



African Journal of Rhetoric (AJR)

African Association for Rhetoric (AAR)

Guidelines for the Appointment of Editors: Types, Roles, and Responsibilities

The African Journal of Rhetoric (AJR) is Africa's premier journal of rhetoric and is accredited by SAPSE. The ethical standards and code of Best Practice in publishing are determined by accrediting bodies like the Academy of South Africa (Assaf) and SCOPUS Elsevier. The following guide has been prepared in compliance with Assaf's recommendations in their 2024 Code of Best Practice. This document serves as a guide for Editors' appointments, roles, and duties.

EDITOR IN CHIEF

The **editor-in-chief (EIC) is in the highest-ranking editorial position**. The EIC oversees the editorial process and ensures the content meets the publication's standards, vision, and goals. The EIC's roles and responsibilities and authority the Editor-in-Chief holds:

Key Roles and Responsibilities:

1. Content Oversight:

- Develops and enforces editorial guidelines, tone, style, and standards.
- Approves or rejects content writers, reporters, and other contributors' submissions.
- Shapes the publication's editorial direction based on its target audience, mission, and current events.

2. Editorial Planning and Strategy:

- Leads editorial planning sessions, determining editorial themes, topics, and story priorities.
- Works with other senior staff to create editorial calendars and align content with the publication's strategic goals.
- Responds to shifts in trends, current events, or issues that require immediate editorial attention.

3. Team Management:

- Supervises editors, writers, and other editorial staff, ensuring a collaborative work environment.
- Mentors junior editorial staff and provides constructive feedback to improve content quality.
- Assign tasks and deadlines to various team members and ensure the editorial workflow runs smoothly.

4. Quality Control:

- Ensures that all content is factually accurate, well-written, and adheres to ethical and legal standards.
- Reviews and approves final drafts of articles, reports, or other content before publication.
- Take responsibility for resolving any editorial errors or controversies.

5. Collaboration and Communication:

- Acts as a liaison between the editorial team and other departments (e.g., marketing, design, and sales) to ensure content aligns with broader organizational goals.
- Communicate with external contributors and experts for potential features, columns, or stories.

6. Budget and Resource Management:

- Manages the editorial budget, allocating resources effectively to ensure high-quality content creation.

- Approves freelance contracts, hires additional staff as needed, and decides on resources for large-scale projects or investigations.

7. Innovation and Trends:

- Stay current with industry trends, emerging technologies, and shifts in consumer behavior to keep the publication relevant.
- Introduces new editorial formats, multimedia projects, and other innovations to keep content fresh and engaging.

8. Public Representation:

- Represents the publication at industry events, conferences, and in the media.
- May occasionally write opinion pieces or commentary that reflect the publication's perspective on key issues.

Authority in the Editorial Process:

1. Final Decision-Making Power:

- The EIC holds ultimate authority over all editorial decisions, including what content gets published and how it is presented.
- They have the final say on the approval or rejection of content, even after other editors or contributors have reviewed it.

2. Setting Editorial Priorities:

- The EIC defines editorial priorities, themes, and topics for the publication, ensuring content aligns with the publication's objectives and values.

3. Hiring and Firing:

- The EIC has authority over hiring editorial staff, including reporters, writers, and section editors.
- In many cases, the EIC may also have the authority to fire staff members for performance or ethical reasons.

4. Handling Sensitive Issues:

- The Editor-in-Chief is the primary authority in handling sensitive or controversial content, guiding decisions on approaching ethical dilemmas, and dealing with backlash or criticism.

5. Conflict Resolution:

- The EIC resolves disputes between editorial team members or editorial staff, contributions, and other departments (e.g., marketing, advertising).
- The EIC also has authority over disputes regarding content that may be considered controversial or risky.

Conclusion:

The Editor-in-Chief plays a critical role in shaping a publication's voice, direction, and integrity. With ultimate authority over the editorial process, they balance creative vision, editorial standards, team management, and business needs while guiding content creation and ensuring quality. Their decisions impact the publication's reputation, success, and relationship with its audience.

