

THE TPIC PROCESS

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AUGUST 28, 2021

PURPOSE:

The Technical Program Integrity Committee (TPIC) is a standing subcommittee of the Conference Quality Committee (CQC) of the IEEE Conferences Committee (ICC). Its purpose (to maintain and ensure the high quality of the technical programs of all IEEE conferences) and its volunteer membership are described in the TAB Operations Manual. To achieve its goals, its primary activity is to review the technical programs of conferences that have already occurred, and if it finds the program of a conference lacking, it has the authority to prevent some or all of the content of that conference from being posted in *Xplore*. It also works to educate all those involved in the conference, in order to prevent future issues.

SELECTING CONFERENCES FOR REVIEW:

The Meetings, Conferences, and Events (MCE) staff will maintain a list of conferences that the TPIC will review. MCE staff and the volunteer Chairs of the TPIC, the CQC, and the ICC (IEEE Conferences Committee) have the authority to add or remove conferences from this list. Typical reasons for being placed on this list include third-party complaints, previous conference quality problems (typically involving the conference organizers, the sponsoring OU, third-party organizations, or previous instances of the conference), as well as random selection. Conferences that have been problem-free for three consecutive instances are generally removed from the list.

WHEN A CONFERENCE IS SELECTED TO UNDERGO TPIC REVIEW:

A letter will be sent to appropriate representatives of the conference organizer and the sponsoring OU. In addition to informing them that the conference will be reviewed, this letter will provide instructions for the review and links to educational materials (notably CLE modules), and the organizers will be encouraged (but not required) to view these materials.

PREPARING FOR THE REVIEW:

Before the review can begin, MCE staff must receive two things from the conference organizers: a completed Technical Program Questionnaire (TPQ) that asks for a variety of information about the conference and the management of its technical program, and a set of files that contain the papers that the conference wishes to submit for distribution in *Xplore*.

INITIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW:

Once the TPQ and the papers have been received, MCE staff will perform an initial administrative review. Its main components are evaluating the TPQ responses (done by MCE staff) and reviewing (usually with the assistance of a third-party vendor) the technical scope and presentation quality (language readability, clarity of figures, etc.) of each paper. If all (or all but a trivial number) of the papers pass this screening and the TPQ is acceptable, then staff can administratively accept the conference. If not, the conference will undergo review by the volunteer members of TPIC.

REVIEW BY TPIC VOLUNTEERS:

Should the conference not be accepted administratively, it will be reviewed by the TPIC. One TPIC member will be assigned to take a detailed look at the conference. This volunteer reviewer will receive the evaluation of scope and presentation quality for every paper, the TPQ responses, and some additional information provided by MCE staff (e.g., the stated conference scope, the identity of the sponsoring OU, and the conference location and dates). The TPIC reviewer will review the materials they were provided with, and will also look at a subset (a minimum of ten) of the papers from the conference, comparing their own evaluation of the scope and presentation quality with that provided to them. The reviewer may also search for additional information on their own (e.g., visiting the conference web site) or request additional information from staff (e.g., information on who reviewed each paper in the conference). Based on all of this information, as well as their own knowledge and experience, the volunteer reviewer will formulate a proposed decision for the conference.

The TPIC will then meet as a body. The volunteer reviewer will “present” to the rest of the TPIC a summary of the conference, their recommendation, and their rationale. After discussion, the TPIC will then vote on a decision, with the decision decided by a simple majority of the voting members present. The TPIC Chair will only vote to break a tie. The possible decisions are “accept,” “reject,” “return for re-review,” or “more information needed.” A decision of “more information needed” essentially means that no decision was made, and the review will continue once the desired information has been received.

WHEN TPIC ACCEPTS A CONFERENCE:

If the decision was to “accept,” then all of the papers submitted by the conference to be included in *Xplore* will be sent on for processing.

WHEN TPIC SENDS A CONFERENCE BACK FOR RE-REVIEW:

The option to “return for re-review” is generally given only to conferences that had a small number of problematic papers, and the TPIC expects the organizers to re-examine the papers that were accepted, remove the ones that they feel don’t meet IEEE standards, and return the revised proceedings. The TPIC will then review the conference again, based on the revised proceedings. It will use the same criteria and process as for its initial review of a conference, and the same set of decisions

are possible. This implies that multiple rounds of re-review are possible, but the expectation is that a conclusion is reached after a small number of iterations.

