

International standards / best practices for authors

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(COPE)

International standards / best practices for authors

- Initial draft – EW
- Consultation – participants to Track 4
- Incorporated comments
- time for discussion ... (now!)
- finalize? at post-conference workshop

Aim

- Set of universal / international standards for authors
- Applicable to all disciplines
- Agreed at this meeting

- Supplement instructions from individual journals
- Set out principles / expected behaviour

from Intro ...

- These guidelines aim to establish standards for the authors of research publications and to represent best practice in the publication of research. We hope they will be endorsed by research institutions and professional societies, promoted by journals, and included in research integrity training.

Ten principles for publishing research

- 1 Ethical research
- 2 Originality
- 3 Accuracy
- 4 Completeness
- 5 Honesty
- 6 Transparency
- 7 Balance
- 8 Ownership and acknowledgement
- 9 Peer review and publication conventions
- 10 Responsiveness

1 Ethical research

1.1 The research being reported should have been conducted in an ethical and responsible manner. Depending on the discipline this may include protecting experimental subjects from harm, obtaining consent from research participants, and minimizing the risk of harm for researchers and colleagues or to the environment.

1.2 Researchers should not generally publish or share identifiable individual data collected in the course of research without specific consent from the individual (or their representative). Researchers should remember that many academic journals are now freely available on the internet, and should therefore be mindful of the risk of causing danger or upset to unintended readers (eg research subjects or their families who recognise themselves from case studies, descriptions, images or pedigrees)

- 1.3 Researchers should adhere to all relevant legislation (eg national and international laws and conventions on environmental issues, endangered species, animal experiments and 'dual-use' technology).
- 1.4 The appropriate approval, licensing or registration should be obtained before the research begins (eg Institutional Review Board, Research Ethics Committee approval, national licensing authorities for the use of animals, toxic materials, radioactive reagents).

1.5 Authors should supply evidence that reported research was ethical if this is requested by journals (eg copies of approvals, licences, participant consent forms).

2 Originality

- 2.1 Authors should adhere to journal requirements that submitted work is original and has not been published elsewhere.

- 2.2 Relevant previous work and publications, both from other researchers and the authors, should be properly acknowledged and referenced.

2.3 Data, text, figures or ideas originated by other researchers should be properly acknowledged and should not be presented as if they were the authors' own. The work of competitors (eg in the Introduction and Discussion) should be properly recognised with explicit acknowledgement of their contribution to the field not just a passing or minor reference. Wording taken from other publications should appear in quotation marks with the necessary citations. Copyright material (eg tables and figures) should be reproduced only with appropriate permission and acknowledgement.

- 2.4 Secondary, overlapping, or linked publications should be clearly identified as such. Authors should provide copies of related publications or manuscripts if journals request this.
- 2.5 Translations and adaptations for different audiences should be clearly identified as such and should acknowledge the original source.

3 Accuracy

- 3.1 Researchers should check their work and their publications carefully at all stages to ensure they are accurate. This will include checking calculations, data presentations, typescripts/submissions and proofs.
- 3.2 Authors should alert the journal editor if they discover an error in submitted, accepted or published work. Authors should cooperate with journals in issuing corrections or retractions when required.

3.3 Authors should represent the work of others accurately. Quotations should be representative and should not be taken out of context. Where possible, original sources should be consulted and cited, or, if secondary sources are used, these should be clearly identified. References should not be copied from other publications unless the cited work has actually been consulted.

4 Completeness

4.1 Reports of research should be complete. In particular, they should not omit inconvenient or inexplicable findings or results that do not support the authors' hypothesis or interpretation. Study limitations should be addressed.

4.2 Authors should supply research protocols (or plans) to journal editors if requested (eg for clinical trials) so that reviewers and editors can compare the research report to the protocol and check that no relevant details have been omitted.

- 4.3 Research sponsors should not be able to veto publication of findings that do not favour their product or position.
- 4.4 Except in exceptional circumstances, such as research classified by governments because of security implications, authors should not enter agreements with research sponsors that permit the sponsor to veto or control the publication of the findings.

4.5 Researchers should publish all meaningful research results that might contribute to understanding. The publication of unsuccessful studies or experiments that reject a hypothesis may help prevent others from wasting time and resources on similar projects. If findings from small studies and those that fail to reach statistically significant results can be combined to produce more useful information (eg by meta-analysis) then such findings should be published.

5 Honest

5.1 Researchers should present their results honestly and without fabrication, falsification or inappropriate manipulation. Images should not be adjusted in a misleading way; manipulations to only part of an image are generally not appropriate.

