

# ACL Reviewing Process Survey

Peer review is an important part of our scientific process that allows us to vet our scientific findings and decide which papers will be presented at our conferences. Recently, there has been an explosion of interest in the area of natural language processing, which has led us to revisit several aspects of the reviewing process.

In this survey, we (the Association for Computational Linguistics Executive Committee, <http://aclweb.org>) would like to ask your opinion about several aspects of the reviewing process based on your experience as an author, reviewer, area chair (AC), or program chair (PC).

The purpose of this survey is to provide information about opinions of the ACL membership to future ACL PCs and to the ACL Exec, which will help guide decisions about these policies in the future. The responses will also be summarized in aggregate form for the ACL membership at ACL 2019. The likely outcome is that there will be a wide range of views, and it will likely not be possible to meet the preferences or opinions expressed by any particular individual. Although the results of survey will not determine policy, they will provide important information about the memberships' priorities both for the membership itself and for helping inform planning by ACL leadership.

Note: This is not a survey about the overall ACL policies on submission, review, citation ([https://www.aclweb.org/adminwiki/index.php?title=ACL\\_Policies\\_for\\_Submission,\\_Review\\_and\\_Citation](https://www.aclweb.org/adminwiki/index.php?title=ACL_Policies_for_Submission,_Review_and_Citation)), and all questions below assume that we will continue to follow this policy.

Note: below we use \*ACL to indicate all ACL-affiliated conferences.

## 1. ----- Authorship/Review/Organization Experience -----

*The below questions ask about your experience authoring, reviewing, or organizing for \*ACL conferences.*

## 2. Are you a current/previous member of ACL?

Yes

No

### 3. Author

*How often have you submitted a long or short paper for review as an author or co-author to a \*ACL conference over the last 10 years?*

Never

1 Time

2 Times

3-5 Times

6+ Times

### 4. Reviewer

*How often have you reviewed for a \*ACL conference over the last 10 years, including full papers or short papers?*

Never

1 Time

2 Times

3-5 Times

6+ Times

### 5. Area Chair

*How often have you served as an area chair for a \*ACL conference in the past 10 years?*

Never

1 Time

- 2 Times
- 3-5 Times
- 6+ Times

## 6. Program Chair

*How many times have you served as a program chair for a \*ACL conference?*

- Never
- 1+ Times

## 7. ----- Author Response -----

*In recent years, some \*ACL conferences have had author responses, which provide a chance for authors to respond to reviewers to answer questions and provide clarifications before final decisions are made. There are several potential pros and cons of this process:*

*Pros:*

*\* For authors: it may increase review quality as reviewer misconceptions can be clarified.*

*\* For reviewers: it may allow reviewers an opportunity to ask questions, increasing confidence in reviews.*

*\* For ACs/PCs: it provides an additional information source upon which to base decisions.*

*Cons:*

*\* For all: it requires the review process to be longer, which may be difficult or impossible when many conference deadlines are back-to-back.*

*\* For authors: they may have to scramble to provide responses in a short period, often over weekends, which may be disruptive. Also, it may not be clear whether this effort is worth it, as empirically only a small portion of papers have their decisions changed based on author response.*

*\* For reviewers/ACs/PCs: it increases the load of having to read an additional response. It also requires time, which may make the reviewing period longer and scheduling hard.*

## 8. Have you submitted a paper to or reviewed a paper for an \*ACL conference that used an author-response period?

- Yes
- No

Not sure

9. What is your view on author response for \*ACL conferences?

Strongly favor

Favor

Oppose

Strongly oppose

No opinion / Not sure

10. Additional comments on author response

*If you have differing opinions depending on your role (as an author, reviewer, AC, or PC), feel free to note this here. Similarly for other "Additional comments" sections below.*

Enter your answer

11. ----- Author Discussion -----

*In addition to one-time response, some conferences have a discussion period where authors can interact with reviewers over an extended period of time. After initial reviews are released, authors may respond to the reviews point-by-point, and then the reviewers or ACs can ask additional follow-up questions or clarifications until the author discussion period is over. All this can be done in an anonymous fashion, preserving double-blind review.*

*Author discussion is a more comprehensive version of author response, which has benefits of allowing additional opportunities to clarify any inconsistent points. However, it increases the time required for the response period, and also increases the time investment for all parties involved.*

12. Have you participated in conferences with author discussion?

Yes

- No
- Not sure

13. Do you prefer having author discussion for \*ACL conferences?

- Strongly favor
- Favor
- Oppose
- Strongly oppose
- No opinion / Not sure

14. Additional comments on author discussion

Enter your answer

15. ----- Meta-review -----

*Meta-review is a review performed by ACs after the review process completes that summarizes the views of the reviewers, and also explains the reasoning of the ACs regarding why they reached their final decision. These meta-reviews potentially make the reasoning about why decisions were made more clear. However, this increases the amount of work required for ACs, who are required to write the meta-reviews. One option is to require meta-review for only for some subset of papers that are on the borderline.*

16. Do you prefer having meta-reviews for \*ACL conferences?

- Strongly favor
- Favor

- Oppose
- Strongly oppose
- No opinion / Not sure

17. If ACs write meta-reviews for a given conference, what is your view of having them written only for borderline cases (and not for all papers)?

