

Ethical Policy

1. Research results

Authors must not fabricate, falsify or misrepresent data or results. They should strive to be objective, unbiased and truthful in all aspects of their work.

Authors must be honest in making claims for the results and conclusions of their research. Making inflated claims for a project interferes with the objective evaluation of its results and applications, and can lead to an unfair and wasteful distribution of resources.

Authors should strive to avoid mistakes in research and exercise due diligence in presenting high quality work for publication. They should critically assess the likelihood of experimental, methodological and human errors and avoid self-deception and bias. Where possible they should conduct an internal review to assess the validity of their work before publication.

It is of course recognized that errors will occur from time to time. When an error is discovered in published or submitted work, the mistake should be admitted and a correction, erratum or retraction should be published. Corrections should be approved by all authors of the original article unless there is a particular reason for not doing this. In these cases the dissent among the authors should be noted in the published correction.

Source material of experiments and research results should be recorded (and retained) in an auditable manner that allows for scrutiny and verification by other scientists. Exceptions may be appropriate to preserve privacy or patent protection.

2. Authorship

When determining the credit for a piece of work, authors should ensure that all those who have made a significant contribution are given the opportunity to be cited as authors. Other individuals who have contributed to the study should also be acknowledged, but not cited as authors.

Some co-authors will be accountable for the entire article, for example those who provide critical data, write the manuscript, present the findings at conferences or provide leadership for junior colleagues. Other co-authors may be responsible for specific contributions to a paper. Authors may wish to include a statement in the acknowledgments to describe the actual contribution of each co-author.

All authors should receive the final version of the submitted manuscript, agree to its submission and take appropriate responsibility for it. Any individual unwilling or unable to accept appropriate responsibility for a manuscript should not be a co-author.

All authors should be consulted about changes to authorship (e.g. the list of authors) during the publication process, and it should be clear to the journal that they have given their consent.

It is unethical to publish articles describing essentially the same studies or results in more than one primary research journal (see also plagiarism in section 3 below). Submitting the same article to more than one journal concurrently is unethical and unacceptable. Exceptions to this rule may be made for review articles or conference papers, in which case authors should consult with journal staff before submission.

3. Referencing and citation

Authors should acknowledge the work of others used in their research and cite publications that have influenced the direction and course of their study. Information obtained in private correspondence or conversation should only be used with the explicit permission of the individuals involved. Information obtained whilst providing confidential services, such as refereeing research articles or grant applications, should not be used without permission of the original author.

Plagiarism constitutes unethical scientific behaviour and is never acceptable. Plagiarism ranges from the unreferenced use of others' ideas to submission of a complete paper under 'new' authorship. 'Self-plagiarism' is the production of many papers with almost the same content by the same authors. Therefore all sources for the work should be disclosed and permission sought for using large amounts of other people's material.

4. Conflicts of interest

4.1 Authors

Articles should include a full list of the current institutional affiliations of all authors, both academic and corporate.

All sources of financial support for the project should be disclosed in the article.

All authors and co-authors are required to disclose any potential conflict of interest when submitting their article (e.g. employment, consulting fees, research contracts, stock ownership, patent licenses, honoraria, advisory affiliations, etc). If the article is subsequently accepted for publication, this information should be included in an acknowledgments section.

It is difficult to specify the threshold at which a financial or other interest becomes significant. Two practical guidelines are:

- to declare any competing interests that could embarrass you were they to become publicly known after your work was published;
- to declare any information which, when revealed later, would make a reasonable reader feel misled or deceived.

4.2 Referees

Referees should contact the editorial office to declare any potential conflicts of interest in advance of refereeing an article (e.g. being a co-worker or collaborator with one of the authors, or being in a position which precludes giving an objective opinion of the work).

5. Paper review

Fellows of the Akademy, which are independent scientists or topic experts, provide advice to the Editors and staff of Journal as an essential component of the scientific process.

Fellows' names are kept confidential and may only be disclosed to journal Editorial Board members, who are also instructed to maintain confidentiality. Unbiased consideration is given to all manuscripts offered for publication regardless of the race, gender, religious belief, ethnic origin, citizenship, political philosophy, sexual orientation, age or reputation of the authors.

Information and ideas obtained as a reviewer must be kept confidential and not used for competitive advantage. Fellows should disclose any conflicts of interest as described in section 4. Fellows will inform the

journal if they are unable to review a paper or can do so only with some delay, as the review process should not be delayed.

Paper reviewers should judge objectively the quality of the research reported, give fair, frank and constructive criticism and refrain from personal criticism of the authors. Comments made by reviewers may be seen by the authors. Therefore reviewers' judgments should be explained and supported so that authors can understand the basis of the comments and judgments.

It is expected from reviewers to point out relevant work that has not been cited, and use citations to explain where elements of the work have been previously reported. They should also note any substantial similarity between the manuscript and any paper published in or submitted to another journal.

6. Handling cases of misconduct

Our Journal is not able actively to police the policies and conditions of publication, and believes that employers have the prime responsibility for ensuring their researchers' conduct and for ethical training and leadership.

However, if a possible breach of policy or misconduct is brought to our attention we will ask the authors to respond. Whilst journals do not have the resources or legal legitimacy fully to investigate scientific misconduct, we will seek advice from an article's referees or the journal's Editorial Board.

If there is then evidence that trust has been significantly compromised by an author's or referee's actions, we will attempt to redress the matter by:

- appropriate corrections in the printed and online journal;
- refusing to consider an author's future work, for a given period;
- (rarely) communications to employers or funding agencies;

in all cases we will also contact affected authors and editors of other journals.