

INTERNATIONAL ANKLE CONSORTIUM ENDORSEMENT GUIDELINES

Application Closing Date: Applications can be submitted anytime throughout the year but will be reviewed on a quarterly basis.

OBJECTIVE:

The International Ankle Consortium (IAC) may endorse position statements, clinical consensus statements, clinical practice guidelines, or other research projects that align with the central mission of the IAC: “to expand the available knowledge of the mechanisms and origins of ankle conditions, and facilitate innovation in prevention, management and treatment of these conditions”. An IAC endorsement is reserved for papers deemed to have the greatest clinical and scholarly impact on the understanding, prevention, management, or treatment of ankle conditions.

An endorsement from the IAC does not guarantee publication in any specific journal. The IAC is not affiliated with any peer-reviewed journals; therefore, publication of an endorsed paper will be at the discretion of the journal to which the paper is submitted. Furthermore, the classification of the paper as a “position statement”, “consensus statement”, or “practice guideline” will be determined by the definitions and criteria of the target journal.

PROCEDURES FOR ENDORSEMENT

(see figure for general outline of the process)

The IAC may endorse papers that originate through one of three pathways:

- 1) **Investigator-Initiated:** Investigators independently identify a topic, self-form an author group, and develop the project without prior involvement from the IAC Executive Committee (EC).
- 2) **IAC Executive Committee (EC)-Solicited:** The IAC EC identifies a priority topic and solicits project proposals through an open call or by inviting individuals or groups to submit a concept paper. The proposed project is subsequently developed by the applicant investigators.
- 3) **IAC EC-Developed:** The IAC EC identifies and develops the project concept internally and determines that the topic warrants development as an IAC-led initiative. The EC establishes and oversees an authoring or working group to complete the project under its direction.

Regardless of project origin, all papers seeking IAC endorsement must undergo a structured review and approval process (**Figure 1**) designed to ensure scientific rigor, transparency, and alignment with the mission of the IAC.

The endorsement process is divided into two phases. The first phase involves concept development and approval by the **Endorsement Committee** for the project to advance to the manuscript development and review phase. The second phase consists of formal manuscript evaluation, peer review, and final endorsement consideration by the Endorsement Committee, culminating in a decision to **accept or reject** the work for IAC endorsement.

Projects developed directly by members of the IAC EC are subject to the same standards of review and endorsement as all other projects. Appropriate conflict-of-interest management procedures shall be implemented throughout the review and endorsement process, including recusal from administrative oversight, peer review, deliberations, and voting when applicable.

Definitions

Endorsement Committee: The body responsible for evaluating concept papers, overseeing manuscript review, and determining whether a manuscript receives IAC endorsement. For

Investigator-Initiated and EC-Solicited projects, the Endorsement Committee shall consist of the full IAC Executive Committee (EC). For IAC EC-Developed projects, the Endorsement Committee shall consist of a five-to-seven-member ad hoc committee appointed and chaired by the immediate past IAC EC Chair.

Peer Review Team: The body responsible for conducting manuscript review and providing recommendations to the Endorsement Committee. The Peer Review Team serves in an advisory capacity and does not make endorsement decisions.

Research Committee Chair (RCC): The RCC is a member of the IAC Executive Committee and serves as the administrator of the IAC endorsement process. The RCC acts as the primary point of contact between author teams, the Peer Review Team, and the Endorsement Committee; receives and distributes submissions; coordinates reviews; monitors timelines; and communicates decisions and feedback to authors. The RCC may participate in deliberations and voting when serving as a member of the applicable Endorsement Committee but does not independently make endorsement decisions. In the event of a conflict of interest, the RCC's administrative responsibilities shall be assumed by the immediate past IAC EC Chair.

STEP 1: INVITATION PHASE

Regardless of pathway, the process begins when a concept paper consistent with the guidelines described in **Appendix 1** is submitted to the Research Committee Chair (RCC) via email. The RCC will then initiate the review process by forwarding the concept paper to the Endorsement Committee*.

**For projects originating through the IAC EC-Developed pathway, the Endorsement Committee shall consist of the ad hoc committee described above to ensure an independent review process. For all other pathways, the Endorsement Committee shall consist of the full IAC EC.*

Concept Paper Review:

The Endorsement Committee will review the concept paper against the following criteria:

- The importance, impact, and interest of the topic/project.
- The alignment of the topic/project with the mission of the IAC.
- The expertise of the author team.
- The quality and adequacy of evidence supporting the need for the project.
- The uniqueness of the proposed work relative to existing IAC-endorsed publications and the broader literature.

Following review, the Endorsement Committee will vote by majority rule to **Accept** or **Reject** the concept paper.

