Best Practice Guidelines on Publication Ethics: A Publisher’s Perspective

- Promoting ethical publication practices
- Transparency
- Promoting research integrity
- Editorial standards and processes
- Responsible publication practices
- Ownership of ideas and expression
- Best Practice statements

Wiley-Blackwell, the world’s leading partner for societies, works with over 700 academic societies. We recognize the importance of developing the highest ethical standards, and we are committed to promoting ethical publication practices across Wiley-Blackwell journals. This document presents the Wiley-Blackwell position on the major ethical principles of academic publishing and considers factors that may foster ethical behavior or create problems. The aims are to encourage discussion, to initiate changes where they are needed, and to provide practical guidance, in the form of Best Practice statements, to inform these changes.

“This is an excellent document. It addresses both broad ethical issues and practical points that we have all come against throughout editorial work”
Panos Vostanis, Editor, Child & Adolescent Mental Health

“It is impressive. I particularly like the ‘Best Practice’ sections. I think it will be a valuable resource”
Bruce Baum, Co-editor, Oral Diseases

“Covers most of the issues that we normally address and has raised some ideas for improving some of our codes of practice”
Carol Huxley, Managing Editor, The Journal of Physiology

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Wiley-Blackwell publication ethics: Promoting ethical publication practices

Wiley-Blackwell, the world’s leading partner for societies, works with over 700 academic societies. We recognize the importance of developing the highest ethical standards, and we are committed to promoting ethical publication practices across Wiley-Blackwell journals.

Background
Academic publishing depends, to a great extent, on trust. Editors trust peer reviewers to provide fair assessments, authors trust editors to select appropriate peer reviewers, and readers put their trust in the peer-review process. Academic publishing also occurs in an environment of powerful intellectual, financial, and sometimes political interests that may collide or compete. Good decisions and strong editorial processes designed to manage these interests will foster a sustainable and efficient publishing system, which will benefit academic societies, journal editors, authors, research funders, readers, and publishers. Good publication practices do not develop by chance, and will become established only if they are actively promoted.

Best practice guidelines on publication ethics: A publisher’s perspective
This document presents the Wiley-Blackwell position on the major ethical principles of academic publishing and considers factors that may foster ethical behavior or create problems. The aims are to encourage discussion, to initiate changes where they are needed, and to provide practical guidance, in the form of Best Practice statements, to inform these changes. These guidelines have been written to offer Wiley-Blackwell authors, research funders, readers, and publishers. Good publication practices do not develop by chance, and will become established only if they are actively promoted.

Implementing change: How Wiley-Blackwell will help
The ideas presented in this document may prompt editors to review or update their policies and processes. Wiley-Blackwell will assist editors of Wiley-Blackwell journals in the review process, and will help them to update their policies and processes according to their decisions.

Evolution
In some sectors, notably medicine, the debate about publication ethics is moving rapidly. In response, and at suitable intervals, we will update our guidance.

Organization
The general principles of publication ethics are grouped and discussed under broad themes. Statements of principle are followed by factors that may affect them. The order of the sections does not imply a hierarchy of importance. The Wiley-Blackwell Publication Ethics Group is Alyson Bowman, Suzan Fiack, Chris Graf, Andrew Robinson, and Allen Stevens. We would like to thank Elizabeth Wager (Publications Consultant, Sideview) for her assistance and consultancy in the development of this document, the Committee on Publication Ethics for their insight.


Contacts and publication ethics helpdesk
If you are an editor of a Wiley-Blackwell journal and have a specific publication ethics query, your first port of call should be your Wiley-Blackwell Journal Publishing Manager. For all other queries please contact the Wiley-Blackwell Ethics helpdesk:

- USA: publication.ethics@bsa.blackwellpublishing.com
- Europe and Global: publication.ethics@oxon.blackwellpublishing.com
- Asia: publication.ethics@asia.blackwellpublishing.com

References
For all other queries please contact the Wiley-Blackwell Ethics helpdesk:

- USA: publication.ethics@bsa.blackwellpublishing.com
- Europe and Global: publication.ethics@oxon.blackwellpublishing.com
- Asia: publication.ethics@asia.blackwellpublishing.com
Best practice guidelines on publication ethics

This document presents the Wiley-Blackwell position on the major ethical principles of academic publishing and considers factors that may Foster ethical behavior or create problems. The aims are to encourage discussion, to initiate changes where they are needed, and to provide practical guidance, in the form of Best Practice statements, to inform these changes.

Transparency

Who funded the work?

Readers have a right to know who funded a research project or publication. A journal must declare all sources of funding for research or publication.

- Research funders should be listed on all research papers.
- Funding for any type of publication, for example by a commercial company, charity or government department, should be stated within the publication. This applies to all types of papers (including, for example, research papers, review papers, letters, editorials, commentaries).
- The role of the research funder, as well as the role of all parties contributing to the research and publication, in designing the research, recruiting investigators/authors, collecting the data, analyzing the data, preparing the manuscript or controlling publication decisions should be stated in the publication, unless this is obvious from the list of authors/contributors.
- Other sources of support for publications should be clearly identified in the manuscript, usually in an acknowledgement. For example, these might include funding for Wiley-Blackwell OnlineOpen (open access) publication, or funding for writing or editorial assistance.

See Box 1.

Box 1. Best Practice: Transparency

Sources of funding for research or publication should always be disclosed. Editors should state this directly in their editorial policy. Authors should routinely include information about research funding in all papers they prepare for publication. Where a clinical trial registration number is available, this should be included.

Who did the work?

The list of authors should accurately reflect who did the work. All published work should be attributed to one or more authors.

- Journal instructions for authors should explain the concepts of academic authorship, setting out which contributions do and do not qualify for authorship.
- Journals should remind contributors about authorship guidelines (for example, the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors [ICMJE] criteria) and should encourage their adherence by appropriately designed authorship declarations.
- Listing individuals’ contributions to the research and publication process provides greater transparency than the traditional listing of authors and may discourage inappropriate authorship practices such as ‘ghost’ authors (individuals who qualify for authorship but are not listed) and ‘guest’ (or honorary) authors (individuals who are listed despite not qualifying for authorship, such as heads of department not directly involved with research).
- Editors should ask for a declaration that all authors meet the journal’s criteria for authorship and that nobody who meets these criteria has been omitted from the list.
- Editors should ask for a declaration that the authors have acknowledged all significant contributions made to their publication by individuals who did not meet the journal’s criteria for authorship. These might include, for example and depending on their contribution, author’s editors, statisticians, medical writers, or translators.
- If an authorship dispute or discrepancy comes to light before publication (for example, changes to the list of authors are proposed after submission) editors should take care to explain the journal’s authorship policy to the corresponding author and to establish that all authors agree to the change before proceeding with publication.
- If an authorship dispute emerges after publication (for example, somebody contacts the editor claiming they should have been an author of a published paper, or requesting that their name be withdrawn from a paper) the editor should contact the corresponding author and, where possible, the other authors to establish the veracity of the case.
- If authorship policies have been clearly set out and an explicit authorship declaration(s) has been received (stating that all authors meet agreed criteria and that nobody deserving authorship has been omitted) then genuine errors are unlikely – however, editors should consider publishing a correction in the case of such errors.

