



## RO-MAN 2026 Peer Review Process and Guidelines<sup>1</sup>

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### Review Process Milestones

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| March 15, 2026 | Paper submissions due                            |
| March 20, 2026 | AEs receive paper assignments                    |
| March 27, 2026 | Reviewer assignments due (two confirmed reviews) |
| May 4, 2026    | External reviews due                             |
| May 11, 2026   | AE meta-reviews due                              |
| May 29, 2026   | Paper decisions & notification of acceptance     |
| June 20, 2026  | Camera-ready deadline                            |

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<sup>1</sup> This guideline is based on the “[RO-MAN 2016 Peer Review Process and Guidelines](#)” written by Bilge Mutlu. We really appreciate Bilge’s great work.

Changes to this document may be made throughout the review process. AEs should direct questions to the program chair, which will be included in the [FAQ Section](#).

## Review Process Basics

### Roles

RO-MAN 2026 review process will involve program chairs, associate editors, and external reviewers. The responsibilities of each role are described below:

1. *Program Chairs*: The program chairs are responsible for managing and overseeing the entire peer review process for the full-paper submission to the main conference track, including the recruiting of associate editors, assignment of papers to associate editors, making the final accept/reject decisions based on the recommendation of the associate editors, and forming the technical program of the conference. The program chairs, in consultation with the Steering Committee and the General Chair, determine the acceptance rate of that year's conference considering the number of submissions, venue capacity, and program planning constraints.
2. *Associate Editors (AE)*: The AEs are responsible for serving as the “primary” reviewer for a subset of the submissions to the conference, including reading the papers they are handling, recruiting reviewers from their network and elsewhere that are among the most qualified to review papers assigned to them, facilitating discussion among the reviewers, writing a meta-review summarizing the reviewer evaluations, and serving as “secondary” reviewer for a small number of borderline papers. As a rule of thumb, no AE should handle more than 6 submissions basically.
3. *External Reviewers*: External reviewers are responsible for evaluating the scientific merit of submissions that they are asked to review, including reading the papers that are assigned to them, writing a detailed review, and engaging in a discussion that the AE may initiate. As a rule of thumb, no external reviewer should be asked to review more than 3 submissions basically.

### Review Blinding & Confidentiality

RO-MAN follows a single-blinded peer-review process, i.e., the author identities are not blinded to the reviewers, but reviewer identities are blinded to the authors. However, author submissions and reviews are both considered *confidential*, reviewers should not share or disclose information about papers to third parties, and authors should not share or disclose external reviewer comments.

### Plagiarism

RO-MAN will adapt IEEE's guidelines for plagiarism. Below is the paragraph on author responsibilities regarding plagiarism from the [IEEE PSPB Operations Manual](#):

IEEE defines plagiarism as *the use of someone else's prior ideas, processes, results, or words without explicitly acknowledging the original author and source*. Plagiarism in any form is unacceptable and is considered a serious breach of professional conduct, with potentially severe ethical and legal consequences. Section 8.2.4.D provides detailed guidelines for a) handling allegations of plagiarism, b) applying appropriate corrective actions when findings of plagiarism have been reached, and c) referencing previously published material.

Our contract with Papercept includes running all submissions through the iThenticate service to calculate a plagiarism similarity score, which will be available to AEs (but not to reviewers) through the “CrossCheck” link under the sub-menu for submission (see screenshot below).



This link will show the iThenticate results for the submission (example below), including a “similarity score” and a link to a detailed report. AEs should review the reports for each paper they are handling, paying particular attention to scores of **40 or higher**. If AEs conclude that submission might involve plagiarism based on their review of the iThenticate analysis, their knowledge of previously published work, or reviewers alerting the AE of potential cases of plagiarism. In these cases, AEs should follow the procedure below:

1. For papers that present potential cases of plagiarism, e.g., an iThenticate similarity score of 40 and above or another reason to suspect plagiarism, review the iThenticate report to determine the nature of the similarity with prior publications;
2. The AE should set a “plagiarism alert flag” on the CrossCheck screen for the paper;
3. The AE should write a note in the “Confidential Comments” section of their meta-review describing their assessment of the case;

- The AE should alert program chairs by sending them a message to ensure their awareness of the case.

