

MODELS 2023

Practice Track

Reviewer Guidelines

MODELS 2023 Practice Track PC members play a pivotal role in creating a conference program that will make the conference worthwhile attending. By identifying interesting papers which are insightful, contain valuable lessons-learned, report on noteworthy experiences, etc., PC members perform the crucial function of making sure that presentations will be attractive and the proceedings will have impact. PC members are furthermore instrumental in ensuring a high-quality author experience.

In the below timeline, key dates and action items for PC members are highlighted; dates corresponding to action items are in bold. Further dates are included since even though PC members are not responsible for the respective outcomes, they contribute towards the latter.

Review Process Timeline

Phase I	18 April	reviewing by PC members begins
	5 May	50% of reviews completed
	22 May	100% of reviews completed
Phase II	22 May–4 June	1. PB-member-led electronic discussion round (<i>consolidate reviews, identify early rejections, and prepare for the author response period</i>)
	4 June	Metareviews MR1
Phase III	5–7 June	Author Response period
	8–15 June	2. PB-member-led electronic discussion round (<i>arrive at recommendations and final review versions</i>)
	15 June	Metareviews MR2
Phase IV	16–17 June	PB meeting
	21 June	Metareviews MR3
	26 June	Author notification

Review quality

In addition to the aforementioned participant-facing responsibility of ensuring an interesting conference program, PC members also have author-facing responsibilities:

Confidentiality At all times PC members must take care that they do not divulge any content from submissions under review or any details of the reviewing discussions to anyone outside the program committee / program board.

Respect Using direct language to point out shortcomings can be useful but must never cross the line to becoming disparaging.

Collegiality A useful attitude is to assume the role of a mentor trying to improve the submission by offering constructive criticism.

Authors highly appreciate reviews which make note of positive aspects and are clear about where shortcomings are and advise on how they could be addressed. In short, the reputation of MODELS depends on PC members selecting quality papers but also on what author experience they create. Note, however, that we do not expect PC members to spend an inordinate amount of their valuable time on submissions that clearly display a lack of effort on behalf of the author(s).

Constructive criticism

Please ensure to back up a less than favorable score with concrete criticism, ideally pointing out how the identified shortcoming could be rectified. Please try to avoid personal judgment or voicing personal preferences and rather frame criticism as objectively as possible, e.g., referring to industry practices, state of the art methods, etc. The reviewer team allocated to a submission that is rejected should endeavor to do as much as possible – within reason, depending on the quality of the submission – that authors fully understand why their submission was rejected and that they receive constructive feedback as well.

While it is important to justify negative criticism towards authors, please also justify a positive attitude towards a submission. It is important for the reviewing process that others are able to understand, in concrete terms, why you are endorsing a submission. By explicitly explaining the significance of a contribution, for instance, you may be able to convince other reviewers who were sitting on the fence to join you in recommending acceptance.

Best reviewer award

To recognise the importance of great reviewing and to celebrate those who go the extra mile to create value for MODELS and/or authors, outstanding reviewers will be considered for a "Best Reviewer" award.

The remainder of this document elaborates on the function of each reviewing phase and the associated guidelines.

Review Process

MODELS 2023 uses a four-phase review process with *early rejection*, *early accept recommendation*, and *Author Response* options.

Phase I – Reviewing

The purpose of Phase I is to

- double-check conflicts of interest,
- review submissions, and
- potentially improve reviews.

Conflicts of interest (again)

Although the bidding phase already included declaring conflicts of interest, please double-check if you have conflicts of interest with any of the authors whose submissions were allocated to you. Please perform this quick check for the *entirety of the submissions* allocated to you, before you start reviewing any particular ones, so that respective arrangements can be made as early as possible. For your reference, the [conflict of interest criteria](#) are attached below.

Program Board Member

A member of the Program Board Committee ("PB member", in short), will shepherd the reviewing process for each submission. The PB member will initiate discussions, may ask for amendments to, or improvements of reviews, lead the effort to address large score differences, etc. Please engage with the requests a PB member may make.

Submission relevance

Please consult the [Practice Track section](#) of the [Call for Papers](#), whenever you are not sure whether the submission falls into the scope of the Practice Track. Feel free to consult with the PB member and/or the [Practice Track PC chair](#), if you are not sure. Since the Foundations Track requires anonymized submissions, it will not be possible to save a Practice Track submission from being rejected by transferring it to the Foundations Track.

Violation of submission rules

If you suspect that a paper could be in breach of [MODELS submission rules](#), such as simultaneously being under review elsewhere or constituting (self-) plagiarism, please inform the [Practice Track PC Chair](#) as soon as possible.

Supplementary material

Authors had the option of submitting supplementary material through EasyChair, so please check whether any is available, in case you would like to consult anything beyond the submission itself.