See Box 2, Box 3, Box 4.

See COPE flowcharts on ‘Changes in authorship’ (pp. 11–13).

Box 2. Best Practice: Authorship and acknowledgement

The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) provides guidance for instances where a number of authors report on behalf of a larger group of investigators [1]. This guidance is applicable outside the medical sector. Wiley-Blackwell recommends that editors adopt the ICMJE policy. ICMJE guidance states: ‘When a large, multi-center group has conducted the work and its essential substance have not previously been published, the group should identify the individuals who accept direct responsibility for the manuscript. These individuals should fully explain authorship criteria, and to collect and manage authorship information efficiently. Editors should ask authors to submit, as part of their initial submission package, a statement that all individuals listed as authors meet the appropriate authorship criteria, that nobody who qualifies for authorship has been omitted from the list, and that contributors and their funding sources have been properly acknowledged, and that authors and contributors have approved the acknowledgement of their contribution.

Box 3. Best Practice: Collecting authorship information

For research papers, authorship should be decided at the study launch. Policing authorship is beyond the responsibilities of an editor. Editors should demand transparent and complete descriptions of who has contributed to a paper.

Editors should employ appropriate systems to inform contributors about authorship criteria (if used) and/or to obtain accurate information about individuals’ contributions. Wiley-Blackwell can advise Wiley-Blackwell editors about how best to do this, and the Wiley-Blackwell electronic submission system can be used to meet the criteria for authorship defined above. When submitting a group author manuscript, the corresponding author should clearly indicate the preferred citation and should clearly identify all individual authors as well as the group name. The individual authors who accept direct responsibility for the manuscript should list the members of the larger authorship group in an appendix to their acknowledgements.

Box 4. Best Practice: Authorship and attribution to a group

The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) provides guidance for instances where a number of authors report on behalf of a larger group of investigators [1]. This guidance is applicable outside the medical sector. Wiley-Blackwell recommends that editors adopt the ICMJE policy. ICMJE guidance states: ‘When a large, multi-center group has conducted the work, the group should identify the individuals who accept direct responsibility for the manuscript. These individuals should fully explain authorship criteria, and to collect and manage authorship information efficiently. Editors should ask authors to submit, as part of their initial submission package, a statement that all individuals listed as authors meet the appropriate authorship criteria, that nobody who qualifies for authorship has been omitted from the list, and that contributors and their funding sources have been properly acknowledged, and that authors and contributors have approved the acknowledgement of their contribution.

Has the work been published before?

Most journals wish to consider only work that has not been published elsewhere. One reason for this is that the scientific literature can be skewed by redundant publication, with important consequences, for example, the results are inadvertently included more than once into meta-analyses. Both journal editors and readers have a right to know whether research has been published previously.

- Journals should ask authors for a declaration that the submitted work and its essential substance have not previously been published and are not being considered for publication elsewhere.
- If the primary research report is published and later found to be redundant (i.e. has been published before), the editor should contact the authors and consider publishing a notice of redundant publication.
- Editors have a right to demand original work and to question authors about whether opinion pieces (for example, editorial, letters, non-original papers) have been published before; journals should establish a policy about how much overlap is considered acceptable between such publications.

Sample authorship description/acknowledgement

Dr A, B, and C designed and conducted the study, including patient recruitment, data collection, and data analysis. Dr A prepared the manuscript draft with important intellectual input from Drs B and C. All authors approved the final manuscript. [Insert name of organization] provided funding for the study, statistical support in analysing the data with input from Drs A, B, and C, and also provided funding for editorial support. Drs A, B, and C had complete access to the study data. We would like to thank Dr D for her editorial support during preparation of this manuscript.

The Wiley-Blackwell Exclusive License Form, the OnlineOpen Form, or the Copyright Assignment form, one of which must be submitted before publication in any Wiley-Blackwell journal, requires the corresponding author to state that written authorization for publication of the article has been received by the corresponding author from all co-authors.

Journals that publish clinical trials should consider making registration a requirement before publication of such trials. Even if a journal does not make clinical trial registration compulsory for publication, editors should encourage clear identification of clinical trials and should have a policy about where such information is presented within the structure of the published article.

Papers that present new analyses or syntheses of data that have already been published (for example, sub-group analyses) should identify the primary data source, including reference to the clinical trial registration number if one is available and full reference to the related primary publications.

See Box 5, Box 6.

See COPE flowcharts on ‘What to do if you suspect redundant (duplicate) publication’ (pp. 14–15).

Read Wiley-Blackwell Copyright FAQs section 1.2.3 ‘What is the situation regarding dual publication?’ [2].
Journal instructions should clearly explain what is, and what is not, considered prior publication. Abstracts and posters at conferences, results presented at meetings (for example, to inform investigators or participants about findings), results databases (data without interpretation, discussion, context or conclusions in the form of tables and text to describe data/information where this is not available. Authors) are not considered by Wiley-Blackwell to be prior publication. Journals may choose to accept (i.e. consider ‘not redundant’) the re-publication of materials that have been accurately translated from an original publication in a different language, that translate and publish material that has been published elsewhere should ensure that they have appropriate permission(s), should indicate clearly that the material has been translated and re-published, and should indicate clearly the original source of the material. Editors may request copies of related publications if they are concerned about overlap and possible redundancy. Re-publishing in the same language as primary publication with the aim of serving different audiences is more difficult to justify when primary publication is electronic and therefore easily accessible, but if editors feel that this is appropriate some steps should be taken for translation. Editors should ensure that sub-group analyses, meta- and secondary analyses are clearly identified as analyses of data that has already been published, that they refer directly to the primary source, and that (if available) they include the clinical trial registration number from the primary publication.

Promoting research integrity

If editors suspect research misconduct (e.g., data fabrication, falsification or plagiarism) they should attempt to ensure that if editors suspect research misconduct (e.g., data fabrication, falsification, inappropriate image publication, they should inform peer reviewers about this potential role.

If peer reviewers raise concerns of serious misconduct (for example, data fabrication, falsification, inappropriate image manipulation, or plagiarism) these should be taken seriously. However, authors have a right to respond to such allegations and for investigations to be carried out with appropriate speed and due diligence.

Box 5. Best Practice: Redundant (multiple) publication

The Wiley-Blackwell Exclusive License Form, the OpenOnline Form, or the Copyright Assignment form, one of which must be submitted before publication in any Wiley-Blackwell journal, requires signature from the corresponding author to warrant that the final work is original, has not been published before and is not being considered for publication elsewhere in its final form either in printed or electronic format. Some questions and answers about duplicate publication.

