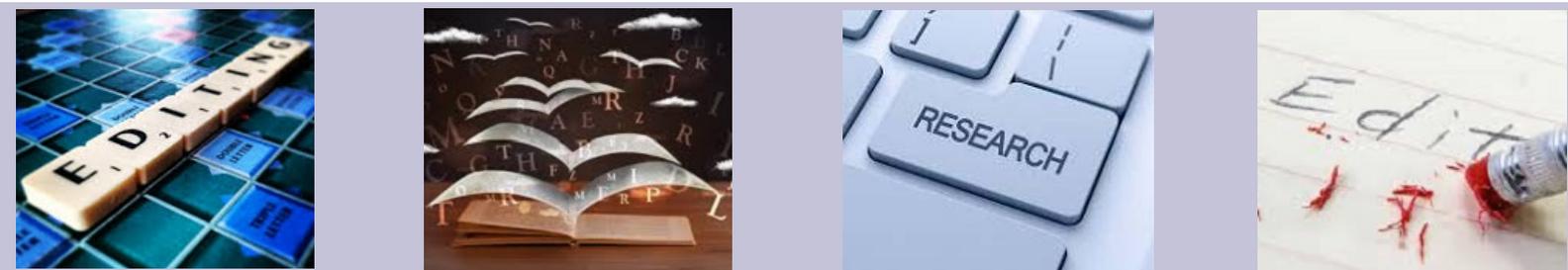




# Code of Best Practice in Scholarly Journal Publishing, Editing and Peer Review

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science  
& technology  
Department:  
Science and Technology  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



## Code of Best Practice in Scholarly Journal Publishing, Editing and Peer Review

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### Fundamental Principles of Research Publishing

- The reported findings and/or conceptual insights must be original, in the sense that that they are novel findings or insights that are not published elsewhere.
- Any paper submitted to a journal should only be considered for possible publication if the author(s) have certified that the paper in question is not under consideration by another publication, and will not be submitted to any other journal until a final rejection decision (or formal withdrawal) from the present journal has been received. Authors may be asked to enter into a publishing agreement.
- Manuscripts must contain, or permit reference in sufficient detail, of the methods and materials used in the study (where applicable) in order to make explicit how the knowledge was generated, and the academic basis for the claims being made.
- Integrity of scholarship requires that no apparently inconsistent data are omitted.
- The statistical treatment of data must be thorough and the conclusions reasonable, and based on the results of the research and objectives.
- The existing relevant literature must be appropriately and fairly cited, and self-citation must be limited; in this respect, efforts should be made to ensure that reference is made to the first report of a finding or conceptual insight, if possible, rather than a later citation with reference to subsequent work.
- Authorship must conform to the notions of responsibility and credit; thus special attention must be given to the first 'lead' author (sometimes explicitly shared), and the inclusion in the authorship listing only of persons who have made a significant contribution to the production of the work at an intellectual, practical or conceptual level.

See COPE Discussion Document: [What constitutes authorship](#)

- Speculative decisions and statements must be clearly specified as such and kept to a minimum (except where the nature of the contribution requires speculation, such as philosophical articles, case discussions, theology, etc.).
- Acknowledgement of funding sources and possible conflicts of interest must be stated.
- Author affiliations should be provided which reflect both the period of the study and the present situation.
- Priority is given from the date of acceptance of an article (i.e. once the peer review has already taken place), not from its date of receipt. However both dates are always provided in the published version.
- Post-publication errors and falsifications must always be corrected and/or retracted in a later issue of the same journal by means of an erratum or a retraction notice which should be published on the article HTML/website page as well as the PDF.

See COPE: [Retraction guidelines](#)

See COPE: [Discussion paper on plagiarism](#)

See COPE: [What to do if you suspect plagiarism](#)

- Studies addressing a particular question should not be broken up into a series of fragmented short publications or articles but should preferably be presented as a full article of the work and its results.

### **Editorial Process**

- Scholarship should be opened to authors from multiple institutions from South Africa. Submissions from the African continent and internationally are encouraged.
- An editorial policy must exist and must be accessible to authors.

### **Editorial Policy**

An editorial policy of a scholarly journal at minimum describes or outlines the aim of the journal:

- the field(s) to be covered;

- the kinds of articles that may be accepted for publication (research articles or letters or short communications; commentaries and reviews that provide a synthesis of existing knowledge; book reviews; correspondence, etc.);
  - the absolute need for originality and not being considered for publication simultaneously elsewhere;
  - technical specifications as to submission of materials;
  - the use of referees and editorial discretion;
  - possible charges (e.g. article processing).
- Clear policies should be put in place and should be published on the journal's website. The following policies are recommended:
    - Conflict of interest;
    - Confidentiality;
    - Ethical issues (including plagiarism);
    - Corrections (Errata, Corrigenda, Retractions);
    - Copyright;
    - Advertising;
    - Preprints, digital archiving, preservation;
    - Peer review (refer to section on Peer Review).
  - Information on copyright and licensing are made available on the journal's website and licensing terms should appear on all published articles.
  - Misconduct must be detected and prevented (e.g. presentation of data, graphs, or figures already published elsewhere; inconsistent data sets; citation manipulation; and plagiarism).

