credit will appear on the journal's website and, where applicable, in the issue metadata submitted to indexing databases. The editorial introduction, where published, will be attributed to the Guest Editor(s) as authors.

RCELL does not offer financial remuneration for the Guest Editor role. The contribution is recognised as a scholarly service to the academic community and to the journal. Guest Editor recognition does not imply editorial decision authority.

13. Acceptance of These Guidelines

These guidelines form part of the formal terms of the Guest Editor appointment. By accepting the appointment, the Guest Editor confirms that they have read, understood, and agreed to comply with all provisions set out herein.

The editorial office will request a signed acceptance of these guidelines at the commencement of the appointment. A digital signature or written confirmation by email from an institutional email address is acceptable.

Full Name of Guest Editor	
Position and Institution	
Special Issue Theme	
Signature	
Date (DD/MM/YYYY)	

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