Accept

Authors are invited to submit a full manuscript for review (Step 2):

- The invitation to submit may include contingencies (e.g., intended journal).
- Authors will have six months to submit a full manuscript.
- Extensions may be requested through the RCC.

- Failure to submit within the approved timeline may result in withdrawal of the invitation at the discretion of the Endorsement Committee.

Reject

The proposed paper will not be eligible for IAC endorsement.

STEP 2: ENDORSEMENT PHASE

The Endorsement Phase begins upon submission of a full manuscript arising from any of the three pathways. The phase consists of four sub-phases:

- a) Manuscript development
- b) Manuscript review
- c) Final IAC endorsement
- d) Submission to the journal

a) Manuscript Development

- The author team prepares a manuscript that complies with the author guidelines of the intended journal.
- The lead author submits the manuscript and the intended journal's author guidelines to the IAC RCC.

b) Manuscript Review

The manuscript review process is designed to emulate a traditional peer-review model, whereby the Peer Review Team serves as reviewers and the Endorsement Committee provides editorial oversight and endorsement decisions.

- The RCC will establish a three-member Peer Review Team.
- At least one member of the Peer Review Team shall also serve on the Endorsement Committee to ensure continuity and communication throughout the review process.
- Additional reviewers may be appointed as necessary to provide appropriate expertise and ensure management of conflicts of interest.
- Members of the manuscript author group shall not participate in peer review of their own work.

Responsibilities of the Peer Review Team

The Peer Review Team will:

- Review the manuscript.
- Prepare constructive feedback for the author team.
- Provide the Endorsement Committee with a recommendation to either:
 - **Accept** for continued endorsement review (contingencies may be included); or
 - **Reject** and discontinue the endorsement process.

Following review of the manuscript and the Peer Review Team's recommendations, the Endorsement Committee will vote by majority rule to:

- **Accept** (continue the endorsement process); or
- **Reject** (discontinue the endorsement process).

Manuscripts Continuing in the Endorsement Process

- Reviewer comments and recommendations will be returned to the authors.
- The author team will revise the manuscript in response to the comments received.
- Revised manuscripts will be resubmitted within four weeks for additional review, as necessary.

Manuscripts Not Continuing in the Endorsement Process

- Authors will receive reviewer comments and feedback.
- The endorsement process will conclude.

The review cycle will continue until the Endorsement Committee determines, based on input from the Peer Review Team, that no substantive revisions are required.

c) Final IAC Endorsement

- The Endorsement Committee will vote by majority rule to **accept** or **reject** the final manuscript for IAC endorsement.
- Upon endorsement, the lead author will receive a signed letter of approval that includes the required language for identifying the work as IAC-endorsed within the manuscript title and/or text.

d) Submission to Journal

- The lead author will submit the endorsed manuscript to the approved peer-reviewed journal.
- If the journal requests major revisions, the revised manuscript must be resubmitted to the Endorsement Committee for review and reaffirmation of endorsement prior to resubmission to the journal.
- If the endorsed manuscript is rejected by the journal, the authors must obtain approval from the Endorsement Committee of any alternative journal and any substantive revisions before resubmission.

RIGHTS OF THE ENDORSEMENT COMMITTEE AND AUTHORS:

The Endorsement Committee reserves the right to:

- Withdraw an invitation for endorsement review.
- Disapprove of a proposed target journal.
- Rescind an endorsement prior to submission of the manuscript to the approved journal.

