



JOURNAL EDITORS' CODE OF CONDUCT

Contents:

Introduction to Springer Nature	3
COPE.....	4
Diversity, equity and inclusion.....	4
Peer review.....	5
Manuscript handling	6
Confidentiality	6
Libelous and defamatory content	6
Editorial policies and field specific standards	6
Human subjects, data and tissue.....	7
Animals used for research, education and testing	8
Conflicts of interest of Editor(s)-in-Chief.....	8
Complaints, appeals and post-publication issues	9
Miscellaneous	9

Introduction to Springer Nature

In one respect the role of an Editor-in-Chief is fairly straightforward: to ensure that the journal publishes good quality research. However the position is multi-faceted and requires Editors-in-Chief to perform a variety of tasks and interact with a wide range of people.

More general information on the role of a Journal Editor at Springer Nature can be found in our [Editors' Information Pack](#).

The Code of Conduct for Editors sets out the standards and expectations associated with the role of Editor. These requirements are based on guidelines and best practice recommendations issued by organizations such as the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE). Adhering to these will ensure that you are working to the highest standard of editorial practice.

Springer Nature is a member of the [Committee on Publication Ethics \(COPE\)](#). COPE is an advisory body which provides guidance to editors and publishers on all aspects of publication ethics.

As members, we are committed to:

1. Adhere to their [Core Practices](#).
2. Follow [COPE guidelines](#) outlining how to deal with cases of potential publication misconduct.

We aspire to a positive and proactive approach to preventing publication misconduct and encouraging sound and reliable research practices.

The Editor-in-Chief is responsible for guaranteeing, as far as possible, the quality and ethics of everything that is published in the journal. A Handling Editor (whether this is an Associate Editor, Section Editor, Region Editor, Special Guest Editor and so forth) should also take responsibility for ensuring the quality of manuscripts which are accepted.

All Editors work to maintain the highest standards of editorial practice for their journals and we have a clear **framework of policies, processes and guidelines** designed to help them achieve this.

Springer Nature Code of Conduct

Editors follow the minimum standards as set out in the Springer Nature Code of Conduct for Editors.

COPE:

- Springer Nature Journals are members of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE). Editor(s) are expected to follow the COPE *Core Practices*
- Springer Nature has responsibility to ensure that the journals it publishes adhere to editorial and publication ethics standards recommended by COPE. Springer Nature will support Editor(s) in their pursuit of adhering to such COPE standards. When dealing with publication and research ethics issues, Editor(s) are expected to follow COPE guidance and flowcharts or any guidance provided by Springer Nature (hereafter called the Publisher). The final course of action should be decided by the Editor(s). In difficult cases, or where there is no existing COPE guidance, the Editor(s) may seek advice from the Publisher, and some cases may need to be resolved in collaboration between Editor(s) and the Publisher. The Core Practices and general guidelines and flowcharts are available from the COPE website (<http://publicationethics.org>)
- Editor(s) are expected to be aware of the editorial policies and information provided for authors by the Journal.
- If there is more than one Editor-in-Chief for the Journal, it is understood that the responsibility concerning Editorship of the Journal is shared between them.

Diversity, equity and inclusion

- Springer Nature is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion.
- The Editor-in-Chief shall nominate, appoint and secure the services of a team of editorial stakeholders that provides both international representation and varied expertise.
- When selecting editors, the Editor-in-Chief should endeavor to ensure that the composition of the team is diverse in terms of both expertise and levels of seniority, with members providing balanced representation from different geographical regions, gender identities, racial/ethnic groups, and other groups.
- When selecting peer reviewers, Editors should endeavor to procure those from a diverse pool to try to ensure a balanced point of view while ensuring that reviewers have appropriate subject knowledge and expertise.

