

## Joint Commitment's Editor Code of Conduct Policy

*This document is intended as a template policy for publishers who are signatories of the Joint Commitment. It may be adapted to suit specific journal or book series contexts, publisher workflows, and disciplinary norms, while maintaining core principles of inclusion, equity, and ethical publishing.*

### Purpose

This guidance is for editors working on journals and books published by organizations that are signatories of the [Joint Commitment for Action on Inclusion and Diversity in Publishing](#). It outlines expectations for embedding EDI, transparency, and respect into editorial practice, and supports editors in making fair, accountable, and inclusive decisions throughout the publishing process.

This Code of Conduct is informed by the [Committee on Publication Ethics \(COPE\)](#), other industry body best practice guidance, and publisher policies.

Editors hold a position of great responsibility in the peer review process. They commission content, are responsible for desk rejects and reviewer selections, and have the final decision on what gets published. It follows that Editors have a pivotal role to play with respect to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) throughout journal processes. It is important that this responsibility is clearly set out to Editors and made publicly available to support accountability and transparency.

The below are important considerations for an editor's role and are intended to help editors align their work with the values of inclusive and ethical publishing. Publishers are responsible for enabling editors to meet these expectations through training, tools, and transparent reporting. As the publishing landscape evolves, this Code of Conduct should be reviewed regularly and updated to reflect emerging best practices and community standards.

### Editors and Editorial Board composition

- Publishers will (aim to) report annually on editorial board composition, reviewer diversity, and author demographics in a manner that is consistent with data protection compliance requirements. Where possible, Publishers, Editors-in-Chief and Editors should consider these statistics when making decisions about appointments.
- Reports should follow the [Joint Commitment's minimum standards](#) and align with the recommended [questions for gender, ethnic origins or ancestry, and race](#).
- Recruitment should be open, advertised, and based on transparent criteria.
- It is advisable that editors and board members serve fixed terms, with a review after two consecutive terms.

### Editorial Independence and Conflicts of Interest

- To safeguard editorial independence, editorial decisions must not be subject to commercial influence.
- Editors are required to declare both financial and non-financial conflicts of interest, including affiliations, patents, and consultancies, see [ICMJE Recommendations on Conflicts of Interest](#).

### Editorial Decision-Making

- Editorial decision-making must be transparent and accountable, particularly in cases involving controversial or borderline submissions. Editors are expected to be able to offer a reasonable rationale for their decision making to ensure consistency and integrity. This aligns with COPE's position on [editorial independence](#), which emphasises that editors are ultimately accountable for journal content and must operate free from external influence.

- Where journals or book series are led by co-editors, decisions, particularly those involving editorials, controversial submissions, or appeals, should be made collaboratively, with documented agreement or consultation to ensure transparency, fairness, and shared responsibility.
- Appeals should ideally be reviewed by a second editor or advisory board member to avoid conflicts of interest and uphold fairness. For example, Elsevier's [Editorial Decision Appeals Policy](#) requires appeals to be assessed by an Editor-in-Chief or designated representative not involved in the original decision.
- Editors should uphold the principle of fair play, ensuring that all manuscripts are evaluated solely on academic merit and relevance to the journal's scope, without regard to authors' personal characteristics or affiliations.
- Editors must actively guard against bias in decision-making. This includes being aware of how implicit assumptions may affect judgments and taking steps to mitigate bias through structured decision frameworks and diverse reviewer pools.
- The editor should use the electronic submission system for all communications to ensure consistency, transparency, and proper documentation of editorial decisions.

### **Respect and Professional Conduct**

- Editors must conduct themselves with integrity and professionalism, recognising their role in upholding the reputation of the journal, publisher, and scholarly community. They should act as role models, fostering trust and accountability in all editorial activities.
- Editors should foster a culture where diverse perspectives are valued, and disagreements are handled constructively.
- Editors must not tolerate or engage in any form of harassment, bullying, disrespect, or discrimination, including based on personal identity, background, or legally protected characteristics.
- Editors are expected to maintain professionalism when representing the journal or publisher in any public forum, including on social media platforms. Posts should reflect the values of inclusive, respectful, and ethical publishing.
- Editors must avoid sharing confidential information, making disparaging remarks about authors, reviewers, or colleagues, or engaging in behaviour that could undermine trust in the editorial process.
- Editors should consult and follow resources and guidance on appropriate and reasonable social media use as provided by the Publisher.

### **Peer Review Integrity**

- Publishers will support editors to work in a way that ensures reviewer pools are diverse and inclusive, using structured tools where available (e.g. Scopus reviewer filters, Publons, Reviewer Finder).
- Editors must set expectations for respectful, constructive, and unbiased reviewer reports. This includes screening for dismissive, aggressive, or coded language, and intervening when tone or content is inappropriate.
- Editors should report reviewers who breach [COPE's Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers](#) to the publisher.

### **Inclusive Authorship and EDI Principles**

- Editors should encourage inclusivity and aim to protect the dignity and welfare of the research community.
- They must also uphold principles of EDI throughout the editorial process, actively identifying and addressing barriers in submission and review processes.
- Editors should actively work to reduce bias in peer review and editorial decisions, and participate in annual publisher-provider or industry-approved EDI training and reporting. See APA's [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Toolkit for Journal Editors](#) and [C4DISC Toolkit for Equity in Scholarly Publishing](#).
- New editors should attend onboarding that includes EDI expectations and reporting obligations.
- Editors are encouraged to consider [positionality statements](#) (how authors' identities relate to their research) and inclusive citation practices (diverse, equitable referencing across gender, geography, and career stage).

- Authors must be informed of inclusive language expectations. Editors should direct authors to publisher or established third-party guidance on respectful, bias-free communication. This includes using accurate and inclusive terminology for gender, race, ethnicity, disability, and other identities. For example, [Springer Nature's Inclusive Language Guide](#), which outlines principles and examples to support inclusive research communication.
- Editors should be familiar with and promote the use of the [SAGER \(Sex and Gender Equity in Research\) Guidelines](#), which provide recommendations for reporting sex and gender information in study design, data analysis, results, and interpretation. These guidelines help ensure that research is inclusive and accurately reflects gender-related variables.
- Editors must support COPE guidance on [post-publication name changes](#) without issuing corrections.
- Editors should consider requests for anonymous or pseudonymous authorship where justified, balancing author safety and privacy with editorial integrity. Decisions should follow publisher and [COPE guidance](#).

#### **Ethical Use of Data**

- Editors must use publisher-provided data only for approved purposes and in accordance with the publisher's data policy, including any restrictions on sharing, reuse, or access. Data should be used to support inclusive publishing, track progress, and inform editorial decisions and not for profiling or discriminatory practices.
- Editors must ensure data privacy and compliance with relevant regulations (e.g. GDPR) by accessing and storing data securely and using anonymized information wherever possible.
- Editors must attend training provided by publishers on data ethics and responsible reporting is recommended.

#### **Artificial Intelligence**

- Editors should use publisher-approved AI tools to support tasks such as reviewer selection, manuscript screening, and plagiarism detection. However, AI must not replace human editorial judgment and decision making.
- Tools must be deployed in ways that uphold fairness, transparency, and inclusivity.

#### **Harmful Content**

- Editors must assess submissions for potential harm to marginalized groups using structured frameworks. See [Springer Nature Harmful Content Policy](#) and a [relevant editorial](#).
- Content that perpetuates stereotypes or exclusion must be revised or rejected.