See COPE: [Allegations of Misconduct](#)

- All manuscripts and substantive correspondence relating to published papers should be properly and accessibly stored (for editor's reference), preferably in a well-designed record- and document-handling system for editor/s' and audit reference.
- The journal should contextualise reported findings in its editorial and supplementary sections.

- Editors must ideally not submit papers to their own journals to prevent the perception of dishonesty. If they do, they must delegate full editorial discretion to an associate editor or Chair of the Editorial Board / guest editor.
- An annual (or biannual) report on the journal must be compiled, with recommendations for journal improvement. These recommendations should be considered by the editor/s, an editorial board member or publisher, if applicable.
- The editorial office contact details must appear on the journal's website.

See Council of Science Editors: [Editor's roles and responsibilities](#)

See COPE: [Short guide to ethical editing for new editors](#)

### **Editorial Board/Governance**

- The journal must have an editorial board, which is reflective of expertise in the relevant subject area(s), and with diversity of members beyond a single institution.
- The journal must list the full names and affiliations of editorial board members on its website.
- Members should be appointed competitively for a specific term.
- Board members must be qualified to contribute to and assist the Editor-in-Chief to achieve the best strategies and policies for the journal.
- The composition of the board must be reviewed regularly.
- Submissions from editorial board members must be handled with extra confidentiality and attention so as not to compromise the peer review process.
- Editorial board members must be given clear guidelines on their role in the journal and their expected duties.

Role of Editorial Board:

- Advise and support the editorial team from time to time regarding the operation and quality of the journal contributions.

- Review occasional articles that fall within the expertise of the board member when requested.
- Encourage colleagues and peers to submit suitable articles.
- Make suggestions to the editor(s) of suitable articles, authors and reviewers.
- Help to promote the journal through personal and professional networks, including social media and at meetings.
- Provide prestige to the journal.
- Respect confidential journal information and ensure it is not inappropriately circulated.
- Accept that the Editor's decisions on publication or otherwise are final.

### Peer Review Process

- Journals must have a peer review policy and articles accepted for publication in the journal must be peer reviewed.
- Editors must carefully examine submitted manuscripts so that they are sent to appropriately selected reviewers.
- A paper to be considered for publication should ideally be sent to at least two reviewers.
- Peer reviewers should preferably be scholars who have not previously co-published with the author(s).
- Peer reviewers must be carefully selected so that they provide helpful critique of a manuscript's content in order to improve it. They must have expertise and competency in the topic.
- It is recommended that the peer-review process be conducted 'double blind', that is, the author(s) does not know who the reviewers are and vice versa. A reviewer should not know who the other reviewers are. Double blind peer review is appropriate where academic fields are small. Other models of peer review are not excluded and the journal should adopt the method that is most suited for the journal, its disciplinary area(s) and its research community.
- The reviewer must declare any potential or real conflict of interest before the review is submitted and must be free of known bias in relation to the subject matter.

- Special statistical and/or mathematical review can be sought, if needed.
- Reviewer reports are carefully assessed by the editor to decide whether they constitute the basis for the publication of the article in question, or whether publication should follow if certain improvements are effected and/or further work done and reported on; or whether the paper should be rejected.
- Editors reserve the right to reject papers without review if they are not appropriate for the journal concerned. In addition, studies that are fundamentally flawed may also be rejected without review. In both cases, editors must communicate clearly the reason for refusals.
- All peer reports and substantive correspondence must be retained within a well-designed record system for possible later scrutiny.
- It is recommended that a list of peer reviewers used by a journal be updated and published at least once a year; ideally, this would include the number of articles that were reviewed by each listed reviewer.
- Editors should seriously consider not retaining reviewers who default on their obligations or who take an inappropriately long time to complete reviews.
- The journal's peer review practice activities should be monitored regularly to ensure effectiveness.
- The journal's peer review policy and process must be published on its website.
- Part of a postgraduate thesis or dissertation submitted for publication in a scholarly journal is subject to the same peer review procedures as all other manuscripts.
- Editors should not act as reviewers for the papers they are handling.

The reviewers must especially:

- Scrutinise the research methodology and results in terms of consistency, quality of interpretation and likely reproducibility.

- Identify gaps that could be explored to enhance the interpretability and strength of the findings and/or insights.
- Suggest how the paper can be improved. Reviewers should always report in writing, with clear recommendations for acceptance of the paper in question, with or without revision, or rejection, as the case may be.
- Assess the originality of references of previously published studies and ensure that the work is positioned in the relevant field.
- Contest conclusions when they are not justified by the results or arguments presented.

**Link to useful checklist of what to consider when publishing online (see Appendix).**

**Resources/Recommended Reading:**

Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE): [Core Practices](#)

Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE): [Guidelines](#)

Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE): [Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing](#)

Council of Science Editors: [White Paper on Publication Ethics](#)

Department of Higher Education Policy (DHET): [Research Outputs Policy](#)

Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ): [Publishing Best Practice and Basic Standards for Inclusion](#)

SciELO: Criteria, policy and procedures for admission and permanence of scientific journals in the South African Collection of SciELO: [SciELO SA Criteria](#)