Q. “I am considering joining two of my fellow journal editors in writing a joint editorial about plagiarism and academic disputes. It would be published simultaneously in three journals.”

A. This is appropriate multiple publication. Multiple publication helps convey the strength of the (important) message. Each editorial should refer to the others, as references and in a direct statement.

Q. “We publish abstracts from specialist societies, then often get the full paper a few months later.”

A. This is not duplicate publication. Abstracts do not present full results/analysis.

Q. “Our Chinese edition has translated papers from the main journal a few months after publication.”

A. This could be appropriate re-publication. Translated papers should make it clear (perhaps in their titles) that they are translated from a primary source, and they should refer directly to the primary source (in their abstract and their text, as a reference, and as a footnote).

Box 6. Best Practice: Registering clinical trials

Since 2005, some medical journals notables those edited by members of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) have made registration in a publicly accessible clinical trial register a requirement for publishing clinical trials [1]. (The World Health Organization (WHO), in May 2006, urged ‘research institutions and companies to register all medical studies that test treatments on human beings’ [3]. ICMJE allowed authors a grace period for registration of new or ongoing trials; this grace period ended on 31 May 2005. WHO states that ‘all clinical trials should be registered at inception’, i.e. prospectively before patients/subjects are enrolled, using the complete 20 criteria described by its International Clinical Trials Registry Platform (www.who.int/trials).

Wiley-Blackwell recommends that editors of medical journals require that the clinical trials they consider for publication are registered in free, public clinical trial registries (for example, www.clinicaltrials.gov). If a paper has been submitted from a country where there is no ethics committee, institutional review board, or similar review and approval, editors should urge their own editors to consider requiring, for example, statements from authors that trials conformed to Good Clinical Practice (for example, US Food and Drug Administration Good Clinical Practice in FDA-Regulated Clinical Trials [8]; UK Medicines Research Council Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice [9]; and/or the World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki [7]).

Editors should make clear the standards that they require. Authors’ national standards for research practices (in human and animal studies) may be appropriate.

Editors should seek assurances that studies have been approved by relevant bodies (for example, institutional review board, research ethics committee, data and safety monitoring board, regulatory authorities including those overseeing animal experiments).

Box 7. Best Practice: Protecting research subjects, patients and experimental animals

Policing the standards of human or animal research is beyond the responsibilities of an editor. Even so, medical journals can encourage appropriate standards and help editors consider requiring, for example, statements from authors that trials conformed to Good Clinical Practice (for example, US Food and Drug Administration Good Clinical Practice in FDA-Regulated Clinical Trials [8]; UK Medicines Research Council Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice [9]; and/or the World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki [7]).

Editors should inform readers if ethical breaches have occurred. Journals should publish ‘retractions’ if work is proven to be falsified, or ‘expressions of concern’ if editors have well-founded suspicions of misconduct.

Editors should encourage peer reviewers to consider ethical issues raised by the research they are reviewing. Editors should request additional information from authors if they feel this is required [10].

Where individual human subjects or case studies are discussed (for example, in medicine, psychology, criminology) journals should protect confidentiality and should not publish information of items that might upset or harm participants/subjects, or breach confidentiality of, for example, the doctor–patient relationship.

Journals should have policies about publishing individual information and identifiable images from patients/human subjects. The best policy is to require explicit consent from any patients described in case studies or shown in photographs.

Box 8. Best Practice: Respecting confidentiality

In the majority of cases, editors should only consider publishing information and images from individual participants/subjects. The best policy is to require explicit consent from any patients described in case studies or shown in photographs. If the decision is made to publish a paper under these circumstances a short statement should be included to explain the situation.

Respecting cultures and heritage

Editors should exercise sensitivity when publishing images of patients described in case studies or shown in photographs. If the decision is made to publish a paper under these circumstances a short statement should be included to explain the situation.

Informing readers about research and publication misconduct

Editors should inform readers if ethical breaches have occurred. Wiley-Blackwell has published general advice on publishing retractions.

Editors should publish ‘retractions’ if work is proven to be fraudulent, or ‘expressions of concern’ if editors have well-founded suspicions of misconduct.

Editors should inform readers if ethical breaches have occurred. Wiley-Blackwell has published general advice on publishing retractions.

Editors should publish ‘retractions’ if work is proven to be fraudulent, or ‘expressions of concern’ if editors have well-founded suspicions of misconduct.
Box 9. Best Practice: Errata, retractions, expressions of concern

Journals have a duty to publish corrections (errata) when errors occur that result in the publication of data or information, whatever the cause of the error (i.e. arising from author errors or from editorial mishaps). Likewise, journals should publish “retractions” if work is proven to be fundamentally flawed. Editors have well-founded suspicions of misconduct.

The title of the erratum, retraction, or expression of concern should include the words “Erratum”, “Retraction”, or “Expression of concern”.

It should be published on a numbered page (print and electronic) and should be listed in the journal’s table of contents.

Box 10. Best Practice: Publishing work from a journal’s own staff

When making editorial decisions about peer-reviewed articles where an editor is an author or is acknowledged as a contributor, journals should have mechanisms in place that ensure that the affected editors or staff members exclude themselves and are not involved in the publication decision. In these cases, a short statement explaining the process used to make the editorial decision should be included. When editors are presented with papers where their own interests may impair their ability to make an unbiased editorial decision, they should deputize decisions about the paper to a suitably qualified individual. See ‘Conflicts of Interest’.

Peer reviewer selection and performance

Editors have a responsibility to ensure a high standard of objective, unbiased, and timely peer review.

Editors should strive to establish and maintain a database of suitably qualified peer reviewers.

Editors should consider objectively monitoring the performance of peer reviewers/editorial board members and recording the quality and timeliness of their reviews. Editors should ignore rude, defamatory peer review. Peer reviewers who repeatedly produce poor quality, tardy, abusive or unconstructive reviews should not be used again.

Editors should encourage peer reviewers to identify if they have a conflict of interest with the material they are being asked to review, and editors should ask that peer reviewers decline invitations requesting peer review where any circumstances might prevent them producing fair peer review. See ‘Conflicts of interest’.

Box 11. Best Practice: Timing of publication

Editors should aim to ensure timely peer review and publication for papers; this is likely to be dependent on when, to what extent that this can be predicted, findings may have important implications. Authors should be aware that priority publication is most likely for papers that, as judged by the journal’s editorial staff, may have important implications. The timing of publication may also be influenced by time-related issues or if editorial group submissions on a similar topic which, inevitably, prevents them from being published in the order that articles were accepted. Online-only publication (for example, via Wiley Online Library or Wiley InterScience) can be arranged, especially if authors are willing to accept a delay in publication. The current trend is for ‘Open Access’ publishing which requires pre-publication peer review and peer reviewers during the peer-review process (i.e. prior to publication). If agreement cannot be reached, editors should consider inviting comments from additional peer reviewers. If the editor feels that this would be helpful. Journals should consider stating in their guidelines that the editor’s decision following such an appeal is final.