GUEST EDITOR(S)

Selection Criteria for Guest Editors

Guest editors are individuals invited to temporarily lead or contribute to the editorial direction of a publication, often bringing a fresh perspective or expertise to a specific issue, project, or thematic focus. The selection of guest editors is crucial because it affects the publication's editorial quality, diversity, and credibility. Below are the key criteria for selecting guest editors:

1. Relevant Expertise and Experience:

- **Industry Knowledge:** The candidate should have deep expertise in the subject matter of the issue or theme they will be overseeing. This could be specific to an industry, a niche subject area, or a style of content (e.g., investigative journalism, creative writing, or cultural criticism).
- **Editorial or Professional Experience:** Ideally, the guest editor should have a track record in editorial roles or relevant professional work demonstrating the ability to curate, review, and oversee content effectively.
- **Credibility and Reputation:** A well-respected individual with a good reputation in their field adds prestige to the publication and can enhance its credibility.

2. Alignment with the Publication's Values and Mission:

- **Cultural Fit:** The guest editor should align with the publication's editorial values, tone, and mission to ensure consistency and cohesion in the editorial content.
- **Ethical Standards:** They should uphold high ethical standards and understand the publication's accuracy, fairness, and impartiality guidelines.

3. Innovative Vision and Creativity:

- **Fresh Perspective:** A good guest editor should bring innovation, new ideas, or alternative perspectives that can elevate the publication's content.
- **Creativity in Editorial Planning:** They should be capable of identifying and addressing relevant topics, creating compelling editorial strategies, and contributing creative solutions to editorial challenges.

4. Network and Relationships:

- **Industry Connections:** The guest editor's professional network can help source high-quality contributors, facilitate interviews, and bring valuable perspectives for the publication.

- **Collaborative Skills:** They should demonstrate the ability to work well with editorial staff, writers, and other departments (e.g., design, marketing, etc.).

5. Commitment and Availability:

- **Time and Focus:** The guest editor should be available for their term, whether overseeing an entire issue, series of articles, or a specific editorial project. The role requires significant time commitment, including reviewing and approving content.
- **Professional Responsibility:** Their commitment should reflect their willingness to engage in regular meetings and feedback cycles and provide editorial guidance.

6. Diversity and Representation:

- **Diverse Perspectives:** Guest editors should ideally reflect diverse voices, whether through their background, experience, or views on a subject. This helps the publication stay relevant to a broad audience and enriches the editorial content with various viewpoints.
- **Inclusive Editorial Approach:** They should be mindful of diversity in their content, ensuring representation across different demographic, social, and cultural groups.

Guest Editors: Roles and Responsibilities

Once appointed, guest editors assume a range of editorial responsibilities. These roles can vary depending on the nature of the publication and the specific editorial project they oversee. However, typical duties include:

1. Editorial Direction and Theme Curation:

- **Setting the Editorial Agenda:** Guest editors are often responsible for choosing the theme or focus for the issue, project, or series they oversee.
- **Identifying Key Topics:** They select the central issues, trends, or stories to cover, ensuring the editorial content is timely, relevant, and thought-provoking.

2. Content Creation and Collaboration:

- **Commissioning Writers and Contributors:** Guest editors may invite select writers, journalists, photographers, or other content creators to contribute. Their industry expertise and specialization network will help bring in high-quality, diverse voices.
- **Providing Editorial Guidance:** They may work closely with contributors, providing feedback, shaping drafts, and ensuring the content aligns with the chosen theme, style, and publication standards.

3. Content Review and Approval:

- **Final Content Approval:** Guest editors often have the authority to approve or reject pieces submitted by contributors, ensuring that the work meets editorial guidelines and fits the theme or direction of the issue.
- **Quality Control:** They help maintain the quality and consistency of the editorial output, ensuring that all content is polished and ready for publication.

4. Collaboration with the Core Editorial Team:

- **Working with In-house Editors:** The guest editor will collaborate closely with the publication's regular editorial team, ensuring that all content aligns with the publication's broader editorial goals and standards.
- **Balancing Independence and Collaboration:** While guest editors bring an outside perspective, they must also respect the publication's internal workflows, brand guidelines, and audience expectations.

