

Ethical Guidelines for the Publication of Chemical Research

These Ethical Guidelines were formulated in November 2019 by the Editors and Publishers of the journals owned and co-owned by the German Chemical Society (GDCh), Chemistry Europe, and the Asian Chemical Editorial Society (ACES) for use in their journals published by Wiley-VCH.

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Introduction

The publication of scientific research in peer-reviewed journals is essential for scientific progress since it enables the dissemination of research results (which represent an investment of time and money) for others in the research community to build on. Scientific publications also act as a record of merit and precedence, which can have important implications for the career development of researchers as they compete for recognition and funding. Scientific integrity is thus of utmost importance: scientific misconduct harms researchers and society. In the context of academic publishing, editors, authors, and reviewers have a responsibility to maintain high ethical standards by following good scientific practice. This set of ethical guidelines for the publication of research results outlines these responsibilities.

1. Responsibilities of Authors

- The precise criteria for authorship may vary by field, but authors should at minimum be individuals who have made a substantial intellectual contribution to the work, which should include contributions to the conception, design, analysis, and/or manuscript preparation.
- All authors are accountable for the content of the manuscript.
- An administrative role (e.g., providing laboratory space or funding) does not in itself confer authorship, and guest/gift authorship is not appropriate.
- Contributions that fall short of the criteria for authorship may be listed in the acknowledgement section.

Authors have the following responsibilities:

- 1.1. To gather and interpret data in an honest way. Data and image manipulation, as well as any other misrepresentation of the results, is unacceptable.
- 1.2. To present a concise and accurate report of their research and an objective discussion of its significance.
- 1.3. To provide sufficient data and methodological details that the work can be critically evaluated, reproduced, and extended by other researchers. Authors are encouraged to provide access to unique materials and applied software, with an appropriate material transfer agreement (MTA) to protect their own interests, to other researchers on request.
- 1.4. To make primary datasets available according to community data-sharing best practice, for example, through deposition in publicly available databases or community repositories such as the [Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre \(CCDC\)](#) or the [Protein Data Bank \(PDB\)](#) archive.
- 1.5. To give due acknowledgement to all contributors and obtain their consent for publication:
 - 1.5.a) Only those who have contributed significantly to the research should be listed as authors.
 - 1.5.b) The corresponding author is responsible for ensuring that all those who contributed substantially are named as co-authors and that they have seen and approved the manuscript before submission. All authors must also have the opportunity to approve the final version (after revision and/or proofing) prior to final publication.
 - 1.5.c) The corresponding author signs a copyright license on behalf of all of the authors.
- 1.6. To place their results in context and give due recognition to published work through appropriate referencing and citation:
 - 1.6.a) Authors must not present the work of others as their own (plagiarism).
 - 1.6.b) A literature search should be carried out prior to submission.
 - 1.6.c) Citations should be based solely on relevance to the presented work. Superfluous citation of only loosely connected work, especially from the authors' own group, should be avoided.
 - 1.6.d) Relevant work from all sources should be acknowledged, including preprints, patents, books, websites, and personal communication.
 - 1.6.e) If published material is used, permission must be sought in accordance with copyright law.
- 1.7. To inform the editor of any related submissions by the same authors:
 - 1.7.a) Submissions the authors currently have under consideration or in press at any journal. The manuscripts should be cross-referenced if appropriate; copies should be provided to the editorial office and the relationship with the current manuscript must be clarified.
 - 1.7.b) Versions of the same work previously submitted to the journal and rejected (with or without review). If the submission is a revised or extended version of a previously submitted manuscript, the changes must be explained, and a response must be provided to any reviewer comments.
- 1.8. Not to submit their work to more than one journal at a time. Research results under consideration or revision at one journal may only be submitted to another journal after the manuscript is rejected or withdrawn.

