Editorial and Appeal Procedures

The following summarizes important procedural aspects of the editorial and appeal processes. Not all aspects of the editorial process are discussed here, only those which are particularly likely to occur in situations leading to appeals. Most of the following provides general guidelines rather than rigid rules capable of being applied in all special situations. Occasional variations from these guidelines may occur, but of course only if they are fair and reasonable in the particular circumstances.

Note: In the following, the term “Editorial Board member” is used generically, and should be understood to include PRL Divisional Associate Editors.

Some Aspects of Editorial Procedures

1. Most editorial decisions are based on the results of review by one or more referees. However, if in the judgment of the editor a paper is clearly unsuitable for the journal to which it is submitted, it will be rejected without referee review. Authors of such papers have the same right to appeal as do other authors.

2. Referee reports are advisory to the editors. As a matter of practice, reports of referees are generally transmitted by the editors to the authors, but the editors may withhold or edit these reports for cause.

3. Authors may suggest referees who are in their opinion suitable (or unsuitable) to review a particular manuscript, but editors are not bound to follow these suggestions.

4. As part of the review process, the editor may consult an Editorial Board member at his or her discretion. Such consultation may result in informal advice to the editor, or in a referee report (transmitted to the authors and/or referees either with or without the name of the Board member).

Appeal Procedures

1. Authors may appeal a rejection of their paper by the editors. In the case of a formal appeal, the paper and all relevant information, including the identities of the referees, will be sent to a member of the Editorial Board. The Board member may review the case on the existing record or may seek additional expert opinion. The Board member will present an advisory opinion to the editor, which will be sent to the authors and/or referees with the Board member’s name.

   (a) If a Board member has provided a referee report on a paper prior to appeal, another Board member must review the paper on appeal. (In the case of PRL, alternatively the Chairman of Divisional Associate Editors may review the paper at this stage.)

   (b) Authors may suggest those Board members they feel are appropriate (or not appropriate) to conduct the review, but the editor is not bound by such suggestions.

   (c) If there is no suitable Board member available, the editor may appoint an appropriate scientist to consider a paper under appeal as an ad hoc Board member.

2. The author of a paper that has been rejected subsequent to an Editorial Board review may request that the case be reviewed by the Editor in Chief of the American Physical Society. This request should be addressed to the Editor of the journal (or, in the case of PRL, the Chairman of Divisional Associate Editors), who will forward the entire file to the Editor in Chief. Such an appeal must be based on the fairness of the procedures followed, and must not be a request for another scientific review. The questions to be answered in this review are: Were our procedures followed appropriately and did the paper receive a fair hearing? A decision by the Editor in Chief is the final level of review.