Journals should consider having a mechanism for authors (and others) to comment on aspects of the journal’s management.

See flowcharts on ‘How to handle appeals about editorial decisions’ (p. 21) and ‘What to do if someone complains about your journal’ (p. 22).

Conflicts of interest

Editors, authors, and peer reviewers have a responsibility to disclose interests that might appear to affect their ability to present or review data objectively. These include relevant financial (for example patent ownership, stock ownership, consultancy, speaker’s fees), personal, political, intellectual, or religious interests.

‘Financial conflicts may be the easiest to identify but they may not be the most influential’ [12].

Readers benefit from transparency, including knowing authors’ and contributors’ affiliations and interests. Editors should strive to maintain transparent policies and procedures regarding authorship and disclosure of conflicts of interest.

See ‘Transparency’.

Box 12. Best Practice: Conflicts of interest

Editors should adopt a policy about conflicts of interest that best suits their particular publishing environment, and should describe this in their editorial policy. Editors should adapt their submission processes to encourage authors to declare and sometimes submit the required financial information. For example, Wiley-Blackwell can configure a journal’s online submission system to identify submissions without required information. Editors should encourage authors with an explanation that their submission cannot be processed without completion of the disclosure form.

Editors should require statements about conflicts of interest from authors. Editors should explain that these statements should provide information on financial (for example patent ownership, stock ownership, consultancies, speaker’s fees), personal, political, intellectual, or religious interests relevant to the area of research or discussion. Research or publication funding is considered separately (see ‘Who funded the work?’).

We want to try to have a policy that covers all conflicts of interest. Other sources of conflict are personal, political, academic, and religious, and we believe that these may be just as potent as financial conflicts.’ [12].

Editors and board members should, whenever these are relevant to the content being considered or published, declare their interests in any affiliations.

Editors should seek disclosure statements from all authors and peer reviewers and should clearly explain the types of conflicts of interest that should be disclosed. Authors’ conflicts of interest (for instance, financial or press) and conflicts of interest should be published whenever these are directly or indirectly relevant to the content being published. Even if they are significant. For example, owning USD 10,000 in a company that manufactures a product discussed in an article would not be significant, whereas consultancy fees of USD 100,000 annually or the equivalent of 5% of an author’s gross income from the previous year could be considered significant. Editors may consider not publishing details of authors’ interests when these interests have no relevance to the content being published. If there is doubt about whether conflicts are relevant or significant, it is prudent to disclose.

The existence of a conflict of interest (for example, employment with a research funder) should not prevent someone from being listed as an author if they qualify for authorship. Editors may prefer not to commission subjective articles for (for example, editorial or non-systematic reviews) from authors with conflicts of interest. However, arguments can be made that such authors are often well informed and have interesting opinions. Strict policies preventing people with conflicts of interest from publishing opinion pieces may reduce the amount of interest in important topics by the authors to relevant interests, and may therefore be counter-productive.

Editors should describe the detail that they require from conflict of interest statements, including the period that these statements should cover (3 years is suggested, but relevant conflicts of interest that are affected by the ability to access financial information, the purpose of the funding received should be described by funding organization (for example, travel grant and speaker’s fees received from [name of organization]). Editors could consider using bands (for example, per year, bands for financial disclosure of USD 0-0.00, USD 0.01-0.10, etc). Editors should consider stating in their guidelines that the editor’s decision following such an appeal is final.

Box 12. Best Practice: Conflicts of interest continued

Wiley-Blackwell recommends that editors publish the minimum amount of information that will provide context and transparency for readers: the sources and types of funding received by the authors. Editors should always publish a statement to describe the principles of editorial independence. The relationship between the editor and the journal owner and publisher should be set out in a formal contract and an appeal mechanism for disputes should be established.

- Decisions by editors about whether to publish individual items should not be influenced by pressure from the editor’s employer, the journal owner or the publisher.

- It is appropriate for journal owners/publishers to discuss general editorial processes and policies with journal editors (for example, the editor’s contract, editorial autonomy). Whether it is permissible to sell reprints of OnlineEarly papers (i.e. papers published online prior to print publication) will be agreed for each journal with the relevant academic society partners and journal editors. Whether it is permissible to sell reprints of OnlineEarly papers (i.e. papers published online prior to print publication) will be agreed for each journal with the relevant academic society partners and journal editors. Whether it is permissible to sell reprints of OnlineEarly papers (i.e. papers published online prior to print publication) will be agreed for each journal with the relevant academic society partners and journal editors.

- In instances of confirmed misconduct editors may consider imposing sanctions on the authors at fault for a period of time. Sanctions must be applied consistently. Before imposing sanctions editors should formally define the conditions in which they will apply (and remove) sanctions, and the processes they will use to do this. Editors of Wiley-Blackwell journals are encouraged to consult Wiley-Blackwell if considering sanctions to ensure that the appropriate processes are applied.

- A body such as the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) can provide editors with impartial advice from other editors about difficult cases, provide information about the prevalence of various types of misconduct and other ethical issues, and allow editors to learn from other journals’ experiences by reference to previous cases.

- Read more: reported cases of publication misconduct and advice from COPE (15).

Box 13. Best Practice: Commercial issues

Wiley-Blackwell does not allow its sales teams to become involved with the editorial decision-making process. The extent of the editorial information available to the sales team and the timing of its disclosure to them will be agreed for each journal with the relevant academic society partners and journal editors. Sales teams may only use this information after editorial decisions are finalized, to provide accurate and timely information to their potential customers. The positions available for advertising in a journal (for example, within or adjacent to an article, or collected in ‘wells’ within the journal) will be agreed for each journal with the relevant academic society partners and journal editors. Whether it is permissible to sell reprints of OnlineEarly papers (i.e. papers published online prior to print publication) will be agreed for each journal with the relevant academic society partners and journal editors.

Accuracy

Journal editors have a responsibility to ensure the accuracy of the material they publish.

- Journals should encourage authors and readers to inform them if they discover errors in published work.
- In instances of confirmed misconduct editors may consider imposing sanctions on the authors at fault for a period of time. Sanctions must be applied consistently. Before imposing sanctions editors should formally define the conditions in which they will apply (and remove) sanctions, and the processes they will use to do this. Editors of Wiley-Blackwell journals are encouraged to consult Wiley-Blackwell if considering sanctions to ensure that the appropriate processes are applied.
- A body such as the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) can provide editors with impartial advice from other editors about difficult cases, provide information about the prevalence of various types of misconduct and other ethical issues, and allow editors to learn from other journals’ experiences by reference to previous cases.
- Read more: reported cases of publication misconduct and advice from COPE (15).

