



Publication Integrity and Ethics

P.I.E. Guidelines for Authors



Practice Guidelines



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Summary

- All published material must be scrutinised under strict quality guidelines by the author, ensuring the integrity and standard of the work is consistent throughout.
- Information included in the final, published version should be free from bias, data manipulation, and deliberate misinformation, having been sourced in an ethical and legal manner by the author.
- The author should be free and independent from outside influence including financial, political, or ideological agents.
- No author should falsely claim ownership of another's written or intellectual property; detailed citations for any referenced or quoted work should be provided.
- Financial contributions, as well as written contributions from other authors, should be freely and transparently disclosed and referenced.
- Authors should take responsibility for their published work and therefore ensure that everything contained within it is, to the best of their knowledge, correct.
- Any promotional activities should be an accurate representation of the content that is being published.
- Arguments about contribution criteria and issues of misconduct are the most common; the PIE is able to act in arbitration role for a successful outcome should such a disagreement take place.

Introduction

The effects of bad practice impinge not only on the integrity of the publishing industry, they can have unforeseen consequences on future researchers, authors, and even on society itself. PIE guidelines aim to succinctly characterise, define, and promote the ethical responsibility of those operating in the publishing sector. The following measures are to assist individuals involved in the creation of published materials, and prevent conflicts of interest arising amongst authors and editors.

PIE will not be successful in achieving its goals if authors and other publishing personnel are merely aware of the ethical rules in their job; they must be willing to fully comply with the guidelines. We encourage all authors therefore to register with the PIE organisation, and ask for guidance or help should they become aware of any circumstances deemed problematic or conflicting. These issues can be connected with their own work or otherwise, and includes all publishing professionals under its remit.

Like all those working in the publishing sector, authors are obliged to assume the role of guardians of the editorial ethical code of conduct. Swift action must be taken against any other party that is found to be in breach of the guidelines.

PIE endeavours to uphold an international benchmark for ethical authorship, and to help ensure that published material is scrutinised under all current legislation. PIE trusts these guidelines will be useful, fair, and necessary and, furthermore, hopes they will be adopted by all professional authors and editors.

Integrity of authorship

1 Standards of consistency

1.1 Authors must certify that all reports and articles are informative, fair, accurate, and well balanced before submission. Any incongruities should be thoroughly checked and certified, and specialist advice sought should it be deemed necessary.

1.2 Inconvenient or conflicting data must not be omitted for the expedience of the author's proposition or discourse.

1.3 Authors must not deliberately try to misinform their readers by falsified documents or manipulated data; any such instance will be considered an act of calculated deception.

1.4 If they are aware of editorial misconduct, errors and/or inaccuracies in the published materials, authors must promptly endeavour to correct them. This stipulation should be followed regardless of whether complaints have been filed against them or not.

1.5 Any shortfall in evidence should be fully addressed in the publication. Dialogue between editor and author, regarding limitations, should be consistent throughout the publishing process and every effort made to ensure they are visible.

1.6 If a peer-review will be conducted prior to the publishing of an article, authors must take into consideration the reviewer's advice and recommendations, making the agreed and required corrections to the text prior to publication.

1.7 All research carried out by the author must be ethical and legal, corresponding with all recognised conventions and institutional bodies to ensure the welfare of human and animal life. Evidence, including licences and consent forms, should be available to the editor and publisher at any point throughout the duration of the project as well as after publication.

1.8 Any clinical trials performed should meet all appropriate and legal requirements.

2 Conflicts of interest

2.1 Authors' relationship with the editors and publishers must always be founded on the principle of editorial independence and freedom. They must signal any problem related to their independence or publisher involvement in the editorial decision, whether it is a personal, political, or a commercial request.

2.2 If intentionally misleading information is proffered when writing an advertising article, it must be refused from the outset. If the information is found to be manipulated at any point whilst working on the job, walking away at the point of discovery is the correct course of action.

2.3 Authors, as well as the other individuals involved in the publishing sector, must take action without delay when they detect conflicts of interests, whether political, financial, or otherwise. This is regardless of whether the complaint is about peer-reviewers, publishers, or editors.

2.4 All decisions regarding the chosen subject area to be of interest to the reader must be based on the quality and informative nature of the topic, and not on political or financial gains.

2.5 Authors must respect the privacy of individuals involved in their journalistic investigations, protect their sources of information and the dignity of each person involved.

2.6 Agreements whereby sponsors and funding agents can prohibit unappealing truths and/or unfavourable aspects relating to their own agenda should not be entered, unless the information is deemed to have security issues and is therefore classified by a governmental body.

2.7 All financial backing to a given project should be disclosed, along with accreditation to relevant writers, researchers, and contributors.

