Code of Ethics

The quarterly journal *Psicoterapia e Scienze Umane* is member of the *Committee on Publication Ethics* (COPE – https://publicationethics.org), and follows the COPE guidelines (https://publicationethics.org/guidance/Guidelines). The journal follows also the publisher's Code of Ethics (https://static.francoangeli.it/fa-contenuti/riviste/codiceetico/en_etiche.pdf).

The rules concerning three important aspects (namely, Conflict of interest, Informed consent, and Statement of human and animal rights) follow the "Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals" (www.icmje.org/recommendations) of the *International Committee of Medical Journal Editors* (ICMJE), which includes *Psicoterapia e Scienze Umane* among the journals that follow these recommendations (see www.icmje.org), and are described in English in the web page:

www.psicoterapiaescienzeumane.it/instr-authors.htm

In Italian, these rules are included in the "Instruction for Authors" at the web page:

www.psicoterapiaescienzeumane.it/normeredaz.htm

The Instruction to referees (who always work in a double-blind review process) are at the web page:

www.psicoterapiaescienzeumane.it/istruz-referee.htm

The guidelines of the *Committee on Publication Ethics* (COPE) regarding various aspects are described at the web page:

https://publicationethics.org/guidance/Guidelines

Regarding the procedures for protecting patients' confidentiality when clinical material is published in the journal, we suggest to follow the guidelines proposed by *Taylor and Francis* for its journals: for www.psicoterapiaescienzeumane.it/AnonymizationGuidelines-TF.pdf.

On the following page it is possible to review the *Core Practices* recommended by COPE, namely:

1. **Allegations of misconduct**: https://publicationethics.org/misconduct
2. **Authorship and contributorship**: https://publicationethics.org/authorship
3. **Complaints and appeals**: https://publicationethics.org/appeals
4. **Conflicts of interest/Competing interests**: https://publicationethics.org/competinginterests
5. **Data and reproducibility**: https://publicationethics.org/data
6. **Ethical oversight**: https://publicationethics.org/oversight
7. **Intellectual property**: https://publicationethics.org/intellectualproperty
8. **Journal management**: https://publicationethics.org/management
9. **Peer review processes**: https://publicationethics.org/peerreview
10. **Post-publication discussions and corrections**: https://publicationethics.org/postpublication

On pages 1-6 below there are the COPE guidelines for anonymous referees.

OUR CORE PRACTICES

|C|O|P|E|

Core practices are the policies and practices journals and publishers need to reach the highest standards in publication ethics. We include cases with advice, guidance for day-to-day practice, education modules and events on topical issues, to support journals and publishers fulfil their policies.

1. ALLEGATIONS OF MISCONDUCT

Journals should have a clearly described process for handling allegations, however they are brought to the journal's or publisher's attention. Journals must take seriously allegations of misconduct pre-publication and post-publication. Policies should include how to handle allegations from whistleblowers.

FIND OUT MORE: publicationethics.org/misconduct

2. AUTHORSHIP AND CONTRIBUTORSHIP

Clear policies (that allow for transparency around who contributed to the work and in what capacity) should be in place for requirements for authorship and contributorship as well as processes for managing potential disputes.

FIND OUT MORE: publicationethics.org/authorship

3. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Journals should have a clearly described process for handling complaints against the journal, its staff, editorial board or publisher.

FIND OUT MORE: publicationethics.org/appeals

4. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST/COMPETING INTERESTS

There must be clear definitions of conflicts of interest and processes for handling conflicts of interest of authors, reviewers, editors, journals and publishers, whether identified before or after publication.

FIND OUT MORE: publicationethics.org/competinginterests

5. DATA AND REPRODUCIBILITY

Journals should include policies on data availability and encourage the use of reporting guidelines and registration of clinical trials and other study designs according to standard practice in their discipline.

FIND OUT MORE: publicationethics.org/data

6. ETHICAL OVERSIGHT

Ethical oversight should include, but is not limited to, policies on consent to publication, publication on vulnerable populations, ethical conduct of research using animals, ethical conduct of research using human subjects, handling confidential data and of business/marketing practices.

