SIGARCH/TCCA Best Practices for Conference Reviewing Process

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Program Chair's Best Practices

Must

[01] Maintain reviewer anonymity among reviewers of the same submission for as long as possible.

[02] Disable access to papers not assigned to a reviewer, except to all non-conflicted PC members when the paper is coming up for discussion. Disable bulk downloads for papers other than those in a reviewer's review pile.

[03] State a clear policy on whether students may be asked to help with a review in some cases. At a minimum, this policy must require that 1) reviewers receive permission from the Program Chair in each case, and 2) the student have sufficient expertise to assist with the review.

[04] Post ethics guidelines for both authors and reviewers on the conference website and remind authors and reviewers of these guidelines at critical steps of the process (abstract/paper submission, review assignment, PC meeting preparation, etc.)

[05] Make reviewers aware that violation of the review or ethics guidelines can result in severe consequences, including but not limited to getting banned from submitting/reviewing in future years.

[06] Maintain confidentiality on all PC matters and interactions with the Steering Committee.

[07] Require reviewers to look at their assigned papers within one week of assignment, to check for cases where they may know the author(s), and to report these to the Program Chair unless such knowledge is limited to passive public exposure (e.g., arXiv, workshop, CAL, or media announcement). For each report, the Program Chair may change the assignment if, after discussing with the reviewer, he or she feels that the review could be biased in any way.

[08] Act upon allegations of misconduct or other complaints by authors or reviewers in a timely fashion, while preserving the confidentiality of the process.

[09] Explicitly point to guidance on what constitutes a prior publication and what does not; consistency across conferences is essential; see NRPA Policy at the end of this document.

[10] Explicitly point to guidance on what constitutes concurrent work; see Concurrent Submission Policy at the end of this document.

Must Not

[11] Use bidding for papers to assign reviewers to individual papers.

[12] Reveal author identities at *any* point in the review process. Only once the acceptance decisions have been made public can they become known, including to reviewers (and only for accepted papers).

[13] Reveal reviewer identities to (non-conflicted) non-reviewers on the PC at any point in the review process before the PC meeting.

Should

[14] Ask each of the authors to certify that they have made "substantial intellectual contributions" to the paper, in line with ACM and IEEE criteria for authorship. This can be accomplished by providing a checkbox on the submission form or by other means.

[15] Check for author-reviewer CoIs regardless of any such disclosures by the same. See the CoI policy at the end of the document.

[16] Not finalize paper decisions until the PC meeting is over. This allows any decisions made online to be revisited in-person if need be. Program Chairs are encouraged to discuss all papers that are accepted online at the PC meeting whenever practical.

[17] Try to notify authors of accepted papers at least THREE months before the conference starts to allow enough time for visa processing.

Reviewer's Best Practices

Must

[18] Treat all submissions as strictly confidential (i.e., not share with anyone) and destroy all papers once the technical program has been finalized.

[19] Review their paper assignments themselves (but see below re. student helpers) and provide unbiased reviews. Reviewers are not allowed to solicit external reviews of submitted papers from third parties unless they have explicit permission from the Program Chair in each case.

[20] Notify the Program Chair immediately if they feel there is a violation of ethics (e.g., authors seeking support for a paper, authors seeking to identify who the reviewers are) or submission guidelines.

[21] Review the current submission and not judge previous versions of the work they may have reviewed for other venues or been exposed to (e.g., arXiv, workshop, CAL, presentation, or media announcement).

[22] Look over all assigned papers within one week of assignment by the Program Chair, and inform the Program Chair if the reviewer has direct knowledge of who the authors of an assigned paper may be, unless such knowledge is limited to passive public exposure (e.g., arXiv, workshop, CAL, or media announcement).

[23] Disclose to the Program Chair and other reviewers of the paper as soon as possible if an assigned paper may be too close to one's competing research effort. The Program Chair may change the assignment if, after discussing with the reviewer, he or she feels that the review could be biased in any way.