Reviews

As indicated earlier, as a member of the MODELS PC you are expected to write high-quality reviews. Please see section [Evaluating Submissions](#) (including the information on the [Review Form](#)) below for details. However, if the quality of a submission is very clearly unacceptable for MODELS, or if the submission is clearly out of scope for the Practice Track, you do not need to write a detailed review. It will still be necessary, though, to clearly justify why a submission is deemed to be out of scope or not meet the bar.

Half-time reviews deadline

Half of the submissions allocated to you will have to be reviewed by **5 May**. Please round up the quotient, if you can at all. One purpose of this intermediate milestone is to mitigate the impact on the reviewing process, should you unexpectedly become unavailable later in the review period. It will also allow PB members to give you early feedback on the quality of your reviews. If you hear from a PB member after this deadline, please respond to their input.

In case there is an opportunity to get a headstart on the first discussion round, directly after the half-time review deadline, please engage if possible, but we understand if you did not plan on having online discussions before **22 May**.

Reviewing deadline

The remaining submissions allocated to you will have to be reviewed by **22 May**.

If at any point in time you foresee that you will unlikely be able to submit your reviews on time, please [let the PC chairs know](#) as soon as possible.

Phase II – First discussion round

The purpose of Phase II is to

- consolidate reviews,
- identify early rejections,
- identify early acceptance recommendations, and
- prepare the Author Response period for submissions requiring further discussion.

Achieving consensus

The main purpose of the first online discussion round is to strive towards a consensus among reviewers regarding the merit of a submission. If there are large score differences and/or effectively incompatible appraisals, reviewers must make every attempt, under the guidance of the PB member, to consolidate their views to the extent possible. This does not mean that all reviewers have to agree on the very same numerical score, but in the aforementioned cases you should engage with the arguments made by dissenting reviewers.

Discussions should not only aim at potentially indicated score adjustments, but also at homogenizing the contents of reviews, if necessary, to the extent that is compatible with a reviewer's judgment. Some doubts a reviewer may have had may be dispelled by others, some

technical criticism may turn out to be unwarranted, etc. Please amend your review accordingly, particularly, if requested by a PB member.

Although achieving consensus is an express goal of the first discussion round, avoid prematurely following other reviewers into a particular direction. If you believe your position has not been given enough consideration, try to alert the other reviewers to points they may not have given enough attention yet.

Scoring

Review scores will be visible to authors, so please make sure to –

- contribute to the process of avoiding unnecessary wildly contradictory scores.
- not use score adjustments to counteract positions held by other reviewers. Each score must make sense on its own, i.e., reflect your assessment of the submission after the consolidation discussions without any added compensation component.
- adjust your score, if other reviews and/or the discussion change your perspective.

If you feel it is necessary to draw attention to what you believe is an incorrect overall assessment of a submission, please use the comments and, as a very last resort, use a respective signaling score *after* reviews have been sent out to authors.

Submission categories

Category 1: Early rejects

If, at the end of the first discussion round on **4 June**, all review scores are negative and the PB member sees no need to encourage reviewers to rethink their scores, the submission becomes an "*early reject*". Such submissions will not progress to Phase III, instead the PB member will directly prepare an [MR3](#) metareview. Please support them in doing so.

Category 2: Early accept recommendations

If, at the end of the first discussion round on **4 June**, all reviewers positively agree that the submission should be accepted, it is not necessary to invite authors to an author response period. Only if the PB/PC member team feels that some clarification could even further improve the submission, they may agree on a set of questions to be sent to the author(s).

Category 3: Further discussion required

If, at the end of the first discussion round on **4 June**, not all reviewers are in agreement regarding acceptance yet and/or would like to see some clarification before lending stronger support, the PB member will invite you to help compile a so-called "metareview" ([MR1](#)), to be sent to the author(s). This first in a series of such metareviews is meant to highlight the most salient critical comments to author(s) and pose a maximum of five questions, with a view to seek input from authors to see whether some criticism may be counteracted by clarifications. Please support the PB member in creating this metareview, e.g., by contributing to the selection of author response questions from those that were submitted as part of the reviews. Since the same EasyChair notion of a "metareview" is used for three different functions, you may find it useful to consult the [metareview overview table](#).

Phase III – Second discussion round

The purpose of Phase III is to

- allow authors to respond (1000 words limit) to reviews and questions,
- discuss Author Responses,
- arrive at final acceptance recommendations, and
- adapt reviews to their final versions.

Updating reviews

After reading the response by the author(s), you may want to discuss it with others first, but eventually you should update your review, and potentially your score, if indicated. Adapting a score, in either direction, should not be viewed as correcting an initial error, but rather as updating an assessment in the light of new information. Authors will feel they have not wasted their time preparing a response, if they see a positive change to the score and/or an update to the reviews, even if, overall, an acceptance may not materialize after all.

