publicationethics.org



Ethics toolkit for a successful editorial office

A COPE GUIDE

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The aim of this guide is to help journal editors and publishers to prepare their application for membership of COPE. This guide will aid editorial offices, and those who handle ethical issues, to develop or revise their own codes of conduct, policies, and processes.

The guide will:

- help editors and publishers to identify areas in need of office development and what type of staff, reviewer, or author training is needed
- explain how to promote best practices in scholarly publishing
- outline how to handle allegations and cases of misconduct appropriately.



1. Develop guidelines for authors



2. Develop guidelines for reviewers



3. Develop processes to help identify ethical concerns



4. Develop guidelines for responding to suspected ethical breaches

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DEVELOP GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

Who contributed substantially to the work and in what role, and is accountable for the work and its presentation in a publication.

In your guidelines for authors, consider including the following, in addition to providing information about the journal, submission criteria, manuscript preparation, and the submission process:

- a clear definition of authorship
- responsibilities of authors and corresponding author
- how author contributions should be declared on submission (and in the publication)
- how to acknowledge non-authors
- how potential authorship disputes are managed
- any author fee
- data and intellectual property policies, including copyright and licence arrangements
- research and publication ethics, including conflicts of interest
- peer review process, including if authors can nominate or exclude reviewers, and procedure for appeals

Resources to help you develop policies and guidelines for authors

- COPE discussion document: Authorship (https://doi.org/10.24318/cope.2019.3.3)
- COPE guideline: How to handle authorship disputes: a guide for new researchers (https://doi.org/10.24318/cope.2018.1.1)
- COPE flowcharts (https://cope.onl/flowcharts-3)
- COPE focus: Authorship and contributorship: an editor view and research institution view (https://cope.onl/news-author)
- Cases on authorship from COPE's cases database (https://cope.onl/cases-authorship)
- COPE webinar: Standards in authorship (https://cope.onl/news-standard)
- An analysis of peer review cases brought to COPE from 1997 to 2016 (https://cope.onl/news-cases)
- COPE's China Seminar: Good authorship practices (https://cope.onl/seminar-authorship)
- Authorship and publication training programme produced by Queensland University of Technology (QUT) (https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.c.3980448)
- ORCID (https://b.link/orcid)
- CRediT taxonomy (https://b.link/CRediT-1)

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DEVELOP GUIDELINES FOR REVIEWERS

State on your website what is peer reviewed, what model of peer review you use, and how the peer review process is managed and by whom. Consider including the following in your guidelines for reviewers:

- how peer reviewers are selected and trained
- how many peer reviewers review each manuscript
- responsibilities of reviewers
- ethics of reviewing, including conflicts of interest, policies on confidentiality of the process and author materials, and the procedure when a reviewer wishes to nominate a co-reviewer
- how to perform a review and time allowed
- what reviewers should do if they suspect research or publication misconduct
- how to prepare the review report, who owns the review, and transferability of reviews
- how decisions on acceptance, revision, and rejection are made
- procedures for review of submitted revisions and handling appeals

Resources to help you develop policies and guidelines for reviewers

- COPE discussion document: Ethical guidelines for peer reviewers (https://doi.org/10.24318/cope.2019.1.9)
- COPE discussion document: Who 'owns' peer reviews? (https://doi.org/10.24318/rouP8ld4)
- COPE guideline: Editing peer reviews (https://doi.org/10.24318/AoZQlusn)
- COPE focus: Peer review (https://cope.onl/digest-peer)
- COPE flowcharts (https://cope.onl/flowcharts-3)
- Cases on peer review from COPE's cases database (https://cope.onl/cases-peer)
- COPE statement on inappropriate manipulation of peer review processes (https://cope.onl/news-peer)

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DEVELOP PROCESSES TO HELP IDENTIFY ETHICAL CONCERNS

Develop processes for these ethical concerns:

- **Allegations of misconduct**
- **Conflicts of interest**
- **Data**
- **Research ethics**
- **Plagiarism**
- **Journal management**
- **Post-publication review**

ALLEGATIONS OF MISCONDUCT

Journal editors should have mechanisms for receiving and responding to allegations of research, publication, and review misconduct. It is the responsibility of the journal editor to define the types of misconduct for their journals and to outline their policies and procedures for handling such issues when they arise.