[24] Report any allegations of submission or reviewing misconduct to the Program Chair, who has the responsibility to follow up with them. The only exception is if the complaint is about the Program Chair. In this case, the Steering Committee should be contacted.

Must Not

[25] Actively look for author identities. Reviewers should judge a paper solely on its merits.

[26] Rely on students to fulfill one's reviewing obligations. Students *may be* allowed to help with a review at the discretion of the Program Chair. However, the purpose of reviewing by students is to help train the students under the supervision of a senior community member, *not* to have students do the actual reviews on behalf of the assigned reviewer.

[27] Discuss the content of a submitted paper with anyone other than the paper's reviewers, other non-conflicted PC members (only during the PC meeting), and the Program Chair, during or after the review period.

[28] Reveal the name of paper authors in case reviewers happen to be aware of author identity. (Author names of accepted papers will be revealed after the PC meeting; author names of rejected papers will never be revealed.)

[29] Disclose the outcome of a paper until its authors are notified of its acceptance or rejection.

[30] Disclose the content of a paper until its publication.

[31] Disclose the content of reviews, including the reviewers' identities, or discussions about a paper. After publication, reviewers, PC/ERC members, and the Program Chair

are allowed to discuss their own opinions of an accepted paper, but not the content of others' reviews or any PC/ERC discussion about the papers.

Should Not

[32] Accept PC or ERC invitations knowing that they will not have adequate time to do a proper review.

Authors' Best Practices

Must

[33] Abide by the ACM code of ethics and the IEEE code of ethics.

[34] Abide by the criterion for authorship laid out by ACM and IEEE. Authorship is reserved only for individuals making substantial intellectual contributions. Gifting authorship is strictly prohibited.

[35] List *all* legitimate CoIs and *only* legitimate CoIs. Asking someone for feedback on a draft of the paper or discussing the idea with someone does not create a CoI (but see provision on disclosing authorship knowledge by reviewers above).

[36] Abide by the Concurrent Submission Policy (see below).

[37] Anonymize their submission for double-anonymous reviewing. This means *not* having any author names on any submitted documents, including in PDF metadata, except in the space provided on the submission form. If referring to one's work, authors must do so in the third person and include a full citation for the work in the bibliography. References must *not* be omitted or anonymized.

[38] Fully anonymize any link to artifacts produced by them concerning the submission (e.g., GitHub repository). Remove any links to artifacts that cannot be fully anonymized.

[39] Report any allegations of submission or reviewing misconduct to the Program Chair, who has the responsibility to follow up on them. The only exception is if the complaint is about the Program Chair; in this case, the Steering Committee should be contacted.

[40] Make no assumptions as to whether a particular paper represents a "community paper" and whether its co-authors are or are not conflicted with each other. The decision rests entirely with the Program Chair, who must be either petitioned explicitly or will be presented with the choice through a conflict-tracking tool such as ConflictDB. A community paper is defined as a paper presenting a survey, compendium, tool, or artifact to which multiple authors contribute without engaging in an actual project collaboration (e.g., a paper describing an open-source software framework to which the authors have contributed different modules).

Must Not

[41] Contact reviewers or PC members about any submission, including their own. This includes asking about the outcome of a submission following the online discussion period and the PC meeting. Similarly, authors are not allowed to ask another party to contact the reviewers on their behalf.

[42] List potential reviewers as conflicts of interest based solely on fear or suspicion of a negative bias. If an author believes there exists *clear and articulable evidence* of a negative bias against their work from a potential reviewer, the author may contact the Program Chair and present such evidence in support of his/her case. The Program Chair must acknowledge receipt and may solicit additional information. The Program Chair is *not* required to notify the authors of any decision taken.

[43] Attempt to sway a reviewer to review any paper positively or negatively.

[44] Contact reviewers or PC members requesting any type of information about the reviewing process, either in general or specifically about submitted papers.

[45] Disclose the content of reviews for one's paper publicly before the results are announced. Any grievances should be directed to the Program Chair.

Other Best Practices

[46] General Chair: Registration should be open at least THREE months before the conference starts to allow enough time for visa processing.