FIND OUT MORE: publicationethics.org/oversight

7. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

All policies on intellectual property, including copyright and publishing licenses, should be clearly described. In addition, any costs associated with publishing should be obvious to authors and readers. Policies should be clear on what counts as prepublication that will preclude consideration. What constitutes plagiarism and redundant/overlapping publication should be specified.

FIND OUT MORE: publicationethics.org/intellectualproperty

8. JOURNAL MANAGEMENT

A well-described and implemented infrastructure is essential, including the business model, policies, processes and software for efficient running of an editorially independent journal, as well as the efficient management and training of editorial boards and editorial and publishing staff.

FIND OUT MORE: publicationethics.org/management

9. PEER REVIEW PROCESSES

All peer review processes must be transparently described and well managed. Journals should provide training for editors and reviewers and have policies on diverse aspects of peer review, especially with respect to adoption of appropriate models of review and processes for handling conflicts of interest, appeals and disputes that may arise in peer review.

FIND OUT MORE: publicationethics.org/peerreview

10. POST-PUBLICATION DISCUSSIONS AND CORRECTIONS

Journals must allow debate post publication either on their site, through letters to the editor, or on an external moderated site, such as PubMed Commons or PubPeer. They must have mechanisms for correcting, revising or retracting articles after publication.

FIND OUT MORE: publicationethics.org/postpublication
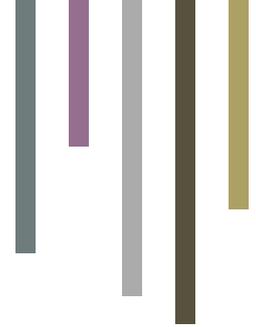
COPE Ethical Guidelines
for Peer Reviewers

COPE Council

Peer reviewers play a role in ensuring the integrity of the scholarly record. The peer review process depends to a large extent on the trust and willing participation of the scholarly community and requires that everyone involved behaves responsibly and ethically. Peer reviewers play a central and critical part in the peer review process, but may come to the role without any guidance and be unaware of their ethical obligations. Journals have an obligation to provide transparent policies for peer review, and reviewers have an obligation to conduct reviews in an ethical and accountable manner. Clear communication between the journal and the reviewers is essential to facilitate consistent, fair and timely review. COPE has heard cases from its members related to peer review issues and bases these guidelines, in part, on the collective experience and wisdom of the COPE Forum participants. It is hoped they will provide helpful guidance to researchers, be a reference for editors and publishers in guiding their reviewers, and act as an educational resource for institutions in training their students and researchers.

Peer review, for the purposes of these guidelines, refers to reviews provided on manuscript submissions to journals, but can also include reviews for other platforms and apply to public commenting that can occur pre- or post-publication. Reviews of other materials such as preprints, grants, books, conference proceeding submissions, registered reports (pre-registered protocols), or data will have a similar underlying ethical framework, but the process will vary depending on the source material and the type of review requested. The model of peer review will also influence elements of the process.

Models of peer review

There are different types or models of peer review, all of which have various advantages and disadvantages. See the COPE document Who "owns" peer reviews?[1] (section titled 'models of peer review') for an explanation of various peer review models. It is important to be aware of the model of peer review that the journal or platform uses before agreeing to undertake the peer review. The chart below, reproduced with permission from QUT, Australia, identifies key elements of the various models related to processes in peer review. Reviewers should understand their responsibilities related to confidentiality of the process and ownership of the review product based on the model of peer review being used.

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Models of peer review continued

There are many different models of peer review. A peer review process may operate to almost any combination in the following table by selecting one option from each row:

TIMING	PrePrints	Pre-publication	Post-Publication
IDENTIFIABILITY	Double blind	Single blind	Open
MEDIATION	Editors mediate all interactions between reviewers and authors	Reviewers interact with one another openly	Reviewers and authors all interact with one another openly
PUBLICATION	Peer reviews are not published	Peer reviews are published but not signed	Peer reviews are published and signed
FACILITATION	Review facilitated by a journal	Review facilitated by a third-party	Review facilitated by authors
OWNERSHIP	Review owned by a journal or third party	Review owned by the authors of the reviews	Shared or mixed ownership of reviews

Using the chart above, a standard, blinded, peer review process for a journal could be: Pre-publication; Single blind; Editors mediate all interactions between reviewers and authors; Peer reviews are not published; Review is facilitated by a journal; Reviews owned by the authors of the reviews.