In the decision letter to the organizers, the TPIC will give a bit more information about why the conference is being returned. While the letter will not identify or give a count of the exact number of papers that the TPIC felt did not meet IEEE standards, it will give some general information about what problems were seen. For example, it might say that it saw papers on tourism and agriculture that were considered out of scope. A small number (~3) of papers will be explicitly identified as examples of problematic papers. In order for TPIC to consider a re-review: 1) appropriate organizers (general chair and publications chair) must view the CLE modules on Scope and on TPIC process (if they have not done so in the previous year), 2) the sponsoring OU must fill out a Sponsoring OU Questionnaire, which asks questions about the OU's involvement in the technical program, and 3) one member on the Sponsoring OU's "Allowed MOU Approver List" must view the CLE modules on Scope and on TPIC process.

WHEN TPIC REJECTS A CONFERENCE:

If a conference is rejected by the TPIC, then none of the conference papers will be sent to *Xplore*. Both the conference organizers and the Sponsoring OU will receive the same sort of "extra information" that the Re-Review conferences receive (general info about the problems seen and ~3 example papers) and they will be pointed to the CLE modules on Scope and TPIC Process, but not required to view them. Note that this decision can be appealed.

WHEN A CONFERENCE WISHES TO APPEAL A TPIC REJECTION:

Appeals to TPIC rejections will be heard by a body appointed by the CQC Chair, usually consisting of three CQC members (possibly including the CQC Chair). Before the appeal will be heard: 1) the appeal must be approved by the Sponsoring OU, and in the case where the Sponsoring OU is a MGA Chapter, Sub-Section, Council, or Student Branch, the appropriate Section, 2) both the conference organizers and the appropriate members of the Sponsoring OU must have taken both the TPIC Process and the Scope CLE classes within the previous year, and 3) the Sponsoring OU must submit the same Sponsoring OU Questionnaire that is described in the TPIC Re-Review section. The Chair of the CQC Panel will submit some written questions to the conference organizers and sponsoring OU, who will provide written responses. The request for appeal and these responses must be received by the CQC within 180 days of when the TPIC rejection notice was sent to the organizers, otherwise the opportunity for appeal is lost. Once the responses are received, the Chair of the CQC Panel will schedule a telecon with the CQC Panel, a representative of the Conference Organizers (appointed by the General Chair of the conference), and a representative of the Sponsoring OU (appointed by the Chair of the Sponsoring OU, e.g., the Chapter Chair if the conference cosponsor was a Chapter or the Society President if the conference cosponsor was a TAB Society). If requested, IEEE will supply a translator. The teleconference will be a dialog between the conference organizers, sponsoring OU, and CQC Panel. The CQC Panel will then make an accept/reject decision and convey it to the conference organizers and sponsoring OU within four weeks of the teleconference. The only possible decisions are "accept" or "reject" — at this point revisions to the conference proceedings content are not allowed.

WHEN A CONFERENCE WISHES TO APPEAL A CQC REJECTION:

Appeals to CQC rejections will be heard by a body appointed by the ICC Chair, usually consisting of three people who have not previously participated in the TPIC review or CQC appeal of the conference. The ICC Chair will not consider appeals to TPIC decisions — only to CQC decisions. Before the appeal will be heard: 1) the appeal must be approved by the Sponsoring OU, and in the case where the Sponsoring OU is a MGA Chapter, Sub-Section, Council, or Student Branch, the appropriate Section, and 2) the appropriate MGA or TAB Division Director must agree to support the Appeal. The Chair of the ICC Panel will submit some written questions to the conference organizers and sponsoring OU, who will provide written responses. The request for appeal and these responses must be received by the ICC Chair within 180 days of when the CQC appeal rejection notice was sent to the organizers, otherwise the opportunity for appeal is lost. Once the responses are received, the Chair of the ICC Panel will schedule a telecon with the ICC Panel, a representative of the Conference Organizers (appointed by the General Chair of the conference), a representative of the Sponsoring OU (appointed by the Chair of the Sponsoring OU), and a representative appointed the Division Director. If requested, IEEE will supply a translator. The teleconference will be a dialog between the conference organizers, sponsoring OU, Division Director, and ICC Panel. The ICC Panel will then make an accept/reject decision and convey it to the conference organizers and sponsoring OU within four weeks of the teleconference. Again, the only possible decisions are “accept” or “reject” — at this point revisions to the conference proceedings content are not allowed.

COMMUNICATION WITH SPONSORING OUs:

In general, the sponsoring OU should be copied on all significant communications to the conference from the TPIC or during the appeal process (e.g., notification that the conference has been selected for review, instructions to the conference organizers, requests for information, notification of decisions). In the case where the Sponsoring OU is a MGA Chapter, Sub-Section, Council, or Student Branch, the appropriate Section should also receive a copy of these communications. At the discretion of MCE Staff, the sponsoring OU and appropriate Section need not receive copies of routine communications with the organizers (e.g., requests for contact information, clarification of details, setting up teleconferences).