Non-Refereed Prior Art (NRPA) Policy

[47] Non-Refereed Prior Art (NRPA) comprises workshop publications that are not in archived proceedings (e.g., ACM Digital Library), technical reports, ArXiV papers, patents or publicly available patent applications, etc.

[48] In general, the expectation is that conference submissions need not compare experimentally against NRPA, nor are authors expected to be aware of NRPA.

[49] NRPA by different authors should be cited if 1) it is technically relevant to the conference submission, and 2) the authors know about it. If NRPA by other authors was influential in the conference submission, the submission must describe how so in sufficient detail.

[50] In the absence of prejudicial information or suspicion of plagiarism, reviewers should not regard the lack of a NRPA citation as a demerit; instead, the reviewer should simply inform the authors of the existence of the NRPA in their review. If the reviewer is aware of prejudicial information or suspects plagiarism, they must report the concern to the

Program Chair. In no case should the reviewer act upon such information unilaterally, including but not limited to coloring their review.

Refereed Prior Art & Concurrent Submission Policy

[51] Authors must guarantee that the manuscript has not been previously published or accepted for publication in a substantially similar form in any conference, journal, or archived proceedings of a workshop (e.g., published in the ACM/IEEE digital library). In the particular case of IEEE Computer Architecture Letters (CAL), it is presumed that a full-length conference paper is substantially different from CAL's four-page publication.

[52] Authors must guarantee that no paper that contains significant overlap with the contributions of the submitted paper will be under review for any other conference or journal or a workshop with archived proceedings during the submitted paper's review period. This includes submissions currently under review by IEEE Computer Architecture Letters.

[53] The only exceptions to the above rules are for the authors' own papers covered by the "NRPA policy." For such cases, the submitted manuscript may ignore the above work to preserve author anonymity. It is recommended that the Program Chair ask authors to disclose any NRPA related to the submission on the submission form, which would allow the Program Chair to make this information available to reviewers if necessary. If in doubt, authors should contact the Program Chair.

[54] Otherwise, ACM and IEEE policies for concurrent non-refereed submissions apply.

Definition of Conflicts of Interest (CoI)

A conflict occurs in the following cases:

[55] Between advisors and advisees, forever.

[56] Between family members, forever (if they might be potential reviewers).

[57] Between people who have collaborated in the last FOUR years. This collaboration can consist of a joint research or development project, a joint paper, or a pending or awarded joint proposal. Co-participation in professional education (e.g., workshops/tutorials), service (e.g., program committees), and other non-research-focused activities does not generally constitute a conflict. When in doubt, the author(s) should check with the Program Chair.

[58] Between people who were at the same institution in the last FOUR years, or where one is actively engaged in discussions about employment with the other person's institution.

[59] **Note:** Graduate students are not presumed to have an automatic COI with their undergraduate institution. Similarly, students who have finalized internships at companies are not presumed to retain an automatic COI with that company. On the other hand, prospective graduate students do have a COI with any institution they have applied to if they are actively engaged in discussions with any faculty member at that institution. Once they join an institution to pursue graduate studies, automatic COIs with any other prospective institutions sunset. In all these cases, the collaboration COI above still applies.

[60] When there is a direct funding relationship between an author and the potential reviewer (e.g., the reviewer is a sponsor of an author's research on behalf of his/her company or vice versa).

[61] Among the leadership of research structures supported by an umbrella funding award (i.e., people making funding decisions or representing members' work before the funding agency) and other members under that umbrella award.

[62] Among PIs of research structures supported under the same umbrella funding award who 1) participate regularly in non-public meetings sponsored by that umbrella award, **and** 2) are regularly exposed to presentations or discussions of unpublished work at such meetings.

[63] Between people whose relationship prevents the reviewer from being objective in his/her assessment.

Exception for Industry-Track Papers

[64] To the extent that industry-track submissions generally do not omit authors and are not subject to double-anonymous reviewing, the provisions above that are meant to preserve author anonymity would not apply.