5.2 Researchers should use appropriate methods of data analysis and display (and, if needed, seek and follow specialist advice on this). The appropriate statistical analyses should be determined at the start of the study and a data analysis plan should be prepared and followed.

6 Transparency

- 6.1 All sources of research funding, including direct and indirect financial support, supply of equipment or materials, and other support (such as specialist statistical or writing assistance) should be disclosed.
- 6.2 Authors should disclose the role of the research funder(s) (if any) in the research design, execution, analysis, interpretation and reporting.

6.3 In addition to the funding source for the reported research, authors should disclose any relevant financial, institutional or personal interests that might be considered likely to affect the interpretation of their findings or which editors, reviewers or readers might reasonably wish to know. This would include the authors' relationship to the journal, for example if editors publish their own research in their own journal, the peer review process should be described. In addition, authors should follow journal and institutional requirements for disclosing relevant competing interests.

- 6.4 Multiple publications arising from a single research project (eg interim analyses, secondary papers, sub-group analyses, follow-up studies) should be clearly identified as such and the primary publication should be referenced.
- 6.5 Secondary or *post hoc* analyses should be distinguished from primary analyses and those set out in the data analysis plan.

6.6 Authors should supply research protocols (or plans including data analysis plans) to journal editors if requested (eg for clinical trials) so that reviewers and editors can compare the research report to the protocol and ensure that it was carried out as planned.

7 Balance

- 7.1 New findings should be presented in the context of previous research. Scholarly reviews and syntheses of existing research should be complete and balanced and should include findings regardless of whether they support the hypothesis or interpretation being presented.
- 7.2 Quotations from other authors should be accurate and representative, and should not be taken out of context.

8 Authorship and acknowledgement

8.1 The research literature serves as a record not only of what has been discovered but also of who made the discovery. The authorship of research publications should therefore accurately reflect individuals' contributions to the work and its reporting.

8.2 In cases where major contributors are listed as authors while those who made less substantial, or purely technical, contributions are listed in an acknowledgement section, the criteria for authorship and acknowledgement should be agreed at the start of the project. Ideally, authorship criteria within a particular discipline should be agreed, published and consistently applied by research institutions, professional and academic societies, funders and journal editors.

8.3 Researchers should ensure that only those individuals who meet authorship criteria (ie made a substantial contribution to the work) are rewarded with authorship and that deserving authors are not omitted. Institutions and journal editors should encourage practices that prevent guest, gift, and ghost authorship.

Note / definition

- *guest authors are those who do not meet accepted authorship criteria but are listed because of their seniority, reputation or supposed influence*
- *gift authors are those who do not meet accepted authorship criteria but are listed as a personal favour or in return for payment*
- *ghost authors are those who meet authorship criteria but are not listed*

8.4 All authors should agree to be listed and should approve the submitted and accepted versions of the publication. Any change to the author list should be approved by all authors including any who have been removed from the list. The corresponding author should act as a point of contact between the journal and the other authors and should keep co-authors informed and involve them in major decisions about the publication (eg responding to reviewers' comments).

8.5 Authors should obtain permission from individuals to be listed in the acknowledgements or cited as the source of 'personal communications' (ie quotations of unpublished remarks or information).

9 Peer review and publication conventions

- 9.1 Authors should follow journal requirements that work is not submitted to more than one journal for consideration at the same time.

- 9.2 Authors should inform the editor if they choose not to respond to reviewer comments and intend to submit to another journal after receiving an invitation to 'revise and resubmit' or a conditional acceptance.

9.3 Authors should respect journals' requests for press embargos and should not generally allow their findings to be reported in the press if they have been accepted for publication (but not yet published) in a peer-reviewed journal. Authors and their institutions should liaise and cooperate with journal publishers to coordinate media activity (eg press releases and press conferences) around publication. In particular, authors should try to ensure that findings with health or safety implications for the public are not reported in the mass media before they are published in a peer-reviewed journal.

10 Responsiveness

10.1 Authors should respond appropriately to post-publication comments and correspondence published in the journal. They should attempt to answer correspondents' questions and supply clarification or additional details where needed.

10.2 Authors should work with the journal to correct their work if errors or omissions are discovered after publication.

10.3 Authors should abide by relevant conventions, requirements or regulations to make materials, reagents, software or datasets available to other researchers who request them. Researchers, institutions and funders should have clear policies for handling such requests. Authors must also follow relevant journal standards. While proper acknowledgement is expected, researchers should not demand authorship as a condition of sharing materials.