- 1.9. Not to engage in redundant publication:
 - 1.9.a) Authors should avoid undue fragmentation of their work, that is, unnecessarily splitting a body of work into several shorter papers.
 - 1.9.b) A submitted manuscript should not share hypotheses, data, discussion points, or conclusions with other published or submitted papers to a substantial degree. Full disclosure and cross-referencing are essential if there is any overlap.
 - 1.9.c) Previous publication on a community preprint server such as ChemRxiv, bioRxiv, and arXiv, or as part of a thesis prepared toward completion of a graduate degree does not preclude subsequent publication in a journal, but full disclosure must be made at the time of submission.
 - 1.9.d) Re-publication of a paper in another language may be acceptable, provided that there is full and prominent disclosure of its original source at the time of submission.
- 1.10. To inform the editor before making any significant changes to the content (including reported values and author list) after acceptance, for example when submitting the author's final version or during proofing.
- 1.11. To declare all sources of funding for the reported work.
- 1.12. To declare any potential conflicts of interest, including any financial stake in the outcome of the research, e.g., patent or stock ownership.
- 1.13. To clearly identify any unusual (potential) health or environmental hazards associated with the work or materials reported and discuss appropriate precautions if applicable.
- 1.14. To carry out any research involving live animals in compliance with the [ARRIVE](#) guidelines and any applicable national regulations. A statement should be included to confirm that the experiments were approved by the relevant local or national authority (giving the approval or accreditation number of the laboratory and the investigator).
- 1.15. To carry out any research involving human subjects or tissue samples in accordance with the principles in the WMA Declaration of [Helsinki – Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects](#). Authors should confirm that approval was granted from the relevant ethical committee and that informed consent was obtained from study participants. When reporting phase II and III clinical trials, tumor marker studies, or studies with human biospecimens, authors should refer to the [CONSORT](#) statement, [REMARK](#) recommendations, or [BRISQ](#) guidelines, respectively.
- 1.16. To avoid suggesting reviewers who are likely to be positively biased due to a personal or professional relationship with the author, for example, recent or frequent collaborators and former students or supervisors.
- 1.17. To ensure that all communication, including discussion in the manuscript, response to reviewer comments, and correspondence with the editorial office, remains professional. Critical discussion of other people's work may be appropriate but personal criticism, insults, or defamatory statements are not acceptable. Offensive or discriminatory comments (against individuals or groups) will not be tolerated.

2. Responsibilities of Reviewers

Reviewers have the following responsibilities:

- 2.1. To treat the manuscript and the review process as confidential:
 - 2.1.a) The editor must be consulted before involving additional parties in reviewing the manuscript. The individual invited by the editor is fully responsible for the content of the review.
 - 2.1.b) Neither the identity of the reviewer nor any other details of the review process may be revealed to third parties.
 - 2.1.c) No part of the content of submitted, unpublished articles (data, information, interpretation, and discussion) may be shared with others.
 - 2.1.d) The submitted manuscript may not be retained in any form after review is complete; reviewers must comply with data protection regulations as appropriate.
- 2.2. Not to use information (data, interpretation, and discussion) gained in confidence from submitted, unpublished articles for their own research; the exception is that a line of enquiry may be discontinued based on information in a manuscript under review.
- 2.3. To inform the editor without undue delay should they be unqualified or otherwise unable to review the manuscript.
- 2.4. To inform the editor if a conflict of interest becomes apparent at any point in the process. If in doubt, check with the editor. Potential conflicts of interest include but are not restricted to:
 - 2.4.a) Cases where the reviewer has a close personal or professional relationship with any of the authors, for example, they are former supervisor or student, or a recent/frequent co-author or collaboration partner.
 - 2.4.b) Cases where there is direct competition between the work reported and a current project the reviewer is involved with.
- 2.5. To review the manuscript in a timely fashion; the editor should be informed immediately if the reviewer is no longer able to review the manuscript or more time is needed.
- 2.6. To evaluate the work (including the Supporting Information) carefully and objectively; judgements should be explained and supported, referencing published work where appropriate.
- 2.7. To base their judgment solely on the scientific merits of the work, without regard to institutional affiliation, nationality, race, gender, age, or other personal circumstances of the authors.
- 2.8. To keep their comments to the author polite and professional, focusing on the content of the manuscript and avoiding personal criticism.
- 2.9. To inform the editor of any similarity between the submitted manuscript and work that is already published or under consideration at other journals.
- 2.10. To alert the editor if there is any indication of potential ethical problems, including:
 - 2.10.a) Any kind of scientific misconduct, for example, plagiarism or data manipulation.
 - 2.10.b) Ethical concerns regarding animal experiments or studies involving human subjects
 - 2.10.c) Inadequately discussed hazards or dual-use concerns, that is, potential for the reported work to be misused in such a way as poses a threat to public health or safety.

3. Responsibilities of Editors

Editors may be professional in-house editors or active researchers who take on an editorial role on behalf of the publisher, and they make the final decision regarding the acceptance or rejection of a submitted manuscript. The following responsibilities also apply to Editorial Board members where relevant.