Box 14. Best Practice: Supplements and other funded publications

Wiley-Blackwell recommends that journals appoint co-editors limiting the individual who proposed the initial idea for the funded material and a second individual appointed by the journal as standard procedure for all funded materials. This enables editorial decisions to be easily deputized as should be the case when one editor is an author or is acknowledged as a contributor to a particular article, or when one editor is presented with papers where their own interests may impair their ability to make an unbiased editorial decision. A short statement explaining the process used to make editorial decisions should be included.

- Journals should not permit funding organizations to make decisions beyond those about which publications they choose to fund and the extent of the funding. Decisions about the selection of authors and about the selection and editing of contents to be presented in funded publications should be made by the editor (or co-editors) of the funded publication.

Wiley-Blackwell reserves the right not to publish any funded publication that does not comply with the requirements defined for the journal to which the manuscript or supplement has been submitted.

Responsible publication practices

Editors should pursue cases of suspected misconduct that become apparent during the peer-review and publication processes, to the extent and in the ways defined in this document in the ‘Promoting research integrity’ section. Editors should first work with the authors, the journal owners and/or the journal publishers (at Wiley-Blackwell a Journal Publishing Manager), referring to information from the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), the Council of Science Editors (CSE), or another appropriate body of further advice is needed.

- In instances of confirmed misconduct editors may consider imposing sanctions on the authors at fault for a period of time. Sanctions must be applied consistently. Before imposing sanctions editors should formally define the conditions in which they will apply (and remove) sanctions, and the processes they will use to do this. Editors of Wiley-Blackwell journals are encouraged to consult Wiley-Blackwell if considering sanctions to ensure that the appropriate processes are applied.

- A body such as the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) can provide editors with impartial advice from other editors about difficult cases, provide information about the prevalence of various types of misconduct and other ethical issues, and allow editors to learn from other journals’ experiences by reference to previous cases.

- Read more: reported cases of publication misconduct and advice from COPE (15).

Journals should promote responsible publication practices in their instructions for authors.

- Read more: Committee on Publication Ethics guidelines on publication practice (5); University of California Academic Publishing; Committee of Medical Journal Editors Uniform Requirements (1); Council of Science Editors (CSE) white paper (14); World Association of Medical Editors policy statement (16); Good Publication Practice for pharmaceutical companies (17); American Medical Writers Association Code of Ethics (18); European Medical Writers Association (EMWA) guidelines on the role of medical writers in the development of peer-reviewed publications (19); American Statistical Association (ASA) Comprehensive Ethical Guidelines for Statistical Practice (20); American Chemical Society (ACS) Ethical Guidelines (21); American Psychological Association Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, Section 8 ‘Research and Publication’ (22); Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials (CONSORT) (23); Standards for Reporting of Diagnostic Accuracy (STARD) (24).

Wiley-Blackwell has published general advice on misconduct and the available sanctions (including plagiarism, dealing with research misconduct, and irregularities within the content of an article, including dual publication, libel, slander and obscenity).

- Read: Wiley-Blackwell Copyright FAQs, particularly sections 1.21 (plagiarism) (22), 1.23 (dual publication) (22), 1.24 (libel, slander and obscenity) (28).

- See COPE flowchart on ‘What to do if you suspect an ethical problem with a submitted manuscript’ (p. 20).

Sample wording

[Name of individual] has received fees for serving as a speaker, a consultant and an advisory board member from [names of organizations], and has received research funding from [names of organizations]. [Name of individual] is an employee of [Name of organization]. [Name of individual] owns stocks and shares in [name of organization]. [Name of individual] owns patent [patent identification and brief description].

It is appropriate for journal owners/publishers to discuss general editorial processes and policies with journal editors (for example, the editor’s contract, editorial autonomy). Whether it is permissible to sell reprints of OnlineEarly papers (i.e. papers published online prior to print publication) will be agreed for each journal with the relevant academic society partners and journal editors.

- In instances of confirmed misconduct editors may consider imposing sanctions on the authors at fault for a period of time. Sanctions must be applied consistently. Before imposing sanctions editors should formally define the conditions in which they will apply (and remove) sanctions, and the processes they will use to do this. Editors of Wiley-Blackwell journals are encouraged to consult Wiley-Blackwell if considering sanctions to ensure that the appropriate processes are applied.

- A body such as the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) can provide editors with impartial advice from other editors about difficult cases, provide information about the prevalence of various types of misconduct and other ethical issues, and allow editors to learn from other journals’ experiences by reference to previous cases.

- Read more: reported cases of publication misconduct and advice from COPE (15).

- Read: Wiley-Blackwell Copyright FAQs, particularly sections 1.21 (plagiarism) (22), 1.23 (dual publication) (22), 1.24 (libel, slander and obscenity) (28).

- See COPE flowchart on ‘What to do if you suspect an ethical problem with a submitted manuscript’ (p. 20).
Ownership of ideas and expression

Plagiarism and copyright

Journal editors and readers have a right to expect that submitted work is the author’s own, that it has not been plagiarized (i.e. taken from other authors without permission, if permission is required) and that copyright has not been breached (for example, if figures or tables are reproduced).

- Many journals require authors to declare that the work reported is their own and that they are the copyright owner (or else have obtained the copyright owner’s permission). This is enforced further by the Wiley-Blackwell Exclusive License Form, the OnlineOpen Form, or the Copyright Assignment form, one of which must be submitted before publication in any Wiley-Blackwell journal. This form requires signature from the corresponding author to warrant that the article is an original work, has not been published before and is not being considered for publication elsewhere in its final form either in printed or electronic form.
- See ‘Transparency’ and ‘Promoting research integrity’.

Protecting intellectual property

Journal owners and authors have a right to protect their intellectual property.

- Different systems are available to protect intellectual property and journals must choose whichever best suits their purpose and ethos. Some Wiley-Blackwell journals require authors to relinquish their copyright, other Wiley-Blackwell journals license content from authors, whereas others adopt an open-access model under creative commons licenses. Wiley-Blackwell recommends adoption of a system that licenses content from authors, rather than more traditional systems that require copyright assignment/transfer by authors.
- Read more: Wiley-Blackwell Copyright FAQs [27].

Peer reviewer conduct and intellectual property

Authors are entitled to expect that peer reviewers or other individuals privy to the work an author submits to a journal will not steal their research ideas or plagiarize their work.

- Journal guidelines to peer reviewers should be explicit about the roles and responsibilities of peer reviewers, in particular the need to treat submitted material in confidence until it has been published.
- Journals should ask peer reviewers to destroy submitted manuscripts after they have reviewed them.
- Editors should expect allegations of theft or plagiarism to be substantiated, and should treat allegations of theft or plagiarism seriously.
- Editors should protect peer reviewers from authors and, even if peer reviewer identities are revealed, should discourage authors from contacting peer reviewers directly, especially if misconduct is suspected.
- See ‘Promoting research integrity’.
- See Box 15.


