

Changes to the Review Process

Over the past year, we made a number of changes to the editorial process at *The Journal of Neuroscience*. Although many of these are described in an editorial published in the January 6, 2016 issue (<http://bit.ly/1SYr13Y>), we recognize that there has been confusion about these shifts in review at *JNeurosci*. In this column, we lay out these changes and the rationale for their implementation.

Editorial Rejection

A major change over the past year has been that *JNeurosci* increased the rate of editorial rejection. This has both sped up the decision process for manuscripts that are more appropriate for other journals and decreased demands on our reviewers, who volunteer their time. The new process involves consultation among at least two reviewing editors and one senior editor who have knowledge of the scientific area, so that each manuscript receives careful consideration. The decision letter now outlines the reasons for editorial rejection, which may relate to the scope of the study, making it more appropriate for a specialized journal, or whether the findings make a significant advance in the field.

JNeurosci welcomes papers that use a wide variety of techniques at many levels of organization, from the biophysical to the cognitive, but focuses primarily on findings that contribute substantially to the understanding of nervous system function. For example, purely biophysical or behavioral studies should provide novel insights into, and make specific predictions about, neural mechanisms or neural representations. Despite the increase in the rate of editorial rejection, the overall acceptance rate has not changed to a similar degree (Fig. 1).

This indicates that, although the new process has accelerated the decision process for editorially rejected papers, it has not skewed the outcomes significantly. In line with our commitment to peer review, *JNeurosci* still sends the large majority of manuscripts to reviewers.

Acceptance Rate

We expect to continue accepting ~20–25% of submitted manuscripts. As an editorial board, we have determined that, given the strength of the manuscripts we receive, this is the level at which we can identify the strongest papers. This is consistent with the goal of *JNeurosci* to publish rigorous studies that make a significant advance in the field.

Brief Communications

JNeurosci has also discontinued the Brief Communication format for reporting novel observations that do not yet have mechanistic underpinnings as of January 1, 2016. *eNeuro* is the new home for these manuscripts. This move was made, in part, because Brief Communications often went through several rounds of review, and many were then transformed into Regular Manuscripts as a result of expectations about what was appropriate for a *JNeurosci* article. Transferring Brief Communications to *eNeuro* is one of the ways that *JNeurosci* is reshaping its identity now that there are two Society for Neuroscience journals (more on this in a future column). As a result of eliminating the Brief Communications format, there has been a decrease in the total number of papers published. *JNeurosci* will still publish short manuscripts and has no lower or upper limit on the number of figures; it will focus on well rounded papers, regardless of length.

2014 - YTD 2016 *JNeurosci* Editorial Rejection Rate vs Acceptance Rate by month

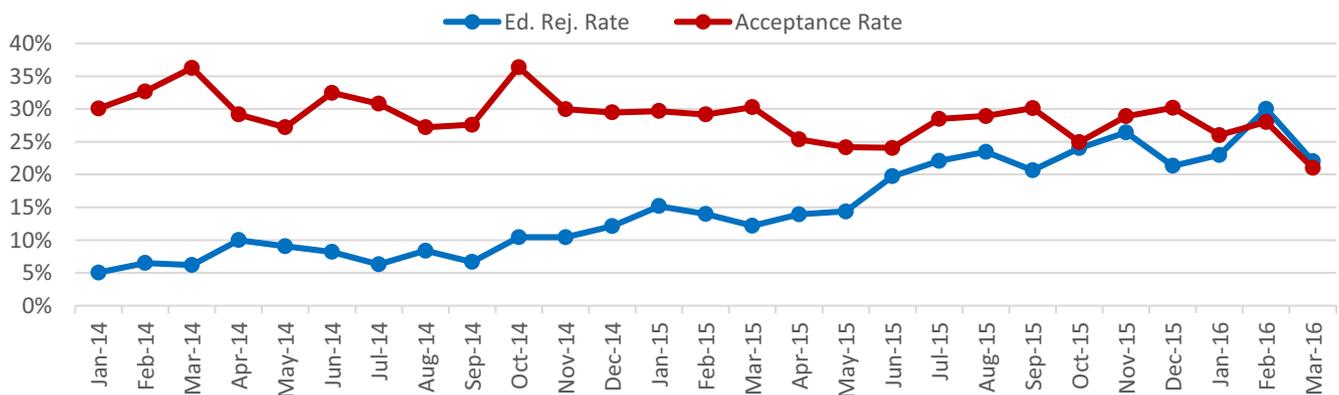


Figure 1. *JNeurosci* editorial rejection rate versus acceptance rate.

Review Process

On the review side, *JNeurosci* now requests that reviewers comment on and score technical/methodological aspects of each manuscript separately from the rating of significance. This facilitates editors' evaluation of technical rigor in making their decisions. Authors are also asked to provide a significance statement about their work to emphasize how the reported research will influence thinking within a neuroscience discipline or more broadly. This statement provides authors with the opportunity to make clear to reviewers, editors, and readers why they believe their work represents a significant advance over previously published findings. Reviewers for *JNeurosci* are asked for both an assessment of the manuscript and a rationale for their "significance" rating. These comments are provided to authors in the decision letter to help explain the rationale for the editorial decision and to guide revisions.

Reviewer Consultations

We have made a concerted effort to get decisions to authors more quickly by decreasing invitations of a third reviewer and minimizing rejection with the possibility of resubmission. To do this,

we have developed a mechanism for reviewer consultation to resolve discrepancies through discussion rather than invitation of a new opinion or another round of review. Consultation sessions allow editors to get a consensus from the reviewers before making a final decision on the manuscript and provide authors with a single set of comments to address.

Bi-directional Transfer Process

In parallel with these changes to the review process, a system for manuscript transfer was established in January 2016 for authors who elect to move scientifically sound papers between *JNeurosci* and *eNeuro*. Transferred articles are considered by the sister journal, sometimes without additional review. To date, the average time in review for manuscripts accepted after transfer has been decreased by >60%.

We realize that these alterations have changed the experience of authors and reviewers significantly. We will continue to provide more information to clarify the editorial process over the next few months. Our goal is to make the submission process as straightforward as possible and to incorporate feedback on how the peer review process can improve.

We welcome your comments, which can be e-mailed to JN_EIC@SFN.org or tweeted to [@SfNJournals](https://twitter.com/SfNJournals) and [@marinaP63](https://twitter.com/marinaP63).

The Journal of Neuroscience Editor-in-Chief and Senior Editors