5. Public Representation:

- **Acting as a Public Face:** Guest editors may represent the publication in public forums, interviews, or events related to the issue they oversee. They may also write editorials or op-eds that reflect their perspective on the chosen theme or subject matter.
- **Engaging with the Audience:** Depending on the publication's approach, guest editors may engage with the publication's audience through social media, talks, or other channels to promote the issue or encourage dialogue around the topics presented.

Importance of Transparency in Guest Editor Appointment

Ensuring **transparency** in the guest editor appointment process is crucial for maintaining trust, credibility, and fairness in the editorial process. Here's why transparency matters:

1. Builds Trust with the Audience:

- Transparent appointment processes show that the publication is committed to ethical standards and that guest editors are chosen based on merit, relevance, and expertise rather than any hidden or biased agendas.
- Audiences are more likely to trust content if they understand why specific guest editors were chosen and how their editorial influence aligns with the publication's values.

2. Prevents Conflicts of Interest:

- Transparency helps ensure that guest editors do not have undisclosed conflicts of interest that could influence content. Clear disclosure about the editor's background and relationship to the subjects they cover helps mitigate any perceived or actual bias.
- The audience can be assured that editorial decisions are made in the best interest of the publication's integrity.

3. Ensures Fairness and Equity:

- A transparent process guarantees that guest editors are selected based on objective criteria, such as expertise, creativity, and relevance, rather than favoritism or other non-professional factors.
- This approach fosters a sense of fairness, which is crucial for the publication's reputation and maintaining diversity in editorial voices.

4. Strengthens Editorial Integrity:

- Clear communication about who the guest editors are, why they were chosen, and their role within the editorial process helps safeguard the publication's editorial integrity. It shows that editorial decisions are not only informed but also accountable.

Steps to Ensure Transparency:

- **Public Announcement:** The guest editor's role will be made public in AAR's internal communication platforms and online, and the rationale for such an appointment will be provided.
- **Clear Communication:** The editor-in-chief shall outline the guest editor's specific role and responsibilities and the extent of their authority in shaping the content.
- **Disclosure of Affiliations:** If a guest editor has affiliations that could be perceived as a conflict of interest (e.g., working with specific brands or industries), disclose these relationships openly.
- **Feedback Mechanism:** Allow audience or staff feedback on the guest editor's contributions to ensure the process remains open and accountable.

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Roles and Responsibilities of Associate Editors

Associate Editors (AEs) play a critical support role within the editorial team, overseeing content, maintaining editorial standards, and ensuring the smooth execution of the editorial process. Their duties often bridge the gap between senior editorial leadership (e.g., Editor-in-Chief) and junior editorial staff (e.g., writers, copy editors). To ensure that all editorial staff understand their roles well, clearly defining the scope of their responsibilities is essential. Here's a breakdown:

1. Content Review and Editing

- **Manuscript Evaluation:** Associate Editors are responsible for reviewing incoming articles, manuscripts, or other submissions, assessing whether they meet the publication's standards, guidelines, and overall quality.
- **Content Editing:** AEs edit and revise submitted content for clarity, accuracy, grammar, tone, structure, and consistency. They ensure the content is well-crafted, concise, and aligned with the publication's editorial voice.
- **Fact-Checking:** They verify the factual accuracy of the content, checking sources, quotes, and statistics to ensure reliability and credibility.
- **Improving Readability:** They focus on improving the flow and readability of content, making suggestions for reorganization, rewording, or cutting unnecessary material without altering the article's core message.
- **Ensuring Style Consistency:** Associate Editors ensure all content adheres to AJR House Style.

