GUIDE FOR GUEST EDITORS

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in acting as a guest editor for the London Review of Education (LRE). The journal benefits enormously from its guest-edited special features, as they enable expert oversight for a broad range of topics in education research.

This pack explains what we need from guest editors to ensure smooth running of the journal and the support we offer along the way. The aim is to generate challenging, professional content that will be widely read and cited.

Please visit the journal website where you can find LRE’s aims and scope as well as all information about governance and article submission. You can also browse all LRE articles from the same page. Articles in LRE are subject to double-blind peer review, with at least two expert reviews secured for each paper. LRE is a diamond open-access journal in which all contributions are free to read and there are no article processing charges for authors. Papers are published under the CC BY 4.0 open-access licence.

This pack includes:

• How to shape a special feature, including details of our minimum requirement for content and what types of material are included in LRE (p. 2).
• A form for you to fill in with details about your special feature (p. 3).
• A walkthrough of the process, from writing a call for papers through to publication (pp. 4–8).

As you formulate your special feature, do contact the Editor-in-Chief with questions about content and how to make decisions during peer-review or the journal’s manager about anything to do with the processes involved. We will also be available to offer guidance and support at any time in the special feature’s journey towards publication.

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A special feature for LRE should comprise at least 6 contributions, with our preference being for 8 to 10 papers. We recommend that guest editors aim to review between 10 and 15 papers as some will fall during the review process and others may be withdrawn by authors. You may receive more than 15 papers, but this is the top limit to send for peer review because our budget is set with this limit. Making an initial choice of up to 15 papers for review on receipt of draft papers helps quality control.

The balance of content in a special feature will of course depend on the submissions elicited from a call for papers. There is guidance later in this pack on writing an effective call.

Once guest editors agree to provide a special feature, they guarantee to supply LRE with at least 4 papers that fall within the journal’s aims and scope, even if they fall outside the scope of the special feature. This means that, even if the feature does not succeed, the journal will receive enough content to publish at least one article per month through the year. This is a quality threshold for journals that publish continuously.

The types of content that appear in LRE are described on the ‘Submissions’ tab of the journal website. Here is a little more information about what we would expect to see across a special feature.

**Original research articles** – Most contributions published in LRE are academic papers of around 6,000 words containing rigorous research and analysis that investigates an aspect of education. A special feature in LRE can be comprised entirely of these and encouraging academics to contribute this type of article will be your priority.

**Review articles** – Critical and systematic reviews make an important contribution to scholarship and to the journal itself. Due to the work involved they can be difficult to commission, and they are rarely offered in unsolicited response to a call. A guest editor can be particularly successful in encouraging researchers to submit a review to LRE, and while inclusion of a review is not essential for a special feature, we would certainly welcome one.

**Commentary** – LRE publishes more informal content, but we do so sparingly. Research commentaries are subject to peer review, and any such material should be discussed with LRE’s Editor-in-Chief before it is sent for review.

**Book reviews** – We do not expect guest editors to elicit book reviews as part of a special feature, although they can be included. All such reviews should be discussed with the Book Reviews Editor.
GUIDE FOR GUEST EDITORS

Content and readership questionnaire

Please use this form to provide us with key information about the intended content and main readership for your proposed special feature. (The form will expand as you type.)

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<th>Outline (see the journal website for live calls for papers as the text indicates the sort of detail we are after; if there are none, please contact Ian for past examples)</th>
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LRE is a continuous-publication journal in which individual articles are published as soon as possible after they are accepted by the journal editors. Articles in a special feature can be published at any time across a year or beyond, and they are gathered over that period into a dedicated space in the online journal, with its own url and DOI. You can visit an example here. This means that, while we offer a framework in which guest editors can ringfence their work in a given period, it is also possible to stretch the workload and avoid a deluge. Authors need not worry about missing publication in a special feature if peer review involves a number of revisions. Their work can be added to the feature once it is ready.

The timeline and stages set out here are based on our experience of an effective journey from ideas to publication for special features. Key throughout is open communication and timely responsiveness with and from LRE editors and staff.

The information here starts with guidance on identifying a likely publication date for the first articles and continues through to publication.

**SETTING A TIMELINE**

LRE works on a period of roughly 15 months from submitting a call for papers to the LRE editorial board to date of feature publication. Some papers may appear earlier than this date. However, 15 months allows a good period for planning, gives authors a fair amount of time in which to write, and takes in the fact that peer review for some papers will take longer than we’d prefer.

