

Special Issue Validation Checklist

When considering the development of a special issue, use this checklist to ensure you consider the perspectives of all stakeholders to properly plan for a successful publication.

- Who will handle peer review operations? Will it be the regular editorial office?
- Does your journal have the appropriate time and resources to support a special issue?
 - Can the editorial office handle processing extra papers? What is the financial cost of that extra effort and is there any way to recover those costs? For those journals with print editions, will special issue pages be included in the regular editorial page budget? Could funds be raised through advertising or sponsorship to cover the cost of extra pages?
 - For commissioned content, how will reminders to authors be handled? Invited content requires an extra level of sensitivity and “white glove” service, all of which require skill and ample processing time.
 - For unsolicited content, how will the editorial office authenticate contributors and their work? How will the journal verify authorship and guard against papermills? Can author contributorship statements or the adoption of the [CRediT](#) taxonomy afford some form of protection?
 - How much work will be required to ensure manuscripts meet formatting demands? In particular, for commissioned articles, authors may reasonably expect that the editorial office will handle some formatting requirements as they were asked to contribute the content. Alternatively, authors responding to a call for papers may not be familiar with the journal to which they are submitting and, thus, may require personalized guidance, again requiring time and effort.
 - How will permissions and copyrights be handled? Will this be the responsibility of the author or the editorial office?
 - Will extra copyediting support be necessary and who will do that?
 - What training will be required for the guest editor? Such training will ensure that the editor completes peer review thoroughly, is aware of their ethical responsibilities, delivers a positive author experience that does not undermine a journal’s reputation and, can actively and appropriately promote the special issue when it publishes.

Checklist continues on next page

- Who will perform the peer review of the special issue manuscripts?
 - How many reviews will be required?
 - Who will select/invite the reviewers? Will it be the regular editorial office or the guest editor?
 - If the guest editor contributes a paper, who will peer review that work?
 - Should the regular editor-in-chief (EIC) ultimately make a final decision on every paper or only papers written by a guest editor?

- Should there be a limit on how much material a guest editor or editors contribute? The real concern here is the very real threat of endogeneity occurring.

- Should there be a mandatory minimum number of papers that must be accepted for publication by a given deadline? Alternatively, will the special issue only be compiled once a target number of papers has been reached, unencumbered by adherence to a specified schedule? Should there be no mandatory minimum at all?

- Are the proposed topic, potential authors, and submitted content balanced and free of bias? For special issues soliciting content, how can the journal ensure a broad array of perspectives is received? In the interest of providing scientific balance, how can a journal guard against a flood of submissions promoting a particular viewpoint?

- If the journal is OA, how will APCs be handled? Will waivers be offered? Will discounts be offered to ensure a sizeable number of submissions and equal global representation?

- More broadly speaking, how many special issues should you feasibly consider? Beyond the obvious logistical questions, does a high number of special issues possibly imply a journal is desperate for content? Will a large number of special issues overshadow regular issue content?

- How will you monitor guest editor and author behavior throughout the assembly of the special issue? Again, this question suggests no one other than the regular editorial office should manage the submission and peer review process.

- How will you must ensure guest editors understand their role and responsibilities both towards content validation and ethicality? It is strongly recommended journals provide guest editors with documentation that clearly delineates roles and responsibilities and ask them to sign an attestation statement that they have read and understood such document. That does not absolve the journal, however, of any blame in the event of an ethical violation that later comes to light as the EIC and editorial office ultimately assume full responsibility for content published within the journal.