2. Content Coordination and Workflow Management

- **Managing Submission Flow:** AEs help manage the submission and approval workflow, ensuring timely responses to writers and tracking articles' progress from initial submission to final publication.
- **Assigning Tasks:** In some cases, Associate Editors may assign specific stories, poems, articles, or topics to writers or ad hoc contributors/reviewers, helping to distribute the workload within the editorial team.
- **Ensuring Deadlines Are Met:** They monitor submission, revision, and approval deadlines, ensuring that content is delivered on time and that no part of the editorial process is delayed.

- **Collaboration with Other Departments:** AEs communicate with other departments, such as design, marketing, and production, to ensure editorial content is appropriately integrated into the publication, whether print or digital.

3. Support and Mentorship for Junior Staff

- **Training Junior Editors:** Associate Editors often help mentor and train junior editorial staff (e.g., assistant editors, interns, or new writers), offering guidance on editorial procedures, style, and content quality.
- **Providing Feedback:** They provide constructive feedback to writers, helping them to improve their work and develop their writing and editing skills. This feedback usually aims to enhance the publication's quality and build the editorial team's overall skills.
- **Supporting Team Collaboration:** AEs help foster a collaborative working environment by encouraging teamwork and communication between writers, editors, and other departments. They also often help resolve any issues or disputes during the editorial process.

4. Collaboration with Senior Editors

- **Assisting Senior Editors:** Associate Editors report directly to senior editors (such as the Managing Editor or Editor-in-Chief) and assist with high-level editorial decisions, strategic planning, and content oversight. They may also be asked to support the development of editorial strategies, themes, or key projects.
- **Implementing Editorial Vision:** They ensure that the publication's editorial vision and guidelines are adhered to by managing the execution of content that aligns with overall editorial goals.
- **Feedback to Senior Editors:** AEs often provide input and feedback to senior editors about content quality, writer performance, and editorial challenges or opportunities.

5. Content Scheduling and Editorial Planning

- **Editorial Calendar Maintenance:** Associate Editors may help manage the editorial calendar, ensuring all content is scheduled for timely publication. This includes working with the editorial team to plan and organize future issues, feature articles, or special projects.
- **Coordinating Special Issues or Themes:** They may take the lead on managing special editorial projects or themed issues, ensuring that all contributors meet their deadlines and that the content remains consistent with the theme or topic.

- **Planning for Future Topics:** AEs may suggest or plan content ideas for future issues, identify trends, and track relevant news or events that could shape upcoming editorial work.

6. Ensuring Ethical Standards and Quality Control

- **Maintaining Editorial Integrity:** AEs ensure the publication adheres to ethical standards, such as accuracy, fairness, and impartiality. They also help guard against potential conflicts of interest, plagiarism, and biased reporting.
- **Managing Legal and Ethical Issues:** Associate Editors may be tasked with identifying and flagging potential legal or ethical concerns in content (e.g., defamation, plagiarism, privacy violations, or potential conflicts of interest).
- **Fact-Checking and Source Verification:** They are responsible for ensuring that all sources used in articles are reliable, and they may perform additional checks to prevent misinformation or errors from being published.

7. Handling Reader Feedback and Editorial Responses

- **Responding to Reader Inquiries:** AEs may handle reader feedback, whether answering questions about content, addressing complaints, or engaging in discussions with readers about published material.
- **Editing Letters to the Editor:** They may review and edit letters to the editor, ensuring that these contributions maintain the publication's content quality and appropriateness standards.
- **Managing Corrections and Retractions:** If an error is discovered after publication, AEs are often involved in issuing corrections or retractions, working with the editorial team to address the mistake transparently and promptly.

8. Acting as an Interim or Assistant Editor

- **Filling in for Senior Editors:** In the absence of senior editors, Associate Editors may be asked to step in temporarily to make editorial decisions, approve content, or lead editorial meetings.
- **Providing Leadership in Specific Areas:** Depending on the publication's needs, Associate Editors may be assigned leadership over specific sections, genres, or types of content (e.g., news, features, culture), overseeing the editorial process for that particular area.