#### Files that are available for scanning

Click on the link [Upload the manuscript for scanning](#) (if available) to upload and queue the manuscript for the plagiarism scan. It will take a moment to upload the file

After the manuscript has been uploaded it may take the iThenticate server several minutes to process it

Only the most recent file that is available may be uploaded, except if this or a previous version was already uploaded. Administrators are exempt from these restrictions

Click on the link [View](#) (if available) to view the similarity report on the iThenticate server in a new window or tab. It may take a moment until the window opens. **Note:** Allow your browser to open a pop-up window

[Open the iThenticate Document Viewer Guide](#) (in a new window or tab)

The "Max percentage match" is the largest match shown when the Report is in Content Tracking mode

|                             |  |   |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| Set a plagiarism alert flag | <a href="#">[Case 1] Possible case of plagiarism</a>               | Set this flag if you believe that this is a possible case of plagiarism   |
|                             | <a href="#">[Case 2] Plagiarism report needs to be followed up</a> | Set this flag if you think that this might be a case of plagiarism but you are unable to follow up some of the reported sources |

| Action   | Type of submission | Date | File name | Size | Uploaded | Scan complete | Word count | Similarity score | Max percentage match | Report               |
|--|--------------------|------|-----------|------|----------|---------------|------------|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <a href="#">Upload the manuscript for scanning</a> | First submission   |      |           |      |          |               | 4625       | 24%              | 7%                   | <a href="#">View</a> |

### Double Submissions

RO-MAN will follow a strict double-submission policy, desk-rejecting any submissions that appear identical to submissions that are currently under consideration at another peer-reviewed, archived venue. An AE or a reviewer may identify such cases through their involvement in the peer-review process of another venue. In such cases, the reviewers should alert AEs, and AEs should alert program chairs of the case for a determination. Submissions that are identical will be immediately rejected; whereas submissions with partial overlap with another submission to RO-MAN or another venue will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. The program chairs will work with the AE handling the paper to make this evaluation.

### Conflicts of Interest

Program chairs, AEs, and reviewers should not be in a position to affect the evaluation of papers with which they have a conflict of interest (COI). Relationships that cause a COI include the following:

- Employment at the same institution or company
- Paper co-authorship with authors in the last 24 months

- Active collaboration on a project or serving as co-investigators on a grant
- Graduate advisee/advisor relationship

If, during the paper assignment or review phases, AEs or external reviewers notice a COI with a paper, they must immediately alert the program chairs. The papers with which the program chairs have COIs will be handled by the general chairs of the conference.

## Review Process Phases

The review process for RO-MAN 2020 is broken down into six phases that are outlined below.

### *Phase 1. Associate Editor Assignment*

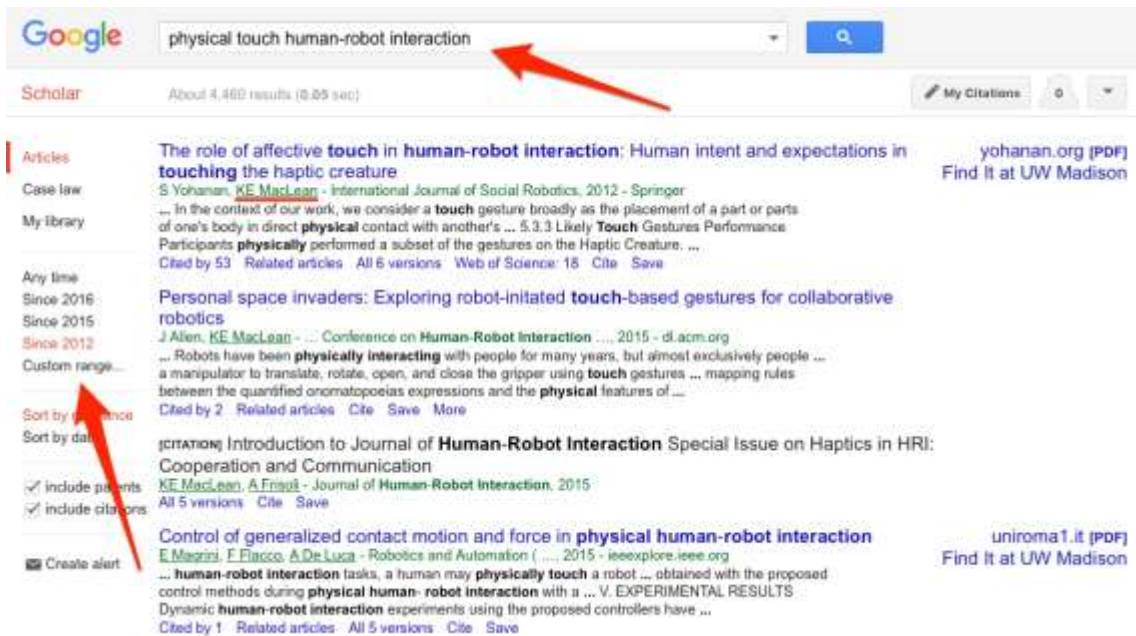
Firstly, associate editor assignments were made automatically by matching author and AE keywords. Next, program chairs checked the validity of the assignments based on their expertise and the paper topics.