Consider implementing processes on the following, documenting the processes on the website, and linking to relevant COPE resources:

- designating a contact person to handle allegations of misconduct
- designating a person or panel to handle ethics issues, review allegations, and initiate impartial and confidential investigations of cases
- how to contact institutions and other journals
- how to handle allegations made by whistleblowers

Resources to help you develop policies and guidelines for allegations of misconduct

- COPE guideline: Sharing of information among editors-in-chief regarding possible misconduct (https://doi.org/10.24318/Y18YSSbNrv)
- COPE discussion document: Addressing ethics complaints from complainants who submit multiple issues (https://doi.org/10.24318/qiW7mhWw)
- COPE discussion document: Responding to anonymous whistleblowers (https://doi.org/10.24318/Z9gtPzCa)
- COPE flowcharts (https://cope.onl/flowcharts-3)
- COPE focus: Allegations of misconduct (https://cope.onl/news-misconduct)
- Cases on allegations of misconduct from COPE's cases database (https://cope.onl/cases-allegations)

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Conflicts of interest are situations that have the potential to influence people's judgements. Conflicts of interest could influence peer review, editorial decisions and publication management. Journals need clear, consistent and well publicised policies on conflicts of interest, including mandatory disclosure of funding of the study and the role of the funder.

Consider implementing processes on the following, documenting the processes in the website, and linking to relevant COPE resources:

- defining, disclosing, and handling conflicts of interest for authors, reviewers, editors, staff, and journal publisher/owner
- defining what needs to be disclosed by all parties, including type of competing interest, extent, and time frame
- how and when such information is collected

Resources to help you develop policies and guidelines for conflicts of interest

- COPE discussion document: Handling competing interests (https://doi.org/10.24318/ElTeSLhp)
- COPE guideline: Editorial board participation (https://doi.org/10.24318/F3lrGybw)
- COPE guideline: Cooperation between research institutions and journals on research integrity cases (https://doi.org/10.24318/cope.2018.1.3)
- COPE flowcharts (https://cope.onl/flowcharts-3)
- COPE focus: Conflicts of interest (https://cope.onl/news-conflict)
- Cases on conflicts of interest from COPE's cases database (https://cope.onl/cases-coi)
- COPE European Seminar 2014: Conflicts of interest and other ethical problems in German medical publishing (https://cope.onl/seminar-coi)
- COPE Asia-Pacific Seminar 2011: The range of conflicts of interest and how they should be managed (https://cope.onl/seminar-range)
- International Committee of Medical Journal Editors disclosure of interest form (https://b.link/icmje-form)

DATA

To achieve greater transparency, replicability, and trust in scientific findings, research authors are increasingly expected to enhance reporting by registering clinical trials, using standardised guidelines, and sharing associated data, code, and materials. Cooperative practices are needed between journal editors and institutional oversight bodies regarding issues such as alleged data fabrication and falsification.

Consider developing and implementing processes and guidelines on the following:

- if data sharing is encouraged or mandated, when exceptions are allowed, and if a data availability statement is needed
- how data should be cited
- if relevant, sharing/uploading anonymised data on a specific online repository or website, handling confidential data, registering clinical trials, using reporting guidelines, and requiring the submission of relevant reporting checklists

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Resources to help you develop policies and guidelines for data

- COPE focus: Data and reproducibility (https://cope.onl/news-data)
- COPE Digest: Data and reproducibility, the role of research institutions (https://cope.onl/news-role)
- COPE flowcharts (https://cope.onl/flowcharts-3)
- Cases on data and reproducibility from COPE's cases database (https://cope.onl/cases-data)
- COPE Forum discussion: data sharing (https://cope.onl/forum-data)
- COPE funded research: data sharing policies in scholarly publications: interdisciplinary comparisons (https://b.link/research-data)
- Creating and implementing research data policies: COPE webinar report (https://cope.onl/news-research)
- Joint FORCE11 & COPE Research Data Publishing Ethics Working Group Recommendations (https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5391293)
- TOP Guidelines (https://b.link/initiatives)
- EQUATOR Network homepage (https://b.link/equator)

RESEARCH ETHICS

Journals must adopt and publish clear guidelines regarding ethical conduct of research. Regulations and norms of the journal's discipline should be consulted to ensure that the journal policies reflect those standards. Journals must diligently review submitted work to ensure that it conforms with research ethics guidelines.