To help guest editors plan their time and filter submissions, LRE calls for papers invite prospective authors to submit abstracts by a given date, usually a couple of months after the call is posted. The deadline for draft papers is four months after the date for abstracts. Guest editors can use the abstracts to invite papers of interest and discourage others, although all authors submitting abstracts are free to submit a paper, and articles can be submitted by authors who did not first submit an abstract.

As few authors submit material early, this process creates two predictable points where guest editors know they will receive many contributions at once, the first to reach the deadline for abstracts, the second for draft papers. Knowing when these pinch points come enables guest editors to map them against their wider workload.

Peer review takes roughly six months, although some papers will pass through more quickly and others may take longer. We will agree the date of feature publication with you, but you can form an early judgement by fitting the following schedule around your known workload:
• Date 1: submission of your draft call for papers
• Date 2: publication of accepted call for papers (1 month after Date 1)
• Date 3: abstract deadline (2 months after Date 2)
• Date 4: draft papers deadline (4 months after Date 3)
• Date 5: acceptance of first paper (6 months after Date 4)
• Date 6: publication of first paper (1 month after Date 5)
• Date 7: date of feature publication (1 month after Date 6).

There is often unavoidable drift during the peer review process. Setting the publication date for the feature at 15 months after submitting a call for papers to the Editor-in-Chief is conservative and provides us all with confidence that papers will be published around this point. As the schedule suggests, papers may be ready before that date.

CALL FOR PAPERS
To elicit submissions that respond appropriately to a call for papers, please set out the background, framework and any guiding literature for the focus of your feature in a couple of succinct paragraphs, ensuring that you include any important key words. It is helpful to follow these with examples of topics or areas of study that you especially hope to know about. The outline you supplied on the ‘Content and readership questionnaire’ can provide the basis for the call, although you may want to revise it. You and LRE’s Editor-in-Chief will agree the final wording. Please see the journal website for live calls for papers. If there are no open calls, contact the journal’s manager for previous examples.

Appropriate deadlines for abstracts and articles will be added to the call. For abstracts and other expressions of interest, your email address will be given as the contact. Articles will be submitted into our online system (JAMS, see ‘Peer review’, below). The finished call for papers will be posted on the journal website and UCL Press will tweet out a link.

Once the call is posted, please circulate it widely across your academic networks, perhaps with personalised messages or specific requests to experts whose work you know. Please also contact any conferences, events or institutions you think will be interested in the call. You might also use Twitter or LinkedIn, or you can ask UCL Press to repost if you don’t use social media.

We hope you will receive a good number unsolicited submissions alongside any that you may invite personally once the call is published.

IDENTIFYING PEER REVIEWERS
Each article needs two anonymous peer reviews to progress towards publication. While this is sometimes achieved easily, academic workload means that peer review for a single paper can require up to six invitations before two reviewers are secured. Here is some guidance on identifying peer reviewers at key stages. (Guidance on managing submissions and peer review follow later.)

(1) When the call for papers is first posted
Identifying and involving prospective reviewers very early saves time during the peer-review process. Don’t wait until abstracts or draft papers arrive to do this.
Identifying reviewers

- You should cast a very broad net and aim to list as many likely experts as you can. Use your own networks and searches, consult JAMS for previous LRE reviewers (see ‘Peer review’ for more about JAMS), or ask LRE’s Editor-in-Chief about suitable members of the LRE editorial board or external advisory board.
- A strategic way to enable peer review and avoid multiple reviewer invitations is to generate a panel of experts in the area covered by your special feature. Each one will agree to review one or (preferably) two papers. You can start recruiting panel reviewers as soon as a call for papers is posted and you know the submission date for draft papers. You can engage as many prospective reviewers as you like as part of your panel, although 10 is a good minimum to aim at. If you establish a panel, it is a good idea to make a list of additional experts who you might invite during the review process.

(2) When you invite articles from abstracts

If you have an advisory panel, you can start matching reviewers with the papers you have invited; you might even share the abstract with them. If you have not established a panel, it might be easier to do that now you have clearer information about prospective submissions. We suggest that you remind panel members of the deadline for draft for article submissions 2 months ahead of time.