Editors of Scientific Journals have the following responsibilities:

- 3.1. To base editorial decisions on the scientific merits of the work, without regard to institutional affiliation, nationality, race, gender, age, or other personal circumstances of the authors.
- 3.2. To make every effort to ensure a fair and timely evaluation/review process for submitted manuscripts.
- 3.3. To ensure that submitted manuscripts are handled in a confidential manner. No details should be disclosed to anyone except the reviewers without permission from the author, except where required as part of a formal investigation into allegations of unethical behavior.
- 3.4. To make known any conflicts of interest that might arise. This is especially important where the editor is an active researcher:
 - 3.4.a) Where the editor is an author of a submitted manuscript, the manuscript must be passed to another editor for independent review.
 - 3.4.b) Where the author is a current or former colleague and/or a frequent collaborator of the editor, the manuscript must be passed to a different editor for handling.
 - 3.4.c) The editor may not use work reported in unpublished submitted manuscripts for their own work, and if the topic is too close to one of their own projects, the manuscript must be passed to a different editor for handling.
- 3.5. To choose reviewers carefully to ensure a fair review process:
 - 3.5.a) Author-suggested reviewers should be used with caution to avoid positive bias (e.g., co-authors of previous publications or former supervisors/students should be avoided).
 - 3.5.b) Contact details of author-suggested reviewers should be independently verified to ensure the integrity of the peer-review process.
 - 3.5.c) The editor maintains the right to use reviewers of his/her own choice.
 - 3.5.d) Specific named reviewers opposed by the authors should not be used unless there is a significant over-riding interest in doing so.
- 3.6. To ensure that the names and other details of reviewers are kept confidential. In exceptional circumstances, e.g., where ethical misconduct is suspected, adjudication reviewers may be informed of the names of prior reviewers.
- 3.7. To give fair and careful consideration to appeals against editorial decisions.
- 3.8. To comply with data protection regulations, as appropriate.
- 3.9. To follow up on any indications or allegations of scientific misconduct. See [Dealing with Unethical Behavior](#).

4. Scientific Misconduct and Unethical Behavior

Scientific misconduct in publishing includes but is not limited to:

- Fraud: data fabrication or falsification/manipulation of data in such a way as to misrepresents the findings, including omitting information that would affect the interpretation or conclusions.
- Duplicate submission: submission of the same research findings (complete or in part) for consideration at different journals simultaneously. Also duplicate publication: publication of the same research findings in different journals without proper referencing and permission.
- Inadequate citation: submission of closely related papers without appropriate cross-referencing; failure to give due credit to prior work; deliberately neglecting to cite/discuss related work (including one's own) to increase the apparent novelty of the results.
- Plagiarism: presenting material, including results, ideas, and text, from someone else's work as one's own. Also self-plagiarism: copying significant content from one's own previous publications. Some reuse of text from the authors' own (cited) work may be appropriate in an introduction or experimental section, but there should not be substantial overlap in the main discussion.
- Reviewer misconduct: Failure to declare a conflict of interest; blocking/delaying the publication of competing work; use of confidential unpublished information for one's own research.
- Authorship misconduct: Omission from the author list of someone who made a substantial intellectual contribution or inclusion of someone who did not; listing of anyone as an author without their consent and approval of the submitted draft.

Dealing with Unethical Behavior

- Editors must follow up on all allegations of scientific misconduct, including from anonymous whistleblowers when clear evidence is presented. Reviewers or editorial board members may be consulted if appropriate.
- If in doubt on the appropriate approach, the [Wiley Best Practice Guidelines on Publishing Ethics](#) and/or [Committee on Publication Ethics \(COPE\)](#) guidelines should be consulted.
- The author/reviewer in question should be informed and given the chance to respond.
- Editors are not in a position carry out a formal investigation themselves. In complex cases, or where the allegations are contested, an institutional investigation may be requested.
- Institutions should ideally have an ombudsman or other designated person to deal with ethical issues and should respond to the journal promptly and let them know what steps will be taken. A full and fair investigation should be carried out within a reasonable time period and the institution should then inform the journal of their findings.
- If appropriate, a retraction or corrigendum should be published to correct the scientific record.
- Sanctions may be considered by the editorial office, including rejecting the paper with a warning regarding future conduct, banning the author from submitting further manuscripts for a certain period, or informing the author's institution.
- In cases involving closely related submissions/publications at different journals, the editor may alert the editors of the other journals, including at other publishers, and share information required to clarify the case.