Consider implementing processes on the following, documenting the processes in the website, and linking to relevant COPE resources:

- recommended practices for handling issues such as:
  - informed consent
  - institutional oversight
  - prior ethics approval
  - compliance with international research guidelines
- investigating concerns raised about the ethics of any study that has been published
- preventing potential cases of misconduct—for example, routines for checking for:
  - plagiarism
  - fabrication
  - falsification
  - citation manipulation
  - peer review manipulation
  - authorship misconduct

Resources to help you develop policies and guidelines for research ethics

- COPE guideline: Cooperation between research institutions and journals on research integrity cases (https://doi.org/10.24318/cope.2018.1.3)

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- COPE guideline: Journals' best practices for ensuring consent for publishing medical case reports (https://doi.org/10.24318/cope.2019.1.6)
- COPE focus: Ethical oversight (https://cope.onl/news-oversight)
- COPE flowcharts (https://cope.onl/flowcharts-3)
- Cases on ethical oversight from COPE's cases database (https://cope.onl/cases-ethical)
- COPE Forum discussion: Publication ethics issues in the social sciences (https://cope.onl/forum-social)
- COPE Forum discussion: Fair play for "researchers": Can editors and regulators develop a common approach to the need (or lack of need) for ethical review? (https://cope.onl/forum-review)

PLAGIARISM

Policies should be clear on what counts as prepublication that will preclude consideration. What constitutes plagiarism and redundant/overlapping publication should be specified.

Consider including the following in your guidelines:

- clearly explaining plagiarism and duplicate/redundant or overlapping publication
- how to reproduce copyrighted material and what counts as previous publication

Resources to help you develop policies and guidelines for plagiarism

- COPE guideline: Text recycling guidelines for editors (https://cope.onl/guidelines-text)
- COPE discussion document: Who 'owns' peer reviews? (https://doi.org/10.24318/rouP8ld4)
- COPE discussion document: Preprints (https://doi.org/10.24318/R4WByao2)
- COPE flowcharts (https://cope.onl/flowcharts-3)
- COPE focus: Intellectual property: (https://cope.onl/news-intellectual)
- SHERPA/RoMEO publisher copyright policies and self-archiving (https://b.link/sherpaac)



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JOURNAL MANAGEMENT

The key element of ethical journal management is transparency.

Journals should:

- have a unique name
- show that the website is not misleading
- clearly identify the publisher or owner and governing body on the journal website
- clearly describe the business model and ownership; and describe how revenue sources, and advertising policies/practices are independent of editorial decisions
- clearly show:
  - print and/or online ISSNs
  - full journal contact details
  - publication frequency
  - peer review model
  - clear aims and scope statement
- clearly explain the **copyright and licensing** policies the journal operates under
- describe copyright procedures, publishing licences, and/or Creative Commons licences to authors and readers, including:
  - what versions authors are allowed to archive
  - and the online platform used to backup/archive journal content
- clearly indicate how the journal content is preserved (**"long-term digital preservation" (archiving")**)
- clearly state all author and reader fees (or that there are no fees)
- show names and affiliations of all editorial board members, and documents how editors/reviewers are selected and trained
- use suitable software to increase office efficiency
- contain a statement describing its direct marketing actively and how this is done ethically