### *Phase 2. External Reviewer Assignment*

The second phase of the review process involves AEs assigning external reviewers to each submission they are handling. AEs should identify *two* (no less to ensure rigorous review, no more to avoid community fatigue) qualified, trusted external reviewers and secure commitment from them for preparing high-quality evaluations by the review deadline, and provide reviewers with information on the review process, milestones, and deadlines.

**Finding Reviewers:** In identifying reviewers, the AEs can rely on their personal networks, work cited by the authors, and senior researchers who have done work on the topic in recent years. Finding the best fit is key. A recommended method is to search on [Google Scholar](#) using keywords, limit the time range to the last few years, and identify the senior author on highly-cited papers (as seen in the screenshot below). The reviewer database in the Papercept system should be used as a last resort, as keyword-based matching usually results in poor reviewer assignment.





Once AEs identify the reviewer they wish to invite for a paper, they should add the reviewer to their personal list of reviewers. This can be done in Papercept<sup>2</sup> by opening the “Reviewers” page, following the “Click to add reviewers to your personal reviewers’ list” link, searching for the reviewer in the new tab/page that opens, and checking the “Add to reviewers” option next to the name of the researcher, as seen in the screenshots below. Note that the “Click to add names to your reviewers list from the list of RO-MAN 2026 referees” will not work (see [FAQ](#)).



<sup>2</sup> The AE user's manual for Papercept is available [here](#).

**Look Up or Create a PIN**

[Manage the Reviewers List](#) [Add References to the Reviewers List](#) [Refresh](#) [Close](#)

**Look Up or Create a PIN**

To add a new PIN to the database, follow the link [Add](#)

To look for PINs

- Select a field from the 'Search in' dropdown list
- Type a search string or logical expression into the 'Search for' box
- Click on the Search button

If the search field is PIN then the whole string is matched.

The search results appear at the bottom of the page

Click on [Refresh](#) to clear the results list and search settings

After you have identified suitable reviewers use the link [Add to reviewers](#) to add them to your reviewers list

**Search in:** Surname

**Search for:**

**Option** ☐ Include the keywords in the results list. The results list is automatically reloaded when this option is checked or unchecked

**Option** Change the number of rows displayed on each page of the results set: 25. The results list is automatically reloaded when this option is changed

You may enter several search strings combined by the logical operators AND, OR and NOT into the "Search for" box. Use parentheses to modify the precedences. Example:  
(security OR safety) AND NOT high risk  
The keywords AND, OR and NOT must be in capitals. Otherwise the search is case insensitive  
Logical expressions may be used for all fields except for the PIN field  
Except in the PIN field the underscore ( \_ ) may be used as the wildcard symbol for a single character and the percent sign (%) for any number of characters

**Search Results** [Top](#)

To see the complete database entry, follow the link [Details](#)  
To update the database entry, follow the link [Update](#)  
To add a single PIN owner to your personal reviewers list, click on [Add to reviewers](#)  
To add several PIN owners at the same time to your personal reviewers list, check their boxes and click on the "Add" button at the bottom of the page  
If a PIN owner is already on your reviewers list then the Add to reviewers link and the checkbox are disabled

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|   | PIN                     | Surname                | Given name                       | Title                    | Affiliation                    | E-mail address |
|---|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|
| 1 | <a href="#">Details</a> | <a href="#">Update</a> | <a href="#">Add to reviewers</a> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <a href="#">Activity check</a> |                |

Page 1 of 1 [Go to page](#) [First](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Last](#)

[Add all checked individuals to my Reviewers list](#) [Add](#)

**Inviting Reviewers:** To invite and get commitments from reviewers, AEs should personalize the email templates provided in the Papercept system by following "My preferences" and then "Personalized form letters" (see the screenshot below).

Home Access Workspace Go to  PINs Reviewers My preferences Settings Program Tools Help Refresh Log out Contact Technical Support

Cancel the page

Use this page to set personal preferences

- Periodic status reports by e-mail
- Personalized form letters

On this page you may personalize the form letters that the system sends for you

**Personalized Form Letters**

\*A conference-wide default form letter exists  
If a form letter is listed as "Exists" then a personalized form letter exists

Click on [Edit](#) for the personalized form letter that you wish to add or to edit  
If no personalized form letter exists then the default conference-wide form letter is loaded (if available)

|                                       |                      |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Review request*                       | <a href="#">Edit</a> |
| Reminder to confirm a review request* | <a href="#">Edit</a> |
| Review reminder*                      | <a href="#">Edit</a> |
| Review cancellation*                  | <a href="#">Edit</a> |
| Thank you note for review acceptance* | <a href="#">Edit</a> |
| Thank you note for review submission* | <a href="#">Edit</a> |
| Request to submit a revised review*   | <a href="#">Edit</a> |
| <a href="#">Cancel</a>                |                      |

