

Statement on publication ethics and misconduct

The Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (Open University of Catalonia, UOC) is committed to upholding the highest standards of quality and integrity in the publication of scientific articles, in accordance with the guidelines set out in its own Code of Ethics,¹ the Code of Conduct and Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors (Committee on Publication Ethics, COPE),² and CSE's White Paper on Promoting Integrity in Scientific Journal Publications (Council of Science Editors, CSE).³ The UOC aims to satisfy the needs of authors and readers alike, ensuring the quality of articles published in its journals, protecting and respecting all rights pertaining to the content of articles, and respecting the integrity of all submissions and published work.

The Editorial Board of the journal undertakes to publish all corrections, clarifications, retractions and apologies as and when they are required. As part of its commitment to best practice, the journal makes publicly available the evaluation system for submitted articles and the criteria applied in the external peer review process. The journal regularly updates these criteria, which are intended to ensure the scientific relevance, originality, clarity and pertinence of published articles.

The journal maintains full confidentiality throughout the evaluation process, protecting the anonymity of authors and external reviewers, the reviewed content, the reviewers' report and any other communication issued by the editorial, advisory and scientific boards, as required. Equally, it applies the strictest standards of confidentiality to any clarifications, claims or complaints that an author may wish to refer to any of the journal's boards or to the external reviewers.

The journal undertakes to respect the integrity of all published work. As such, the journal will be particularly vigilant in identifying and sanctioning cases of plagiarism. Any manuscript that is found to plagiarize published work will be removed from the journal or barred from publication, as the case may be. The journal will act as swiftly as possible in all such cases. In agreeing to the terms of the journal, authors undertake to

¹ Codi Ètic de la Universitat Oberta de Catalunya i Codi de Bones Pràctiques de Recerca i Innovació [Code of Ethics of the Open University of Catalonia and the Code of Good Practice for Research and Innovation] (in Catalan).

<http://www.uoc.edu/portal/ca/recerca-innovacio/activitat-rdi/comite-etica/recursos/index.html>

² Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE). Code of Conduct and Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors. http://publicationethics.org/files/Code_of_conduct_for_journal_editors_0.pdf

³ Scott-Lichter, D. and the Editorial Policy Committee, Council of Science Editors. CSE's White Paper on Promoting Integrity in Scientific Journal Publications, 2012 Update. 3rd Revised Edition. Wheat Ridge, CO: 2012. [Accessed 28 May 2013]. http://www.councilscienceeditors.org/files/public/entire_whitepaper.pdf

ensure that the articles they submit and all of the associated materials contain only original work and that they do not infringe on the rights of third parties. In the case of shared authorship, a clear statement must be made to the effect that all authors have agreed to the content of the manuscript and that the work has not been published previously in any other form.

Authorship

The authors of articles submitted for publication must ensure that the material they submit to the journal is original work and that it does not contain fragments of work published either by themselves or by other authors. In submitting a manuscript, the authors must also guarantee the accuracy of the data presented therein, which must not have been altered to verify the experimental hypothesis or hypotheses put forward.

Authors must ensure that the materials consulted during the preparation of their article are the most recent and relevant in the field with which the research is concerned and that they have given due consideration to all current schools of thought on the subject matter.

Authors must clearly identify all those individuals who have made a significant scientific contribution to the conceptual design and planning of the study, the interpretation of the results and the writing of the article. The list of authors must be ordered hierarchically to reflect the degree of responsibility of each author and their respective roles in the study.

All authors accept responsibility for the content of the manuscript.

Peer review

Reviewers undertake to produce a critical, sincere, constructive and impartial evaluation of submissions and to complete their review in the shortest time possible, to ensure that the deadlines of the evaluation process are met.

Reviewers are only assigned to a manuscript if they have the necessary expertise in the relevant field and are not affected by any conflicts of interest.

The reviewers will submit a full and thorough report, complete with the necessary references, in compliance with the terms of the evaluation process and any applicable public standards, particularly when rejecting a submission. In addition, reviewers must

notify the Editorial Board of any part of the manuscript that has already been published or is under consideration for publication in another journal.

Reviewers must ensure that they have no conflicts of interest with regard to the research presented in the article, the author/s, and the sources of funding for the project.

Once the Editorial Board has verified that the article conforms to the standards on content and style indicated in the editorial criteria, it will send the article to two anonymous experts, not affiliated to the authors' home institution, for a double blind review.

The reviewers' evaluation of the article will focus on its interest to the scientific community, the novelty of its contribution to existing knowledge of the subject matter, the accuracy of the relationships it establishes with other work, the critical judgement displayed, the bibliographic references used, the quality of writing and presentation of the manuscript, and other standard considerations. Where necessary, recommendations will be made as to how the manuscript can or should be improved.

The Editor of the journal will examine the reviewers' report and notify the author/s of the outcome (fit for publication without changes; fit for publication with minor corrections; fit for publication with major corrections; not fit for publication) by sending an email to the address from which the manuscript was submitted. The reviewers' comments and suggestions will be provided for consideration by the first author.

If the manuscript has been deemed fit for publication with minor or major corrections, the authors must submit a revised version which addresses the external reviewers' comments and suggestions. The authors may also attach a rebuttal letter for the Editorial Board in which they explain the specific changes made to the original submission.

The Editorial Board will determine whether the revised manuscript is fit for publication on the basis of the changes made and the degree to which they successfully address the reviewers' comments and suggestions. The Editor will then notify the authors of the final decision.