Resources to help you develop policies and guidelines for journal management

- COPE discussion document: Predatory publishing (https://doi.org/10.24318/cope.2019.3.6)
- COPE guideline: Guidelines for the board of directors of learned society journals (https://doi.org/10.24318/cope.2019.1.5)
- COPE guideline: A short guide to ethical editing for new editors (https://doi.org/10.24318/cope.2019.1.8)
- COPE discussion document: Preprints (https://doi.org/10.24318/R4WByao2)
- COPE discussion document: Artificial intelligence (AI) in decision making (https://doi.org/10.24318/9kvAgrnJ)
- COPE focus: Journal management (https://cope.onl/news-journal)
- Cases on journal management from COPE's cases database (https://cope.onl/cases-journal)
- COPE flowcharts (https://cope.onl/flowcharts-3)
- Council of Science Editor's (CSE) white paper on publication ethics (https://b.link/cse-resources)
- CSE short courses (https://b.link/cse-courses)

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POST-PUBLICATION REVIEW

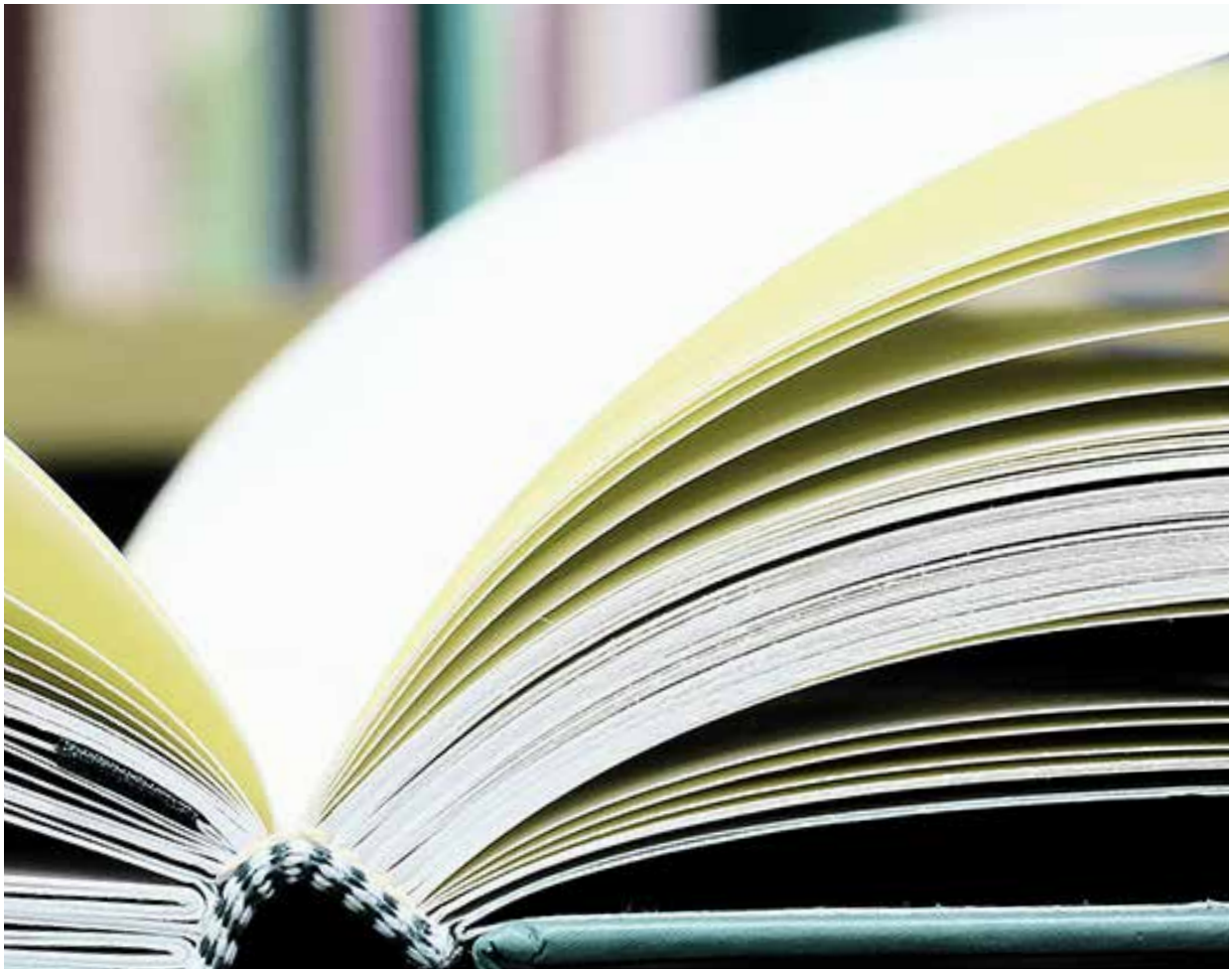
Journals must have in place methods to correct the literature after content publication. Some form of post-publication commentary or discussion should be allowed when alternative interpretations of published data are brought to light.