3 Originality

3.1 All authors must be aware of the importance of quality and originality in their written words; they have to signal problems related to plagiarism, gift, and ghost authorship as soon as they appear.

3.2 All authors should provide comprehensive references to others' work in quotations and citations.

3.3 Copyright laws and regulations should be applied to all published material and any reproduced data should be accredited with permission from those who hold the copyright.

3.4 Any data, be it words, ideas, or numerical, that is the work of another should not be accredited as the work of the author; any information sourced from another's work should be acknowledged to the person who created it.

3.5 Persons considered to have made significant contributions should be accredited as an author, whereas minor contributors are to be recognised in the acknowledgement section. For more information on this point, see the section below entitled "Authorship problems and disputes".

4 Responsibility

4.1 Authors are expected to take responsibility for published work and check the sources, data, and research underlying their assertions. With regards to research and reports, the author generally takes half the responsibility for the quality and veracity of the research that backs up the written work. Any research where the author does not take responsibility should be clearly outlined in the published material.

4.2 Any associate of the author that could be seen to have had an influence on the published work, be it financial, political, ideological, or otherwise, must be disclosed in full.

4.3 Authorship entails a relationship between the author, the editor, and the publisher; all three should work in tandem to guarantee the integrity of the finished product.

4.4 An author is accountable for responding to queries and observations after the work has been published in an appropriate and sensible time frame with clarifying information. This includes peer reviews as well as correspondence post-publication.

4.5 Unless agreed as a co-publication, authors should not submit their work to more than one publisher. Any information regarding a co-publication should be relayed in the published material

4.6 Editors should be kept informed of all decisions relating to peer review. This includes if a work is withdrawn from review or if advice is not to be taken and acted upon after a conditional approval beforehand.

4.7 Media activity and publicity should be handled in co-operation of author, publisher, and editor to ensure a satisfactory outcome for all. All material relating to promotion and publicity should accurately reflect the content of the work to be published, including press releases, advertisements, and conferences.

Authorship problems and disputes

The two most common authorship problems that may appear are related to gift authorship and ghost authorship. Gift authors refer to persons who fail to meet authorship criteria and had little or no contribution to the article yet are still credited as authors. This can often be because of financial contributions or as an act of favour, and is considered a conscious act of deception. Ghost authorship on the other hand refers to cases where the publisher or editor fails to credit or leaves people out who were active in the research or the writing of the article in question, and crediting the work to another or forgetting them entirely. Both are common causes for disagreement but can more often than not be curtailed through prevention, following the PIE Guidelines, and adhering to a few basic principles of editorial conduct.

5 Preventative measures

5.1 Encouraging and promoting a culture of ethical authorship by following the PIE guidelines set out above.

5.2 Discuss any authorship problems and matters before the commencement of an article or research for a project. Many problems arise because of miscommunication that should have been established at the outset.

5.3 Have a robust understanding of the ethical guidelines in general and in particular the editorial policy of the publication. Anyone found to be misinformed should be forwarded the relevant literature, thus preventing any further misunderstanding occurring later down the line.

5.4 Any practice, person, or institution that encourages ghost or gift authorship should be reported and avoided.

6 Acknowledgement

6.1 Before publication, all contributing authors should be briefed about expected roles and desired contributions.

Any changes to the list of contributors made throughout the exercise must be the result of a consultation between all the listed authors including those already removed from the list.

6.2 All authors need to approve the final publication before its release. Upon the publication of the agreed version, any queries and comments must be forwarded to all involved parties before a response is issued.

6.3 Authors should never consciously set out to credit a contributor for work that they have not performed, nor should they knowingly discredit someone who has had a meaningful involvement with the finished article.

PIE arbitration

The two major authorship disagreements that may be addressed directly or through the PIE are interpretation about contribution criteria, and issues of misconduct. Contribution criteria are centred on the degree of involvement needed to be gifted certified author status, and is an issue that can sometimes require arbitration from a neutral outsider. It is vital that the contributions made to each published article are represented accurately to ascertain where credit is due. The extent of a person's right to authorship status should always be determined at the outset of a project so that everyone understands their position. Failing this, the PIE can become involved to help all parties come to a satisfactory and agreeable settlement.

Misconduct issues are when individuals are engaging in unethical behaviour regarding the authorship matter, and are circumstances that need to be swiftly and robustly resolved. Authorship is as much a historical record as the content itself, and any wrongdoing or unethical behaviour must be recognised and dealt with.

Finally, in case of breach of the PIE's Guidelines and recommendations on ethical editorial conduct, authors may complain to the PIE Council Sub-Committee. This can only be performed after previously addressing the matter directly to the editor or the publisher of the paper.

While such matters are usually resolved in a suitably amicable and professional manner, in case there is no resolution or the publisher fails to comply, authors may formulate written complaints through PIE and ask for mediation.

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