Personal emails that provide the reviewer with a brief overview of the paper and why you think he/she would be the best person to review this paper work the best to get commitments. Below is a sample review request email. Once the reviewer agrees to help, the official email can be sent with the link to the Papercept system as well as a copy of the paper. We have prepared a document similar to this for external reviewers, and you can send reviewers a link to this document (RO-MAN 2026 Guidelines for External Reviewers).

Re: RO-MAN 2026 paper review request

Dear <First-Name>,

I am wondering if you would be available and interested in reviewing a RO-MAN paper that explores the effects of physical touch by a robot on user experience in home healthcare scenarios. I thought that you would be an excellent reviewer for this paper, as the authors build on and cite the RO-MAN 2021 paper you co-authored on parameters of human-robot physical interaction, and would greatly appreciate your help if you would be available. The review deadline is midnight PST on May 1, 2026, and review guidelines can be found at RO-MAN 2026 Guidelines for External Reviewers. Thank you for considering this request.

Best regards,

<Your-Name>

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<Paper-Title>

<Abstract>



### *Phase 3. External Review*

In the next phase of the review process, external reviewers will complete their evaluations of the papers and submit their reviews to Papercept by the deadline. AEs are responsible for ensuring the timely completion of all reviews, if necessary, obtaining emergency reviews, and checking review quality and, if necessary, seeking further input or improvements from reviewers. Additionally, AEs can initiate discussion among reviewers in this phase, although, because reviews may not be submitted by the review deadline, the majority of discussions are expected to take place during the primary review period.

During the external review phase, AEs should plan on communicating review guidelines to the external reviewers, sending them reminders regarding the review deadline, and thanking them for their service and time after this phase. The two most important aspects of reviews are (1) the numerical overall assessment of the quality of the submission and (2) comments provided for the authors. The numeric evaluation involves a scale from five (“Definitely accept”) to one (“Reject (with explanation)”) with half-point increments as shown below.

| Grade  | Quality assessment                                  | Recommended action      |
|--------|---|-------------------------|
| A/5.0  | Award candidate                                     | Definitely accept       |
| B+/4.5 | Journal material                                    | Accept                  |
| B/4.0  | Solid conference paper                              | Accept                  |
| B–/3.5 | Fair conference paper                               | Accept if possible      |
| C/3.0  | Controversial/amendable                             | Accept with discretion  |
| C–/2.5 | Marginal  | Last resort             |
| D/2.0  | Substandard   | Unacceptable            |
| U/1.0  | Unsuitable: previously published, no audience, etc. | Reject with explanation |

The textual comments should focus on evaluating the technical quality of the submission and the significance of its contributions to the field of human-robot interactive communication. The comments should also provide concrete and informative comments for the AE as well as constructive and actionable comments for the authors. Below is a suggested structure for a “good” review.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Adapted from reviewer guidelines developed for HRI 2015 by Mutlu & Takayama.

**Summary** — The review should start with a brief summary of the work presented in the paper and outline its main findings and potential contributions to human-robot interactive communication.

**Strengths and Weaknesses** — The review should list the strengths and weaknesses of the paper in brief paragraphs or in a bulleted list form. Most reviews list three key strengths and three key weaknesses.

**Detailed Comments** — This section is the main part of the review. It will expand on the strengths and weaknesses that are listed in the previous section. The reviewers should use this section to discuss the intellectual contributions of the paper, make detailed recommendations on design, implementation, and evaluation, provide pointers to relevant work that the paper does not mention, and point to future directions that might benefit the authors' research program.

Reviewers should strive to be as constructive as possible in their comments and provide authors with actionable suggestions. For instance, if the presented work or the presentation of the work could be improved in any way, a breakdown of what improvements could be made would be most helpful to the authors. If the reviewer thinks that key related work is missing in the paper, the review should include pointers to this work (e.g., links or citation information). If the presentation of the work lacks clarity, the review should posit specific questions that the authors should seek to answer in the paper.

A key point that the reviewers should consider is whether the weaknesses they are highlighting are addressable in a short timeframe (i.e., until camera-ready papers are due). If the work has weaknesses that require significant new data collection and analysis or major restructuring of the paper, the reviewer should not consider these issues addressable. Weaknesses that require improvements in the clarity of the paper or reframing of aspects of the paper should be considered addressable.