Box 15. Best Practice: Protecting intellectual property

Wiley-Blackwell is legally required to have explicit authority to publish any article. The societies we partner with decide which copyright arrangement they require from the options we provide, a brief and abridged description of which is provided in the bulletins below. Wiley-Blackwell recommends the Exclusive License Form (ELF) system (for a sample form visit http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/pdf/ijcp_ELFPdf.pdf).

- The Wiley-Blackwell Exclusive License Form (ELF). This form of copyright agreement, among other things, enables the owners of intellectual property (be they authors or named organizations) to retain copyright in their journal articles; Wiley-Blackwell or the journal owner retains the commercial publishing and journal compilation rights.
- The Wiley-Blackwell OnlineOpen Exclusive License Form (OOF). While allowing articles to be published and made freely available for all to access online, this form of copyright agreement (among other things and like the ELF) enables the owners of intellectual property (be they authors or named organizations) to retain copyright in their journal articles; the OOF adheres to Creative Commons 2.5 and Wiley-Blackwell recommends adoption of a system that licenses content from authors.
- The Copyright Assignment Form (CAF) is also still in use.

Flowcharts

Changes in authorship

(a) Corresponding author requests addition of extra author before publication

- Check that all authors consent to addition of extra author
- Amend contributor details (role of each contributor/author) if included
- Proceed with review/publication
- Get new author to complete journal’s authorship declaration (if used)
- Amend contributor details (role of each contributor/author) if included
- Proceed with review/publication
- All authors agree
- Authors do not agree
- All authors agree
- Authors do not agree
- Amend author list and contributor details (role of each contributor/author) / acknowledgements as required
- Proceed with review/publication
- Suspended, review/publication of paper until authorship has been agreed by all authors, if necessary, via institution(s)
- Note: major changes in response to reviewer comments, e.g. adding new data might justify the inclusion of a new author

(b) Corresponding author requests removal of author before publication

- Clarify reason for change in authorship
- Check that all authors consent to removal of author
- Amend author list and contributor details (role of each contributor/author) / acknowledgements as required
- Proceed with review/publication
- All authors agree
- Authors do not agree
- Most important to check with the author(s) whose name(s) is/are being removed from the paper and get their agreement in writing

Note: major changes in response to reviewer comments, e.g. adding new data might justify the inclusion of a new author

Changes in authorship

Most important to check with the author(s) whose name(s) is/are being removed from the paper and get their agreement in writing
Changes in authorship
(c) Request for addition of extra author after publication

- Clarify reason for change in authorship
- Ask why author was omitted from original list – ideally, refer to journal guidelines or authorship declaration which should state that all authors meet appropriate criteria and that no deserving authors have been omitted
- Check that all authors consent to addition of extra author
- Authors do not agree
  - All authors agree
    - Publish correction
  - Authors still cannot agree
    - Refer case to authors’ institution(s) and ask it/them to adjudicate
- All authors agree
  - Publish correction if required by institution(s)

To prevent future problems:
1. Before publication, get authors to sign statement that all listed authors meet authorship criteria and that no others meeting the criteria have been omitted
2. Publish details of each person’s contribution to the research and publication

Changes in authorship
(d) Request for removal of author after publication

- Clarify reason for change in authorship
- Ask why author wishes to be removed from list – refer to journal guidelines or authorship declaration which should state that all authors meet appropriate criteria. Ask if author suspects fraud/misconduct
- Check that all authors agree to change (including excluded author)
- Author(s) gives acceptable reason for change
  - Author(s) writes a letter
    - Contact other authors explaining what is happening
      - Other authors do not wish to respond
        - Author(s) does not agree to write letter (or writes something unpublishable)
        - If author insists on removal of name and other authors agree, then consider publishing correction
      - Other authors submit response
        - Author(s) writes letter
          - Publish both letters
        - Author(s) has difference in interpretation of data
          - Suggest author(s) put views in a letter and explain you will give other authors a chance to respond and will publish both letters if suitable (i.e. correct length, not libellous)
  - Author(s) alleges fraud/misconduct
    - Other authors
      - Submit response
        - Author(s) writes letter
          - Publish minority view letter
        - Author(s) does not agree to write letter (or writes something unpublishable)
      - Author(s) writes letter
        - Publish correction
  - Author(s) does not agree to change
    - Publish minority view letter

Other authors
- Submit response
- Author(s) writes letter
  - Publish both letters
- Author(s) does not agree to change involving a co-author
  - Publish correction

To prevent future problems:
1. Before publication, get all authors to sign statement that all listed authors meet authorship criteria that no others meeting the criteria have been omitted
2. Publish details of each person’s contribution to the research and publication
### What to do if you suspect redundant (duplicate) publication

#### (a) Suspected redundant publication in a submitted manuscript

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Reviewer informs editor about redundant publication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Thank reviewer and say you plan to investigate. Get full documentary evidence if not already provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Check degree of overlap/redundancy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Major overlap/redundancy is based on same data with identical or very similar findings and/or evidence authors have sought to hide redundancy e.g. by changing title or author order or not citing previous papers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minor overlap with some element of redundancy or legitimate re-analysis (e.g. sub-group/extended follow-up/discussion aimed at different audience).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Contact corresponding author in writing, ideally enclosing signed authorship statement (or cover letter) stating that submitted work has not been published elsewhere and documentary evidence of publication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Author responds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsatisfactory explanation/admits guilt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfactory explanation (honest error/journal instructions unclear/very junior researcher).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Write to author (all authors if possible) rejecting submission, explaining position and expected future behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Consider informing author’s superior and/or person responsible for research governance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inform author’s(s) of your action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inform reviewer of outcome/action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>If no response, keep contacting institution every 3–6 months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Write to author (all authors if possible) rejecting submission, explaining position and expected future behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Consider informing author’s superior and/or person responsible for research governance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inform author’s(s) of your action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>If no significant overlap.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discuss with reviewer. Proceed with review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Consider informing author's superior or person responsible for research governance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inform reviewer of outcome/action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Ununsatisfactory explanation/admits guilt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attempt to contact all other authors (check Medline/Google for emails).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Contact author's institution requesting your concern is passed to author's superior and/or person responsible for research governance. Try to obtain acknowledgement of your letter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Contact author's institution requesting your concern is passed to author's superior and/or person responsible for research governance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consider informing author's superior and/or person responsible for research governance. Inform author's(s) of your action. Inform reviewer of outcome/action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Author responds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Request missing reference to original paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Note: ICMJE advises reference the original paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Discuss publishing statement of redundant publication or retraction. Inform editor of other journal involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Write to author (all authors if possible) explaining position and expected future behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Consider informing author’s superior and/or person responsible for research governance. Inform author’s(s) of your action. Inform reviewer of outcome/action.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### (b) Suspected redundant publication in a published article