9. Contributing to Strategic Decisions

- **Participating in Editorial Meetings:** Associate Editors participate in editorial meetings, where content strategy, editorial priorities, and long-term planning are discussed. They contribute ideas and suggestions to shape the publication's overall editorial direction.
- **Evaluating Performance:** They may also be involved in evaluating the performance of certain content, assessing reader engagement, and helping senior editors decide whether to pivot or adjust editorial strategies.

Summary of Roles and Responsibilities of Associate Editors:

1. **Content Editing and Quality Control:** Review, edit, and ensure the accuracy, clarity, and consistency of all content.
2. **Editorial Coordination:** Manage submission workflows, deadlines, and task assignments, ensuring smooth editorial operations.
3. **Mentorship:** Provide guidance, feedback, and training to junior editorial staff.
4. **Support for Senior Editors:** Assist senior editorial leaders in decision-making, planning, and implementing editorial strategies.
5. **Ethics and Standards Enforcement:** Maintain ethical standards and quality control, ensure factual accuracy, and address legal issues.
6. **Content Planning:** Help manage editorial calendars, plan future issues, and suggest topics for content.
7. **Reader Engagement:** Handle reader feedback, edit letters, and manage corrections or retractions.

Conclusion

The role of the Associate Editor is dynamic and essential to the smooth functioning of the editorial process. By providing support in editing, content coordination, mentoring, and strategic decision-making, AEs help ensure that the editorial vision is executed effectively. Their responsibilities directly impact the quality of the content and the efficiency of the editorial team, making it crucial that the entire staff understands their duties well. Clear communication of these responsibilities can foster better collaboration and ensure that the editorial process remains organized and high-quality.

ROTATING EDITORSHIP

Process for Selecting Rotating Editors

The concept of **rotating editors** refers to a model in which editorial leadership or decision-making responsibilities are shared among a group of editors rotating. This approach helps inject fresh perspectives into the editorial process, ensures diverse viewpoints are considered, and helps foster greater inclusivity and balance in content creation. Below is a detailed outline of how the process for selecting rotating editors typically works and the benefits this model offers to editorial decision-making.

Steps for Selecting Rotating Editors

1. Establish Clear Rotation Guidelines:

- **Duration of Rotation:** A Rotating Editor will serve not more than 2 years per term.
- **Selection Frequency:** Selection of a rotational editor might be based solely on the individual's area of expertise in the event of a publication of specific issues or projects.
- **Scope of Responsibility:** Rotating editors shall work closely with the Editor in Chief throughout their tenure. While the editor may have decision-making authority over content and editorial direction during their rotation, consistency with the publication's overall editorial mission must always be maintained.

2. Criteria for Selection:

- **Experience and Expertise:** Rotating editors shall be selected based on their experience, subject matter knowledge, and editorial skills. This ensures that the rotating editor can lead the editorial process effectively. For example, an editor with deep expertise in environmental issues may rotate in for an issue focused on sustainability.
- **Diversity of Perspectives:** editors in this category may be selected from diverse backgrounds, ensuring that different cultural, demographic, professional, and personal experiences are represented. Diversity can encompass gender, race, ethnicity, geographic location, professional background, and even editing style.
- **Professional Development Opportunities:** Junior editors or fee-paying members may rotate into editorial leadership roles, fostering growth and development within the association.

3. **Pre-Rotation Briefing:**

- **Training and Preparation:** Rotating editors shall receive adequate training on editorial processes, content guidelines, and their responsibilities during the rotation. This ensures they understand the publication's editorial values and style.
- **Mentorship from Senior Editors:** An Associate Editor or Member of the Editorial Advisory Board shall be available to support the rotating editor during their term, answering questions and offering guidance as needed.

4. **Rotation Implementation:**

- **Execution of Editorial Role:** During their rotation, editors will assume responsibilities such as content selection, approval, strategic planning, and managing editorial staff. They may also meet with writers, designers, and other team members to steer editorial directions.
- **Feedback Mechanism:** A feedback loop is essential at the end of the rotation period. Other editors, staff, and contributors can provide feedback on the rotating editor's performance. This helps refine the process for future rotations and offers growth opportunities for the rotating editor.