**Suggestions for Improvement** — The review should provide authors with a forward-looking summary of the changes they can make in future iterations of the work or future revisions of their paper, including changes that should be made to the camera-ready version of the paper, if the paper is accepted. This section could be made up of a bulleted list or short paragraphs that list the changes the reviewers think are important to improve the work.

**Recommendation** — The review should conclude with a brief qualitative statement of whether or not the reviewer recommends including the paper in this year's technical program. This recommendation is extremely important in interpreting the numeric evaluation, particularly for borderline cases. Recommendations such as "I believe that this paper makes a significant contribution to human-robot interactive communication and should be included in this year's technical program," "While the paper has some weaknesses, it could be included in the technical program, as it makes the following contributions: ...," "Although the paper has some weaknesses, they can be addressed by making the following improvements: ...," "While the work presented in the paper is

promising, it does not seem to be ready for publication due to major weaknesses in ..., " or "The paper does not seem to be appropriate for the topics and goals of the conference and the authors should be encouraged to submit their work elsewhere such as ...." are appropriate.

#### *Phase 4. Primary Review*

In the next phase of the review process, AEs will facilitate discussion among reviewers in Papercept, particularly when a paper has diverging reviews (e.g., numerical ratings differing by *two points* or greater, write a meta-review for each paper that summarizes the paper's key strengths and weaknesses and the points made by the external reviewers, and make preliminary accept/reject recommendations for papers. During discussion and meta-review, AEs should seek to maintain the confidentiality of reviewers, referring to reviewers with their Reviewer numbers (e.g., "R1") instead of their names. Meta-reviews should not be another review of the paper; they should instead provide the authors with a "big picture" summary of the paper's contributions, strengths, weaknesses, and evaluation by external reviewers. A suggested outline for a meta-review is provided below.

**Summary** — The meta-review should start with a brief summary of the research presented in the paper, outline the potential contributions of the work, and the significance and relevance of the research for the RO-MAN community.

**Strengths and Weaknesses** — This section should be the bulk of the meta-review and outline the key strengths and weaknesses of the research and the presentation of the work in the paper. This outline could be in the form of brief paragraphs or a bulleted list. Three key strengths and three key weaknesses tend to capture the important points for most papers. These descriptions should cite external reviewers' comments (e.g., "R1 highlighted that...") and involve the meta-reviewer's assessment of these comments. The meta-review can also highlight strengths and weaknesses that are not highlighted by external reviewers.

**Recommendation** — The primary meta-review should draw on the weighing of the paper's strengths and weaknesses to conclude with a concrete recommendation for the Program Chairs. AEs should try to arrive at a concrete "I would like to see this paper at the conference" or "I don't think this paper is ready for publication (yet)" decision.

**Numerical Evaluation** — The verbal recommendation should reflect this decision in their numerical ratings. The numeric evaluation involves a scale from "5 = Definitely Accept" to "1 = Reject (with explanation)," and AEs should try not to use the mid-point in this scale, "3 = Accept with discretion."

### *Phase 5. Paper Decisions*

The final phase of the review process is to make accept/reject decisions for all papers. These decisions will take into account the acceptance rate (determined with input from the Steering Committee and general chair and taking program/venue constraints into consideration), the average numerical rating papers have received, and the accept/reject recommendations provided in primary and secondary reviews. Accept/reject decisions will be sent to authors by the paper notification deadline.

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

### *Q: What do I do when reviewers ask for extra time?*

A: The review deadline posted in the [Process Milestones](#) is the target date and can be extended on an individual basis. As long as AEs can complete their meta-reviews by the meta-review deadline, they can give their reviewers additional time.

### *Q: Can we reject any papers without review?*

A: A “desk reject” is possible if (1) the paper has no relevance to the conference, (2) it is a double submission to RO-MAN or another conference, or (3) there is plagiarism involved. If it is none of these cases, e.g., when a paper appears weak, the desk rejection is a bit harder to justify, and peer review is the best way to proceed. Note that some of these weak papers may be by authors who are trying to enter the field or starting their research, so they are the ones who need the feedback the most. The peer-review process will not only help us create a sound technical program but will also help us grow and strengthen our community.

### *Q: Can AEs serve as reviewers?*

A: AEs are discouraged from serving as external reviewers for the papers they are handling or papers that other AEs are handling for two reasons. First, managing the process and writing meta-reviews is already a lot of work, so this would just add to your workload. Second, for the papers you are handling, if you are one of the external reviewers, you may not get the diversity of opinions you would otherwise get on the paper. AEs should only do this as a last resort, e.g., if one of your committed reviewers can't complete their review at the last minute or when other AEs need emergency reviewers.