It is by no means a given that a response will impact on your assessment but in order to optimize the author experience, please acknowledge the author response by updating your review (in particular if your review was referenced by the author(s), potentially just by explaining why you did not find the response to be convincing), and making sure that the second metareview (**MR2**, to be compiled by the PB member) explains why no adjustments were deemed necessary.

Please engage with any discussions during this second phase, having an open ear for others and making your points as you see fit. In particular, please respond to encouragements or requests from the PB member to adapt your reviews/scores. It is vital that your score at the end of Phase III reflects your updated evaluation of the submission.

Agreeing on a recommendation

Please work with the PB member and the other reviewers to arrive at an acceptance recommendation and the second metareview ([MR2](#)). This time, the metareview's purpose is to elaborate on and justify the acceptance recommendation. **MR2** is meant to address the participants of the PB meeting, who will consider all acceptance recommendations to arrive at the final acceptance decisions. **MR2** may therefore include information about the reviewing process to convey how the recommendation was arrived at. **MR2** should indicate how strong the recommendation is, e.g., by using qualifications such as "best paper candidate", "very good", "solid", "decent, but not exciting", "only consider, if there is space", etc

Conditional accepts

MODELS does not support conditional accepts, i.e., an acceptance recommendation cannot be contingent on authors making critical changes to the submission for the camera-ready version. When suggestions are made to authors, e.g., as a result of acknowledging their responses and wanting to see the clarifications incorporated into final versions, we act in good faith, trusting

that the authors will enact the requests. However, such requests cannot amount to a major revision of the submission as we will not have a means of verifying whether the revision was performed to the satisfaction of the critical reviewer(s).

Best paper awards

Please support the PB in identifying candidates for best paper awards. The second discussion round in Phase III represents a good opportunity for making respective deliberations.

Phase IV – Final decisions

The purpose of Phase IV is to

- determine the final acceptance decisions during the PB meeting, and
- agree on the final feedback to authors.

Please support the PB member in producing the final **MR3** which contains the final feedback to authors. Depending on the decisions made at the PB meeting, either an acceptance or a rejection should be justified. **MR3** needs to be ready by **21 June**.

Evaluating Submissions

The following remarks about arriving at acceptance decisions relate to both writing reviews and participation in online discussions.

Acceptance standards

PC members perform an essential filtering function to sort the good submissions from the not so good ones. During reviewing, it can therefore be all too easy even for well-meaning reviewers to focus on the weaknesses of a submission in an attempt to protect the high MODELS quality standards. While identifying rejects is very important, it is equally important to not lose sight of the positive aspects of a submission while examining it for problems that should prevent a publication in its current state.

Our aim should be to create an interesting conference program, as opposed to rejecting submissions that do not meet journal-level quality standards. Therefore, some minor shortcomings, a disagreement regarding the approach taken, some missed opportunities, etc. should not lead to rejection. In other words, please do not set the bar too high and allow good aspects to compensate for tolerable weaknesses. If the paper is interesting, if you have learned something from reading it, if you would recommend it to others, if you think it could generate a good debate at the conference, then these could be good reasons to accept the paper. Based on past experiences, we kindly ask you to, if in doubt, try to err on the side of acceptance.

Those new to reviewing may want to consult Alan Jay Smith's "[The Task of the Referee](#)", IEEE Computer, 23(4), pp. 65-71, April 1990, for further input.

Champions and detractors

It can be good to make oneself a "champion" for a submission, i.e., a passionate advocate who is prepared to fight for a submission against resistance, in case one is convinced it deserves publication. It can also be good to become a detractor, i.e., a tenacious critic who is not prepared to readily give into otherwise positive views, in case one sees severe flaws.

In both cases, however, keep an open mind for the arguments by opposing reviewers. Try to convince them of your view by expressing as clearly as possible what justifies your position, but also have an open ear as to why others may not share the same judgements.

The challenge and the reward of the online discussions lies in using a rational debate to overcome what at first may seem like incompatible views.

Subreviewers

PC members are expected to personally read and write reviews for allocated submission. Help may be solicited from trusted colleagues, but such support should come as an addition to the PC member's work, not replace it. Whether a subreviewer is used or not, PC members need to be able to competently participate in online discussions, i.e., consider other reviews and contribute to a fair assignment of review scores.

Review Form

Summary

A summary in your own words helps others to see what you regard as the essence of the submission and can therefore be helpful in PC and PB discussions.

Pros and Cons

List the main strengths and weaknesses of the submission. Focus on the content but mention the presentation, if appropriate. The "Pros" lend themselves to include the main contributions of the submission. The "Cons" should definitely include any major deficits, but may also point out if there is a significant amount of room for improvement.

