

Ethics and Malpractice Statement

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Guidelines on the Ethics of Journal Publishing

This section is designed to help everyone engaged in the journal publication process; namely, editors, authors, and manuscript reviewers and referees.

We are confident that unambiguous and consistent guidelines will enhance the quality of published research, and ensure a process is in place to respond to a situation where ethics may have been transgressed.

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We ask editors to make every reasonable effort to ensure the following criteria are taken into account for those submitted manuscripts they deem worthy of consideration by peer review.

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- Manuscripts should be dealt with and processed with reasonable speed and efficiency.
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- Authors must present an accurate account of the research performed, and offer an objective discussion of its significance.
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- Authors must cite all relevant references.
- Authors must identify any hazards inherent in conducting the research.
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- Authors must avoid fragmenting research to maximize the number of articles submitted.
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- Unbiased consideration should be given to each manuscript, judging each on its merits without regard to the race, religion, nationality, sex, seniority, or institutional affiliation of the author.
- Manuscripts should be dealt with and processed with reasonable speed and efficiency.
- The quality of the manuscript, and its experimental and theoretical work, its interpretations, and its exposition, will be judged objectively.
- The peer-review process will be kept confidential.
- Conflicts of interest must be declared.
- Referees' judgments must be explained and supported. Any statement that an observation, derivation, or argument had been previously reported must be accompanied by the relevant citation, and unsupported assertions must be avoided.
- While the review of a manuscript may justify criticism, even severe criticism, under no circumstances is personal or malicious criticism of the author appropriate or acceptable.

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The moment an article is published (even if only online) it enters the scientific literature as the ‘version of scholarly record’ and becomes a fixed-state document available for citation by other journal articles. In consequence, Journals does not allow amendments to articles after publication, other than by means of publishing an erratum or corrigendum.

If journal articles were to become subject to continued revision after initial publication they would no longer play the role of ‘the minutes of science’, which capture the authors’ conclusions at a specific point of time.

There are some exceptions to this rule; particularly cases where we may consider it permissible to correct errors in an Early Online (ahead of print) article prior to its publication in a print issue. Examples include:

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