Where there is nobody suitable on a panel for certain invited papers, or where you are not going to establish a panel, now is the time to make a good, long list of experts you might approach for each paper when they are submitted. We recommend that you identify four prospective reviewers for each paper. You are likely to duplicate names here and there, but this should give you a good spread.

Identifying more reviewers

- Where authors submitting abstracts have an established record of published peer-reviewed articles, you may wish to invite them on to your review panel, or add them to the list of additional experts who you may call upon during peer review.
- An additional way to generate reviewer names at this point is to ask invited authors to suggest 6 to 10 possible reviewers for their paper when they submit it.

(3) When peer review is under way

You will engage the review panel and/or begin inviting individual reviewers.

Identifying even more reviewers

Once you have decided that a paper merits peer review, you can invite the author to act as a peer reviewer on other papers.

INVITING CONTRIBUTIONS FOLLOWING ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Your judgement about when to invite an article from a submitted abstract will be based on a number of considerations. As well as your own interest in seeing a full submission, please interrogate each abstract for the following points:

- Is it relevant to LRE’s aims and scope?
• Does it address your call for papers?
• What are the strengths of its argument and analysis?
• Does it offer an original contribution to the field?
• Does it engage with recent scholarship?
• Is the style, presentation and use of English good?

It is not always easy to identify these elements in an abstract, but most reveal likely strengths and weaknesses in the planned articles.

• Invite contributions where you have confidence in the abstract as presented. Where an abstract is of interest but requires improvement or a change in direction, offer guidance to the author along with your invitation to write, or ask for a revised abstract.
• Where a submission is of interest but does not answer your call, pass it to the journal’s Editor-in-Chief for consideration as a general submission to LRE.
• Do not invite articles from any abstract suggesting an article that is not relevant to LRE’s aims and scope or which looks weak. Please inform these authors that they will not be proceeding any further.

CONDUCTING PEER REVIEW
LRE uses the Journal Article Management System (JAMS). We recommend that you register on JAMS as soon as your call for papers has been approved by LRE’s editorial board. You can do it here: https://ucl.jams.pub/user/register

You will receive training and information about how to use JAMS before authors begin to submit papers. We find it’s best not to do this too early, as it’s better to get to know the system by using it.

Papers submitted to JAMS will first be assessed by LRE’s peer review manager, Cecile Berbesi, who will ensure that papers have been submitted in the correct format and that all figures and tables are present. She will be available to support you throughout peer review.

Assessing quality and suitability ahead of peer review
The points noted for consideration on submission of abstracts are even more important when assessing whether a paper is suitable for peer review, although you will want to interrogate them a little further. Peer reviewers are asked to provide comments that address the following points. Where you feel a paper looks strong on all or most of these counts, you are likely to put it through for peer review. If the submission looks of interest but is lacking in some of these areas, you may seek a revised paper ahead of sending for peer review. If it fails severely on some or all of these points, or if it is simply of the journal’s scope, you may reject without sending for peer review:

• Is the article relevant to LRE’s aims and scope, as set out above?
• Does it offer an original contribution to the field? Is it breaking new ground? If so, how?
• Does it engage with recent scholarship?
• What are the strengths of its argument and analysis? Do you have suggestions for improvement?
• Is the overall style and presentation good? Do you have suggestions for improvement?
• Is the article’s length appropriate for what it has to say.

All elements of the journal’s guidance on submission should also be in place. Please familiarise yourself fully with LRE’s notes on submission so you can judge e.g. whether the title follows the standards we set out and length is in close contact with the given limits. Many aspects of our guidance are related to important areas that affect the journal’s long-term health, such as discoverability or quality measures from journal indexers. It is so helpful if you can help us stay in touch with these. Do ask the journal’s manager for information and advice at any time.

Making judgements on receipt of peer reviews
LRE follows recommendations from peer review. As articles have already had some editorial scrutiny before going to reviewers the majority of review pairs tend to recommend publication subject to suggested amendments. In this case, you can invite the author to submit a revised article using the combined review comments, guiding them through any differences across the two reviews.

Sometimes reviewers disagree. One might recommend publication with minor amendments while the other recommends rejection. This makes decision-making more complex than when reviewers are broadly in agreement on the level of work needed. But as an expert in the area of your special feature, you can bring your own scholarship to the judgement. In the end, a peer review is a recommendation not an instruction, and as editor of the feature you are empowered to judge between them and guide the author accordingly.

However, two recommendations to reject send a clear message and should be followed.