

International Guidelines For Ethical Conduct in Scientific Publishing

(To be submitted for possible adoption to the International Union of Pure and Applied Physics)

In order to provide a common international reference for ethical behavior in scientific publishing, as well as to suggest appropriate responses to misconduct when it occurs, the following guidelines are proposed for the various parties in the scientific publication enterprise. It is important to note that it is not unethical to be wrong, provided that errors are promptly corrected.

Institutions

The senior management of a university or research institution should set high standards for ethical behavior, including all aspects of research publication, and should actively post and promote these to employees. Institutions should establish research practices that minimize the possibility of misconduct and also protect the rights of younger researchers. Regular instruction in ethical behavior should be provided to employees.

Institutions should also establish procedures for objective investigation in the event of accusations of misconduct and outline penalties in the event of a positive finding.

Individual Researchers

Individual researchers should understand and scrupulously uphold high standards for ethical behavior in the conduct of research, particularly in relation to the verification and truthful reporting of data, the granting of proper credit, and referencing of the work of others in publication. Plagiarism of another's work is a form of theft and constitutes serious misconduct.

Individual researchers should ensure that institutional guidelines on ethics are known and upheld, and they should promptly raise and resolve as appropriate any misconduct that may occur.

In publication it is essential that each co-author contributed significantly to the research reported, openly accepts joint responsibility for the work, and undertakes not to make multiple submissions of the same material. If these conditions of authorship cannot be met, the person should not be included as an author.

Journals

The senior management of scientific journals should establish and conspicuously post their standards for ethical behavior in publishing, and specify responsibilities and steps in investigating and responding to suspicions or accusations of misconduct. Journal managers should ensure that these standards are as clearly understood and upheld internally as they are externally. Journals should respond to author complaints with respect and due process but also keep community needs in mind in apportioning resources.

Journals should work closely and responsively together to resolve inter-journal problems such as plagiarism or duplicate publication. As far as is possible within the publication structure, journal management may establish private and public penalties for those found to have committed misconduct, be they authors, referees or editors.

Editors

Editors should adhere to high standards of ethical treatment of all authors in arriving at a responsible and objective decision about publication.

An editor will excuse himself or herself from editorial duties that would impose a personal, financial or professional conflict of interest. An editor will also avoid any misuse of privileged position or information to influence the handling of his or her own papers or those of colleagues or rivals.

Referees

Referees should adhere to high standards of ethical treatment of all authors in arriving at a responsible and objective recommendation about publication.

A referee will excuse himself or herself from refereeing duties that would impose a personal, financial or professional conflict of interest, and will avoid the use of privileged information in a paper under review.

Professional Organizations

National and international professional organizations shall take a leadership position in establishing and stating standards of ethical conduct, developing these standards in consultation with membership, specialist committees and governing bodies. These standards should be well publicized and prominently posted. In addition, standards should be examined regularly and revised to cover appropriate publishing practice and any new situations as they arise.