Peer review:

- Editor(s) are expected to comply with the Journal's peer review policy (e.g. open, single-blind, double-blind).
- Peer review is an essential component of the research publication. It aims to assess the validity of the reported research and suitability for journals' scope and aims. In order to maintain the integrity of the published record the Editor(s) are expected to ensure that all manuscripts reporting primary research, or secondary analysis of primary research, accepted for publication in the Journal are peer reviewed by reviewers who are competent in a relevant field and/or have expertise in a relevant methodology, as judged by their publication record. Editor(s) should ensure absence of conflicts of interest (e.g. recent collaboration with authors) for *all* peer reviewers; special attention should be given to peer reviewers suggested by the authors of the manuscript.
- Editor(s) are expected to obtain a minimum of two peer reviewers for manuscripts reporting primary research or secondary analysis of primary research. It is recognized that in some exceptional circumstances, particularly in niche and emerging fields, it may not be possible to obtain two independent peer reviewers. In such cases, Editor(s) may wish to make a decision to publish based on one peer review report. When making a decision based on one report, Editor(s) are expected to only do so if the peer review report meets the standards set out below.
- Peer review reports should be in English and provide constructive critical evaluations of the authors' work, particularly in relation to the appropriateness of methods used, whether the results are accurate, and whether the conclusions are supported by the results. Editorial decisions should be based on peer reviewer comments that meet these criteria rather than on recommendations made by short, superficial peer reviewer reports which do not provide a rationale for the recommendations.
- Editor(s) are expected to independently verify the contact details of reviewers suggested by authors or other third parties. Institutional email addresses should be used to invite peer reviewers wherever possible. Each manuscript should be reviewed by at least one reviewer who was not suggested by the author.
- Manuscripts that do not report primary research or secondary analysis of primary research, such as Editorials, Book Reviews, Commentaries or Opinion articles, may be accepted without two peer review reports. Such manuscripts should be assessed by the Editor(s) if the topic is in the area of expertise of the Editor(s); if the topic is not in area of expertise of the Editor(s), such manuscripts should be assessed by at least one independent expert reviewer or Editorial Board Member.

Manuscript handling:

- Editor(s) are expected to provide a professional service to authors. Correspondence should be handled in a timely and professional manner. Arrangements should be in place to ensure editorial staff absences do not result in a reduced service to authors.
- Editor(s) are expected to make full use of the online submission and peer-review system provided by the Publisher and, where necessary, maintain offline records, in order to preserve a full record of the peer review of each manuscript.

Confidentiality:

- Editor(s) are expected to respect and uphold the confidential status of materials submitted to the Journal and should ensure that material remains confidential while under review.

Libelous and defamatory content:

- Editor(s) are expected to seek advice from the Publisher if they believe a manuscript contains potentially libelous or defamatory content.

Editorial policies and field specific standards:

- Editor(s) are expected to ensure that manuscripts accepted for publication comply with the Journal's editorial policies and specific research requirements and ethics standards for the relevant field. For example, where manuscripts contain any data from human or animal subjects, or endangered plants, Editor(s) are expected to ensure that the manuscript complies with internationally agreed or comparable national ethics standards for such research. For example, international standards for human research are set out in the World Medical Association's [Declaration of Helsinki](#) and national guidelines which are intended to protect the safety and rights of research participants (see next section). Research on endangered animal and plant species should be carried out in compliance with standards set out in the [IUCN Policy Statement on Research Involving Species at Risk of Extinction](#) and the [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora](#). Further information on these standards and those for animal research is available from the Publisher. In cases of uncertainty, Editor(s) should seek advice from the Publisher.