Consider implementing processes on the following, documenting the processes in the website, and linking to relevant COPE resources:

- systems for post-publication discussion, correction, and retraction
- systems to correct papers that are not so seriously flawed as to warrant retraction (eg, expressions of concern, editorial note)

Resources to help you develop policies and guidelines for post-publication review

- COPE guideline: Retraction guidelines (https://doi.org/10.24318/cope.2019.1.4)
- COPE Forum discussion: Expressions of concern (https://cope.onl/forum-eoc)
- COPE flowcharts (https://cope.onl/flowcharts-3)
- COPE focus: Post-publication discussions and corrections (https://cope.onl/news-correct)
- Cases on post-publication discussions and corrections from COPE's cases database (https://cope.onl/cases-corrections)



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DEVELOP GUIDELINES FOR RESPONDING TO SUSPECTED ETHICAL BREACHES

Complaints may arise over the conduct of editors, authors an/or peer reviewers (eg, breaches of confidentiality, undisclosed conflicts of interest, or misuse of privileged information), or they may arise from disputes about substantive decisions, such as retractions. Still others may be more administrative in nature (eg, irregularities in editorial processes or complaints that journal staff are unresponsive).

Journals should develop guidelines for responding to suspected ethical breeches and in addition, consider the following:

- designating a contact person for ethics enquiries and appeals/complaints
- editorial offices should focus on promptly correcting the literature but request authors' institutions or employers/funding agencies to investigate and follow-up on author misconduct and discipline
- have a process for author appeals against editorial decisions
- have processes to investigate and manage editor, reviewer, or staff misconduct (eg, undeclared conflicts of interest)
- when needed, contacting other journals or contacting institutions (of authors, editors, reviewers) and seeking independent and legal advice

Resources to help you develop policies and guidelines for responding to ethical breaches

- COPE focus: Complaints and appeals (https://cope.onl/news-complaints)
- COPE discussion document: Sharing of information among editors-in-chief regarding possible misconduct (https://doi.org/10.24318/Y18YSSbNrv)
- COPE guideline: Cooperation between research institutions and journals on research integrity cases (https://doi.org/10.24318/cope.2018.1.3)
- Cases on complaints and appeals from COPE's cases database (https://cope.onl/cases-complaints)
- COPE flowcharts (https://cope.onl/flowcharts-3)

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COPE Strategic plan:

COPE's mission is to provide expert guidance to uphold the integrity of the scholarly record through:

COLLABORATION AND PROBLEM SOLVING



Actively bringing together stakeholders to explore and provide solutions to the challenges arising in publication ethics.

SUPPORT AND EDUCATION



Providing support and education to empower stakeholders to uphold the integrity of the publication process and published record and take corrective action where necessary.

LEADERSHIP AND EXPERTISE



Providing leadership and an unbiased expert voice in publication ethics.

Member benefits:

FORUM



CONTACT COUNCIL FOR ADVICE



SEMINARS & WORKSHOPS



WEBINARS



ELEARNING



JOURNAL AUDIT



PERSONALISED COPE LOGO



TEMPLATE LETTERS



STAND FOR COUNCIL



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PROMOTING INTEGRITY IN SCHOLARLY RESEARCH AND ITS PUBLICATION