5. **Post-Rotation Evaluation:**

- **Assess Editorial Impact:** After each rotation, evaluate the impact the rotating editor had on the editorial direction, content quality, and diversity of perspectives. Did the content produced reflect diverse voices? Did the editor bring innovative ideas or perspectives?
- **Reflection and Improvement:** Based on the feedback from the team, the rotating editor can reflect on their performance and learn how to improve for future opportunities. This also helps improve the overall editorial process.

Benefits of the Rotating Editor Model

1. **Diverse Perspectives in Decision-Making:**

- **Broadens Editorial Viewpoints:** By rotating editors from different backgrounds, experiences, and areas of expertise, the publication can incorporate a broader range of perspectives into editorial decisions. This prevents editorial vision from dominating and ensures the content reflects multiple angles on various issues.

- **Inclusive Content Creation:** A rotating model encourages the creation of content that is more inclusive, offering space for diverse voices, underrepresented topics, and innovative approaches. It helps avoid echo chambers and broadens the scope of coverage.

2. Professional Development:

- **Empowerment of Junior Editors:** Rotating editorship allows junior or mid-level staff members to take on leadership roles and develop their editorial skills. This fosters a culture of learning and mentorship within the team.
- **Leadership Opportunities:** Regular rotation allows editors to gain leadership experience in a non-permanent capacity. They can build confidence and refine their decision-making skills, preparing them for higher organizational positions.

3. Fostering Creativity and Innovation:

- **Fresh Ideas:** Each rotating editor brings a unique perspective, leading to innovative ideas and creative approaches to content. A rotation system can help prevent stagnation by introducing new editorial strategies, topics, and storytelling methods.
- **Challenging the Status Quo:** New editors may question established editorial processes or suggest changes, leading to improvements or new formats that appeal to evolving audience interests.

4. Preventing Editorial Homogeneity:

- **Counteracts Bias:** A rotating editor model reduces the risk of editorial homogeneity, where the biases or preferences of a single individual or a small group of senior editors shape content. With rotating editors, content decisions are less likely to reflect a narrow worldview, which is particularly important in publications that cover a wide range of topics.
- **Reduces Groupthink:** When the same editorial team consistently makes decisions, it can lead to a form of groupthink, where the same thinking patterns influence everyone. Rotating editors bring in diverse approaches to problem-solving and decision-making, preventing this.

5. Increased Team Collaboration and Cohesion:

- **Strengthens Teamwork:** By rotating editorial duties, team members better understand their colleagues' responsibilities and challenges. This fosters a stronger sense of camaraderie and collaboration across the editorial team.

- **More Effective Communication:** The shared responsibility of rotating editors can improve internal communication and understanding among editors, writers, and other staff members. Everyone gains insight into the editorial process, improving coordination and workflow.

6. Audience Engagement and Relevance:

- **Appealing to Diverse Audiences:** By including a wider array of perspectives in the editorial process, the publication may resonate more deeply with different segments of its audience. Readers may feel more connected to the content if they see that the publication takes a diverse, multifaceted approach to storytelling and reporting.
- **Flexibility in Editorial Direction:** The rotating model enables the publication to adapt quickly to changing reader interests, cultural shifts, and emerging issues, as new editors can bring in fresh, timely content ideas.

7. Risk Management:

- **Spreads Editorial Responsibility:** By distributing editorial power across multiple editors, the publication reduces the risks of one person having too much control over the content. If one editor's decisions or approach is controversial, the rotating model allows for a smoother transition and prevents long-term editorial missteps.
- **Ensures Editorial Accountability:** The collective decision-making process ensures that no single editor can make unilateral decisions that could negatively affect the publication's reputation.

Conclusion

The rotating editor model is a powerful way to introduce diversity and creativity into the editorial process. It offers numerous benefits, including a broader range of perspectives, increased professional development opportunities, and reduced bias or stagnation. By ensuring that different editors have the chance to lead on a rotating basis, publications can foster an editorial environment that is dynamic, inclusive, and innovative—ultimately enriching the content and strengthening the publication's connection with its audience.