Human subjects, data and tissue

- Concerning any data from human subjects, Editor(s) are expected to ensure that manuscripts accepted for publication comply with the Journal's editorial policies and specific research requirements and ethics standards for their field.
 - a. Editor(s) should be satisfied that all research involving human subjects, human material or human data that is accepted for publication in the Journal is ethical and has been performed in accordance with the World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki (<https://www.wma.net/policies-post/wma-declaration-of-helsinki-ethical-principles-for-medical-research-involving-human-subjects/>) or a comparable national standard that aims to protect the safety and rights of human research participants. Such research must comply with the authors' national and institutional ethics committee requirements for ethics approval and informed consent.
 - b. Where some or all of the research has taken place in a country that is different from that of the authors', approval should be obtained from an ethics committee that is local to where the research took place.
 - c. Regulations regarding what type of study requires ethical approval vary world-wide. Where there are no local or national ethics committees or established regulations, Editor(s) should use the standards set out in the Declaration of Helsinki to decide whether there are any ethical concerns about the conduct of the research that would preclude publication. Guidance is available from COPE, in particular from the COPE document entitled *Guidance for Editors: Research, Audit and Service Evaluations*. Editor(s) should seek advice from the Publisher in difficult cases.
 - d. In the case of use of human tissue, expressly including but not limited to stem cells, the research should comply with national and international regulations and guidelines on the use of such tissue for research.
 - e. Regardless of any local ethics committee approval, research that appears to violate the Declaration of Helsinki or comparable national standards that aim to protect the safety and rights of human research participants, or any guidelines on the use of human tissue, should be investigated in accordance with COPE guidelines. Editor(s) should seek guidance from the Publisher in difficult cases.
 - f. Manuscripts reporting research on human subjects, tissue or data should include a statement of independent ethics committee approval including the name of the ethics committee that approved the study and a statement of informed consent obtained from the human subjects to participate in the study.
 - g. Where the manuscript reports information, data, images or videos that might potentially identify an individual, the manuscript should include a statement of informed consent to publish those details.

Animals used for research, education and testing:

- Work reporting animal research, including that used for education and testing, should have been approved by an appropriate ethics committee. In the absence of an animal research ethics committee or any institutional or national guidelines or regulations, Editors-in-Chief should use their discretion when deciding whether there are any ethical concerns about the research that may preclude publication. Research on endangered animal and plant species should be carried out in compliance with standards set out in the [IUCN Policy Statement on Research Involving Species at Risk of Extinction](#) and the [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora](#). Editors-in-Chief should seek advice from the Publisher in difficult cases.

Conflicts of interest of Editor(s)-in-Chief:

- Editors-in-Chief are expected to inform the Publisher of any interests that may influence, or may be perceived to influence, their decisions as Editor-in-Chief of the Journal. Financial and non-financial interests (including, but not limited to personal relationships, professional interests or personal beliefs) should be disclosed. The declaration of these interests does not disqualify the Editor-in-Chief from the role as Editor-in-Chief of the Journal.
- Although Editors-in-Chief may publish in the journal for which they are Editor-in-Chief, they are expected to ensure that a (senior) member of the Editorial Board is assigned to assume responsibility for overseeing peer review and making decisions regarding acceptance or rejection of any manuscript submitted and/or co-authored by the Editor-in-Chief.
- Where Editors-in-Chief have a conflict of interest regarding a specific manuscript, a (senior) member of the Editorial Board should be assigned to assume responsibility for overseeing peer review and decisions making on that manuscript.
- Editors-in-Chief are expected to ensure that Editorial Board members are not involved with the peer review or decision-making process on any manuscript on which they are an author or on any manuscript where they may have a conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest.
- Editors-in-Chief submitting to the Journal any manuscript on which they are authors are expected to comply with the Journal's editorial policies for authors on disclosures of potential conflicts of interests.

Complaints, appeals and post-publication issues:

- Editors-in-Chief are expected to have a written appeals and complaints procedure for the Journal and should seek advice from the Publisher where one does not exist. The Editors-in-Chief should respond promptly to complaints (from non-anonymous and anonymous complainers alike) and, in collaboration with the Publisher, where applicable, follow guidance set out in the COPE flow charts on whistle blowers. All reasonable complaints should be handled within a timely manner. The Editors-in-Chief should seek advice from the Publisher in difficult situations, particularly where an issue may necessitate the publication of a retraction or expression of concern. Unresolved cases may be referred to COPE for advice.
- Complaints against the Editors-in-Chief will be investigated by the Publisher in the first instance, but may be referred to an independent ombudsman or COPE for advice if appropriate.

Miscellaneous:

- Editors-in-Chief should not act as representatives of the Publisher or make statements to the media, post comments or write editorials claiming to represent the Publisher without the Publisher's prior agreement.