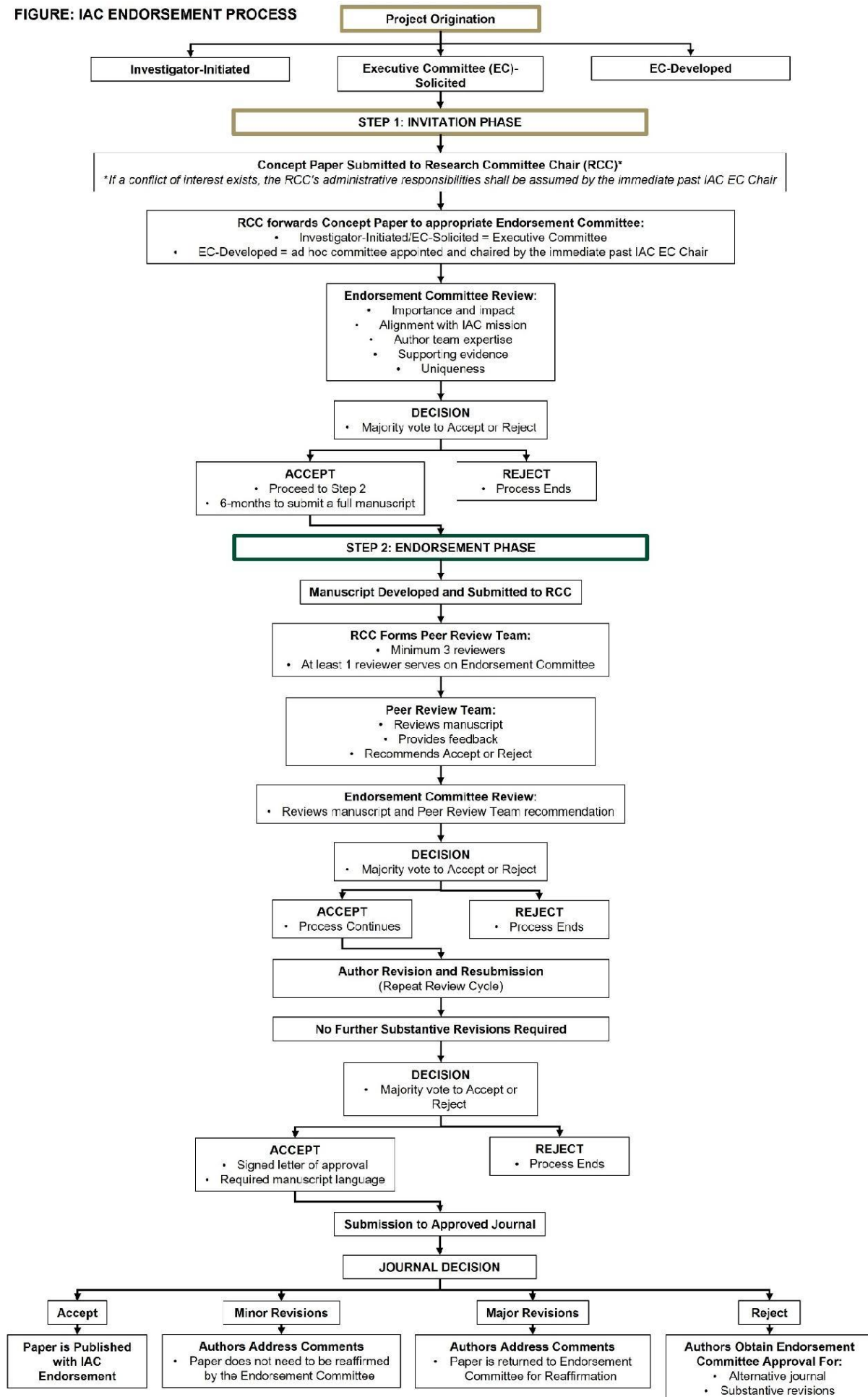
- Request revisions, clarifications, or additional information as part of the endorsement review process.

The author team reserves the right to:

- Withdraw from the endorsement process at any time prior to submission of the manuscript to the approved journal.

If endorsement is not granted or is subsequently rescinded, the author team remains free to submit the manuscript to any journal; however, no language may be used that states or implies endorsement by the International Ankle Consortium.

FIGURE: IAC ENDORSEMENT PROCESS



APPENDIX I: IAC Concept Paper Guidelines

General format: Concept papers are limited to 2-pages using single-space, narrow margins (0.5"), and Arial ≥11 point font. Within the document, the following sections must be included:

General & Specific Purpose(s): Provide an overall purpose statement/aim for the proposed research/paper, and any primary/secondary objectives.

Problem, Significance & Impact: Use the literature to justify the need for your research/paper. Include what makes the project unique and innovative, especially considering any similar publications. Outline how the findings of this paper will influence the greater body of knowledge regarding ankle pathologies.

Alignment with the Mission of the IAC: Describe how the project aligns with the primary mission of the IAC. Elaborate on the clinical and research implications of the proposed work. Finally, describe why you are seeking an endorsement from the IAC for this paper.

Design, Methodology & Analysis: Provide an overview of the study design, general approach, and analytical plan for achieving the stated purpose(s). Be sure to include enough detail to demonstrate appropriate scientific rigor to achieve the stated aim.

Team & Logistics: Indicate the author team's expertise and prior experience to demonstrate your ability to lead and complete the proposed research/paper.

Timeline and Intended Journal: Describe the current stage of the paper and the projected timeline in which a draft could be reviewed by the IAC EC. Indicate the journal you plan to pursue publication and include the journal author guidelines as an appendix to your application.

Additional Information (optional): Provide any additional information you want the Endorsement Committee to know regarding your proposed research/paper (this counts towards the 2-page limit).