- Strongly favor
- Favor
- Oppose
- Strongly oppose
- No opinion / Not sure

18. Additional comments on meta-review

Enter your answer

19. ----- Structured Review Forms -----

*There are various levels of structure provided by review forms from various conferences. These vary from a simple score and free-form text box with which to enter reviews, to multiple text boxes on various aspects. More structured forms can result in more fine-grained advice, but also may increase the load on reviewers. What do you think about the following options?*

20. What format of review form do you prefer for \*ACL conferences?

- No structure, a single text box/score

- Minimal structure, such as strengths/weaknesses/questions only
- Much structure, commenting on various aspects of the paper (such as novelty and soundness, etc.) separately
- No opinion / Not sure
- 

## 21. Additional comments on structured review forms

Enter your answer

## 22. ----- Review Transparency -----

*After the review process, reviews and scores are generally released to authors to explain why decisions are made. In some conferences, other varieties of discussion are released to further improve transparency of the review process. The down-side of these is that reviewers or ACs may feel nervous about being candid in discussion. In addition, in the case of public release of reviews authors may be nervous of negative elements damaging the reputation of their papers or themselves.*

## 23. Reviews should be

- Kept private among reviewers, ACs, and PCs
- Released to authors
- Released to authors, and also the public for accepted papers
- No opinion / Not sure
-

## 24. Post-review discussion should be

- Kept private among reviewers, ACs, and PCs
- Released to authors
- Released to authors, and also the public for accepted papers
- No opinion / Not sure
- 

## 25. Meta-reviews (if existing) should be

- Kept private among ACs and PCs
- Released to reviewers only
- Released to reviewers and authors
- Released to reviewers, authors, and the public for accepted papers
- No opinion / Not sure
- 

## 26. Additional comments on review transparency

## 27. ----- Acceptance Rates -----

*Currently, acceptance rates for the major \*ACL conferences are around 20-25%. There could be arguments made for aiming for lower or higher rates.*

*Favoring lower rates:*

*\* This allows conferences to fit into reasonably-sized venues and time slots.*



- \* *It arguably improves the average quality and reliability of the accepted papers.*
- \* *It perhaps causes readers to pay more attention to the papers that are accepted.*
- \* *It may be an important criterion in hiring or promotion decisions for some academic/industry positions.*

*Favoring higher rates:*

- \* *They result in a more inclusive conference, where more people can participate and present work.*
- \* *They may reduce the effect of variance in the reviews.*
- \* *They speed the dissemination of scientific results as fewer papers will be rejected multiple times before being published.*

*What do you think of the following questions?*

## 28. Acceptance rates should be:

- Much lower than present
- Slightly lower than present
- About present rates
- Slightly higher than present
- Much higher than present
- No opinion / Not sure

## 29. How do you think acceptance rates should be decided for conferences?

- A rate should be decided before-hand, and the number of accepted papers should be adjusted
- The number of accepted papers should be decided before-hand, and the rate should be adjusted
- Rates should not be decided before-hand, and adjusted based on quality of submitted papers
- No opinion / Not sure
-

### 30. Should conference presentations be selective at all?

*In other fields (e.g. medicine), most submitted papers or abstracts are given presentations at conferences, and other measures are used to indicate relative quality of papers (e.g. journal publications). What do you think of this model for \*ACL venues?*

- Conference publications should remain selective, indicating the quality of the accepted papers
- Conference publications should not be selective, with other venues such as journals taking this role
- Conference publications should not be selective, but reviews should be made public as an indicator of paper quality
- 

### 31. Additional comments on acceptance rates

Enter your answer

### 32. ----- Review Release/Submission Deadline Timing -----

*When several conferences are back-to-back, it is sometimes the case that reviews are released only shortly before the next major conference submission deadline. This limited time span for revisions before the next opportunity to submit can cause authors to scramble to revise their papers. On the other hand, having a longer time span (especially in the absence of author response) can be difficult logistically for PCs or other conference organizers.*

### 33. Is the amount of time between release of reviews and the next conference deadline important to you?

- Very important
- Somewhat important

- Minimally important
- Not important at all
- No opinion / Not sure

34. How long is the minimal time that you would like between reviews and next submissions?

- 1 week+
- 2-3 weeks+
- 1 month+
- 2 months+
- No opinion / Not sure
- 

35. Additional comments review release/submission deadline timing

Enter your answer

36. ----- Public Review -----

*Some conferences have public review where the public is allowed to view and publicly post comments about papers during the review period. This can be done in an anonymous fashion, where author names are hidden from the papers during the review period, which is required by the ACL anonymity guidelines. Public review has several potential pros and cons:*

*Pros:*

- \* It theoretically allows the work to be vetted by a larger number of interested parties, if those parties take time to comment.*
- \* It encourages dissemination of research ideas in a more timely manner, as they are made available at the point the review process starts.*

*Cons:*

*\* It requires work to be public before vetting by peer reviewers, which may increase the chance of factually inaccurate statements being consumed by a wider audience.*

*\* It forces authors to make papers public before receiving expert third-party feedback.*

*\* Negative public reviews have the potential to damage the reputation of papers or their authors.*

*\* It potentially makes it harder to support double-blind reviewing, as the affiliations of authors may be hinted at by public comments.*

## 37. Have you participated in conferences with public review?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

## 38. Do you favor public review?

- Strongly favor
- Favor
- Oppose
- Strongly oppose
- No opinion / Not sure

## 39. Additional comments on public review

Enter your answer

## 40. ----- Free Comment Space -----

*If you have any additional comments about review processes that do not fit in the categories above, please add them here:*

Enter your answer

#### 41. ----- Demographic Questions -----

#### 42. In which region are you based?

- Asia/Pacific
- Europe/Africa/Middle-East
- North/Central/South America

#### 43. Gender

- Female
- Male
- Other
- Prefer not to answer

#### 44. Role

- Professor/lecturer
- Researcher in academia
- Researcher in industry
- Graduate student

Other

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