Main evaluation

This field is meant for elaborations on the strengths and weaknesses of the submission. Comment on the submission's quality and provide justifications for your score. Justifications for a negative score are especially important but also positive scores should be supported by respective arguments/observations. If you notice major technical errors, please explain them, rather than just remarking that they exist. Please refer to sections "[Evaluating Submissions](#)" and "[Review quality](#)" for guidance, e.g., regarding constructive criticism. If indicated, please include suggestions to improve the presentation, including pointing out typos, incorrect grammar, suboptimal structure, etc. However, you should not spend a lot of time on helping to improve the presentation, if the submission is severely lacking in overall quality.

Score

We deliberately omitted a "0 - borderline" rating to avoid slight tendencies towards acceptance or rejection to be hidden by a neutral rating. If you feel neutral about a submission, please consider which side of the fence you have a preference for, bearing in mind the points made above in "[Evaluating Submissions](#)". The "-1" and "1" ratings are understood to be very weak votes in either direction and are best read as "*close to neutral with some tendency to accept/reject*". Please use ratings with absolute values of "2" or "3" to express stronger recommendations.

Reviewer's confidence

Please indicate how confident you are in your score and findings. Being an expert in the area of the submission will typically boost this confidence level, whereas not having been able to fully verify some crucial points, or lacking knowledge about related work, for instance, will typically lower the confidence level.

Confidential remarks

This field gives you the option to communicate thoughts, concerns, etc. to PB/PC members only. If, for instance, you are unsure whether the submission might be (self-) plagiarized, has a deep flaw, could have been submitted to the wrong track/category, or might be out of scope, and would like to seek input from other reviewers, please use this section. You may also use this section to elaborate on the score, e.g., that you had considered a different score as well but then decided against it for a particular reason.

Questions to author(s)

Please formulate up to three questions whose answers could potentially change your support for the submission. For instance, you might be looking for some clarification that would increase your support for the submission and could be easily added by the author(s) for the camera-ready version. Note that any questions that imply a significant rewrite of the submission need not be asked, since we cannot support [conditional accept recommendations](#).

The questions you provide in this section will be very useful when it comes to agreeing on an [MR1](#) that will be sent to authors prior to the Author Response period. We are deliberately forcing you to one of two extreme positions, should you be tempted to not ask any questions, since it is important that, in case you do not hold any of these extreme positions, you think of some questions now, rather than later. We need to use the valuable discussion time to come to agreements rather than considering potential questions to authors.

Best Paper candidate?

You may accompany a score of "2" or "3" with a recommendation to consider the submission for a best paper award. Again, we are not necessarily looking for flawless submissions, some remarkable/outstanding contributions may compensate for other shortcomings.

Questions/Comments

Many thanks in advance for all the hard work you are willing to put in for MODELS 2023. If you have any comments or questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best regards,

Thomas Kühne
(MODELS 2023 Practice Track Chair)

Acknowledgments

I created this document based on Review Guidelines produced by previous PC chairs. Recent modifications to the original produced by Robert France were made by Manuel Wimmer & Nelly Bencomo, Daniel Varro & Shiva Nejati, Juan de Lara & Silvia Abrahão, Marouane Kessentini & Tao Yue, Richard Paige & Øystein Haugen, Jeff Gray & Vinay Kulkarni, Jörg Kienzle & Alexander Pretschner, Alexander Egyed & Jordi Cabot, Wolfram Schulte & Juergen Dingel, and Bernhard Schaeetz & Ana Moreira.

Conflict of Interest Criteria

You should declare a conflict of interest with any submission that is (co-)authored by:

- yourself
- past or current students
- past or current academic advisors
- anyone where acceptance or rejection would further your personal goals
- a member of your family or anyone you consider a close personal friend
- anyone whose work, for whatever reason, you cannot evaluate objectively

Also, within the limits of the past five years:

- co-authors
- supervisors or employees in the same line of authority
- members of your organization (e.g., company, university, government agency, etc.)
- anyone with whom you have/had a financial relationship (e.g., grants, contracts, consultancies, equity investments, stock options, etc.)

Metareviews

#	Due	Target	Function	Typical Contents
MR1	4 June	Author(s) [public]	elicit author response	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. very brief summary of the main reviewer points. 2. list of weaker aspects of the submission that reviewers would like to see clarifications on in order to increase their scores or confidence. 3. up to five questions to authors.
MR2	15 June	PB- meeting [con- fidential]	support decision making	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. very brief summary of the main strengths and weaknesses of the submission. 2. brief summary of reviewer viewpoints, often including a history of discussion dynamics. 3. acceptance recommendation justification, including qualifications (e.g., "<i>accept, if there's space</i>").
MR3	21 June	Author(s) [public]	justify decision / specify revision actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. summary of (combined) reviewer response to the author response. 2. justification for final decision, e.g., an enumeration of which aspects remained unsatisfactory, which responses helped, etc. 3. potentially: action items for authors for the camera-ready version.