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Reader informs editor about redundant publication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Thank reader and say you plan to investigate. Get full documentary evidence if not already provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Check degree of overlap/redundancy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Major overlap/redundancy is based on same dataset with identical findings and/or evidence that authors have sought to hide redundancy, e.g. by changing title or author order or not referring to previous papers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minor overlap (‘salami publishing’ with some element of redundancy) or legitimate re-analysis (e.g. sub-group/extended follow-up/discussion aimed at different audience).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Contact corresponding author in writing, ideally enclosing signed authorship statement (or cover letter) stating that submitted work has not been published elsewhere and documentary evidence of publication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Author responds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Note: ICMJE advises that translations are acceptable but MUST reference the original.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Discuss publishing correction giving reference to original paper. Where editor has reason to believe failure to refer to previous papers was deliberate, consider informing author's superior or person responsible for research governance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Contact author's institution requesting your concern is passed to author's superior and/or person responsible for research governance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Consider informing author's superior and/or person responsible for research governance. Inform author's(s) of your action. Inform reviewer of outcome/action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory explanation/admits guilt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attempt to contact all other authors (check Medline/Google for current affiliations/emails).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Contact author's institution requesting your concern is passed to author's superior and/or person responsible for research governance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Consider publishing statement of redundant publication or retraction. Inform editor of other journal involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Write to author (all authors if possible) explaining position and expected future behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Consider informing author’s superior and/or person responsible for research governance. Inform author’s(s) of your action. Inform reviewer of outcome/action.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

No significant overlap. Proceed with review.

Satisfactory explanation (honest error/journal instructions unclear/very junior researcher). Contact author in neutral terms/expressing disappointment/explaining journal’s position. Explain that secondary papers must reference the original. Request missing reference to original paper. Where editor has reason to believe failure to refer to previous papers was deliberate, consider informing author’s superior or person responsible for research governance. Inform reviewer of outcome/action. Proceed with review.
What to do if you suspect fabricated data

(a) Suspected fabricated data in a submitted manuscript

- Reviewer expresses suspicion of fabricated data
- Thank reviewer, ask for evidence (if not already provided) and state your plans to investigate
- Consider getting a 2nd opinion from another reviewer
- Assemble evidence of fabrication
- Author replies
  - Author cleared
  - Unsatisfactory answer/admits guilt
  - Request raw data/lab notebooks as appropriate
- Contact author to explain concerns but do not make direct accusation
- No response
- Author replies
  - Attempt to contact all other authors (check Medline/Google for emails)
- No response
- Author replies
  - Contact author’s institution requesting your concern is passed to author’s superior and/or person responsible for research governance, if necessary coordinating with co-authors’ institutions
- Author found guilty
- Author(s) guilty of fabrication
- Contact regulatory body requesting an enquiry
- No response
- Author(s) found not guilty
- Publish expression of concern
- Contact regulatory body (e.g. GMC for UK doctors) requesting an enquiry
- Inform all authors you intend to contact institution/regulatory body
- Contact author to explain concerns
- Request raw data/lab notebooks as appropriate
- Inform reviewer of outcome
- Author(s) guilty of fabrication
- Author(s) found not guilty
- Publish retraction
- Apologize to author(s)
- Publish expression of concern
- Inform readers of outcome

(b) Suspected fabricated data in a published article

- Reader expresses suspicion of fabricated data
- Thank reader and state your plans to investigate
- Consider getting a 2nd opinion from another reviewer
- Assemble evidence of fabrication
- Author replies
  - Author(s) guilty of fabrication
  - No response
  - Unsatisfactory answer/admits guilt
  - Satisfactory explanation
  - No or unsatisfactory response
- Author replies
  - Apologize to author(s) (check Medline/Google for emails)
- Contact author’s institution requesting your concern is passed to author’s superior and/or person responsible for research governance, if necessary coordinating with co-authors’ institutions
- Author found not guilty
- Author(s) found not guilty
- Publish retraction
- Apologize to author(s)
- Publish expression of concern
- Inform reader of outcome
- Contact regulatory body (e.g. GMC for UK doctors) requesting an enquiry
- Inform all authors you intend to contact institution/regulatory body
- Contact author’s institution requesting an enquiry
- No response
- Author(s) guilty of fabrication
- Author(s) found not guilty
- Publish retraction
- Apologize to author(s)
- Inform reader of outcome
What to do if you suspect plagiarism

(a) Suspected plagiarism in a submitted manuscript

Reviewer informs editor about suspected plagiarism

Thank reviewer and say you plan to investigate

Get full documentary evidence if not already provided

Check degree of copying

Clear plagiarism (unattributed use of large portions of text and/or data, presented as if they were by the plagiarist)

Contact corresponding author in writing, ideally enclosing signed authorship statement (or cover letter) stating that the submitted work is original/the author's own and documentary evidence of plagiarism

Author responds

No response

Contact author in neutral terms/expressing disappointment/explaining journal's position

Redundancy (i.e. copying from author's own work) – see flowcharts on redundancy

Unsatisfactory explanation/admits guilt

Write to author (all authors if possible) rejecting submission, explaining position and expected future behavior

Consider informing author's superior and/or person responsible for research governance and/or potential victim

Satisfactory explanation (honest error/journal instructions unclear/very junior researcher)

Attempt to contact all other authors (check Medline/Google for emails)

Write to author (all authors if possible) explaining position and expected future behavior

Proceed with review

Discuss with reviewer

(b) Suspected plagiarism in a published article

Reader informs editor about suspected plagiarism

Thank reader and say you plan to investigate

Get full documentary evidence if not already provided

Check degree of copying

Clear plagiarism (unattributed use of large portions of text and/or data, presented as if they were by the plagiarist)

Contact corresponding author in writing, ideally enclosing signed authorship statement (or cover letter) stating that the submitted work is original/the author's own and documentary evidence of plagiarism

Author responds

No response

Contact author in neutral terms/expressing disappointment/explaining journal's position

Redundancy (i.e. copying from author's own work) – see flowcharts on redundancy

Unsatisfactory explanation/admits guilt

Write to all authors (if possible) explaining position and expected future behavior

Consider informing author's superior and/or person responsible for research governance

Satisfactory explanation (honest error/journal instructions unclear/very junior researcher)

Inform reader (and plagiarized author(s) if different) of journal's actions

Write to editor of other journal(s) involved or publisher of plagiarized books

Discuss publishing correction giving reference to original paper(s) if this has been omitted

No response

Contact author in neutral terms/expressing disappointment/explaining journal's position

Inform readers and victim(s) of outcome/action

If no response, keep contacting institution every 3–6 months

If no resolution, consider contacting other authorities, e.g. ORI in US, GMC in UK

Contact author's institution requesting your concern is passed to author's superior and/or person responsible for research governance

Consider publishing retraction

Note: The instructions to authors should include a definition of plagiarism and state the journal's policy on it.

Clear plagiarism (unattributed use of large portions of text and/or data, presented as if they were by the plagiarist)

Minor copying of short phrases only (e.g. in discussion of research paper from non-native language speaker)

No misattribution of data

Contact author's institution requesting your concern is passed to author's superior and/or person responsible for research governance

Inform author(s) of your action

Contact corresponding author in writing, ideally enclosing signed authorship statement (or cover letter) stating that the work is original/the author's own and documentary evidence of plagiarism

Inform reviewer of outcome/action

Note: The instructions to authors should include a definition of plagiarism and state the journal's policy on it.
What to do if you suspect an ethical problem with a submitted manuscript

Reviewer (or editor) raises ethical concern about manuscript

Thank reviewer and say you plan to investigate

Author(s) supplies relevant details

e.g. lack of ethical approval/concern re patient consent or protection/concern re animal experimentation

Issue resolved satisfactorily

Satisfactory answer

Inform author that review process is suspended until case is resolved

Forward concerns to author’s employer or person responsible for research governance at institution

Consider submitting case to COPE if it raises novel ethical issues

No/unsatisfactory response

Inform reviewer about outcome of case

Refer to other authorities (e.g. medical registration body, UKPRI, ORI)

e.g. request evidence of ethical committee/IRB approval/copy of informed consent documents

How to handle appeals about editorial decisions

Submission rejected after in-house review

Author appeals

Acknowledge appeal and explain procedure

Submit issue for external peer review

Author appeals

Consider author’s arguments, contact original reviewers if new data supplied

Reject appeal

Inform author of action

Reconsider decision* in light of reviewers’ comments

*Decision making process (e.g. editorial board, committee) will depend on journal

If reviewers gave conflicting advice, consider seeking additional review

Inform author of decision

Explain that this decision is final

No/unsatisfactory response

No/unsatisfactory/no response
What to do if someone complains about your journal

1. Journal receives complaint
   - Acknowledge receipt and explain complaints procedure

2. Editor attempts to resolve issue
   - Respond to the complaint
   - Complainant not satisfied with response
     - Editor refers complaint to, for example:
       - publications committee
       - journal oversight board
       - journal ombudsman
       - editor’s employer
     - Appropriate body attempts to resolve issue
   - Complainant not satisfied with response
     - Complainant may refer case to COPE or other body, e.g., Press Complaints Commission

3. Editor refers complaint to, for example:
   - publications committee
   - journal oversight board
   - journal ombudsman
   - editor’s employer
   - Appropriate body attempts to resolve issue

4. Complainant satisfied with response

Note: To ensure correct handling of complaints, editors should ensure that their journal has an agreed procedure and that this is set out in their contract.

See flowchart for how COPE handles complaints.

What to do if a reader suspects undisclosed conflict of interest (Col) in a published article

1. Reader informs editor of author’s undisclosed Col
   - Thank reader and say you plan to investigate

2. Contact author(s) and express concern
   - Author(s) supplies relevant details
   - Explain journal policy/Col definition clearly and obtain signed statement from author(s) about all relevantCols (if not obtained previously)
   - Author(s) denies Col

3. Author(s) supplies relevant details
   - Thank author but point out seriousness of omission
   - Publish correction to competing interest statement as required
   - Inform reader of outcome

4. Explain journal policy/Col definition clearly and obtain signed statement from author(s) about all relevant Cols (if not obtained previously)

To avoid future problems:
- Always get signed statement of Cols from all authors and reviewers before publication
- Ensure journal guidelines include clear definition of Col
- It may be helpful to provide a copy of the journal’s policy/definition of Col

Redrawn for Committee on Publication Ethics by Wiley-Blackwell
© 2008 Committee on Publication Ethics
What to do if a reviewer suspects undisclosed conflict of interest (Col) in a submitted manuscript

Reviewer informs editor of author’s undisclosed Col

Thank reviewer and say you plan to investigate

Contact author(s) and express concern

Author(s) supplies relevant details

Thank author but point out seriousness of omission

Explain journal policy/Col definition clearly and obtain signed statement from author(s) about all relevantCols

Amend competing interest statement as required

Proceed with review/publication

Inform reviewer of outcome

To avoid future problems:
Always get signed statement of Cols from all authors before publication (or get them to tick a box if they declare no conflict)
Ensure journal guidelines include clear definition of Col

What to do if you suspect ghost, guest or gift authorship

(see also flowcharts on Changes in authorship, as such requests may indicate the presence of a ghost or gift)

Review acknowledgement section and authorship declaration (if supplied) and/or*

Send copy of journal’s authorship policy** to corresponding author and request statement that all qualify and no authors have been omitted (if not obtained previously)

Request information (or further details) of individual’s contributions***

Authorship role missing (e.g. contributor list does not include anybody who analyzed data or prepared first draft)

Satisfactory explanation of author list

Doubts remain/need more information

Try to contact authors (Google names for contacts) and ask about their role, whether any authors have been omitted, and whether they have any concerns about authorship

Review your journal’s instructions to contributors and submission forms to ensure clear guidance and prevent future problem

‘Ghost’ identified

Suggest missing author should be added to list

‘Guest’ or ‘gift’ author identified

Suggest guest/gift author(s) should be removed/moved to Acknowledgements section

Listed author does not meet authorship criteria

Satisfactory explanation of author list

Doubts remain/need more information

Try to contact authors (Google names for contacts) and ask about their role, whether any authors have been omitted, and whether they have any concerns about authorship

Get agreement for authorship change (in writing) from all authors. Letter should also clearly state the journal’s authorship policy and/or refer to published criteria (e.g. ICMJE) and may express concern/disappointment that these were not followed. For senior authors consider copying this letter to their head of department/person responsible for research governance

Proceed with review/publication

Reference


*Note: initial action will depend on journal’s normal method of collecting author/contributor info

**Note: including clear guidance/criteria for authorship in journal instructions makes it easier to handle such issues

***Note: Marusic et al have shown that the method of collecting such data (e.g. free text or check boxes) can influence the response. Letting authors describe their own contributions probably results in the most truthful and informative answers.
Ethical Policy Template

Do you want help to update your instructions for authors or online submission system?

This is a template for editors to use when they want additions to specific items in their instructions to authors and on-line submission systems. Editors can select from the items listed. These suggestions follow the principles outlined in Best Practice Guidelines on Publication Ethics: A Publisher’s Perspective [1].

Items shown in teal are suggested priorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Descriptive wording for addition to instructions for authors</th>
<th>Further guidance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>Authors must disclose all sources of funding for their research and its publication, or for their publication if it is not a research publication.</td>
<td>How was this research and its publication (or this publication if it is not research funded)? (List all funders giving grant numbers where applicable). [free text]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Role of sponsor

Authors should state whether they had complete access to the data that support the publication.

Conflicts of interest

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