Being a reviewer

Professional responsibility: Authors who have benefited from the peer review process should consider becoming peer reviewers as a part of their professional responsibilities. Some journals require a formal process of appointment to the review panel, and some require specific expertise; anyone interested in becoming a reviewer should look for the journal guidelines on peer review and follow any requirements posted. In order to assign appropriate reviewers, editors must match reviewers with the scope of the content in a manuscript to get the best reviews possible. Potential reviewers should provide journals with personal and professional information that is accurate and a fair representation of their expertise, including verifiable and accurate contact information. It is important to recognize that impersonation of another individual during the review process is considered serious misconduct (e.g. see COPE Case 12-12: *Compromised peer review in published papers).* When approached to review, agree to review only if you have the necessary expertise to assess the manuscript and can be unbiased in your assessment. It is better to identify clearly any gaps in your expertise when asked to review.

Competing interests: Ensure you declare all potential competing, or conflicting, interests. If you are unsure about a potential competing interest that may prevent you from reviewing, do raise this. Competing interests may be personal, financial, intellectual, professional, political or religious in nature. If you are currently employed at the same institution as any of the authors or have been recent (e.g., within the past 3 years) mentors, mentees, close collaborators or joint grant holders, you should not agree to review. In addition, you should not agree to review a manuscript just to gain sight of it with no intention of submitting a review, or agree to review a manuscript that is very similar to one you have in preparation or under consideration at another journal.

Timeliness: It is courteous to respond to an invitation to peer review within a reasonable time-frame, even if you cannot undertake the review. If you feel qualified to judge a particular manuscript, you should agree to review only if you are able to return a review within the proposed or mutually agreed time-frame. Always inform the journal promptly if your circumstances change and you cannot fulfil your original agreement or if you require an extension. If you cannot review, it is helpful to make suggestions for alternative reviewers if relevant, based on their expertise and without any influence of personal considerations or any intention of the manuscript receiving a specific outcome (either positive or negative).

Conducting a review

Initial steps: Read the manuscript, supplementary data files and ancillary material thoroughly (e.g., reviewer instructions, required ethics and policy statements), getting back to the journal if anything is not clear and requesting any missing or incomplete items you need. Do not contact the authors directly without the permission of the journal. It is important to understand the scope of the review before commencing (i.e., is a review of raw data expected?).

Confidentiality: Respect the confidentiality of the peer review process and refrain from using information obtained during the peer review process for your own or another's advantage, or to disadvantage or discredit others (e.g. see COPE Case 14-06: *Possible breach of reviewer confidentiality*). Do not involve anyone else in the review of a manuscript (including early career researchers you are mentoring), without first obtaining permission from the journal (e.g. see COPE Case 11-29: *Reviewer asks trainee to review manuscript*). The names of any individuals who have helped with the review should be included so that they are associated with the manuscript in the journal's records and can also receive due recognition for their efforts.

Bias and competing interests: It is important to remain unbiased by considerations related to the nationality, religious or political beliefs, gender or other characteristics of the authors, origins of a manuscript or by commercial considerations. If you discover a competing interest that might prevent you from providing a fair and unbiased review, notify the journal and seek advice (e.g. see COPE Case 15-05: *Reviewer requests to be added as an author after publication*). While waiting for a response, refrain from looking at the manuscript and associated material in case the request to review is rescinded. Similarly, notify the journal as soon as possible if you find you do not have the necessary expertise to assess the relevant aspects of a manuscript so as not to unduly delay the review process. In the case of double-blind review, if you suspect the identity of the author(s) notify the journal if this knowledge raises any potential competing or conflict of interest.

Suspicion of ethics violations: If you come across any irregularities with respect to research and publication ethics do let the journal know (e.g. see COPE Case 02-11: *Contacting research ethics committees with concerns over studies*). For example, you may have concerns that misconduct occurred during either the research or the writing and submission of the manuscript, or you may notice substantial similarity between the manuscript and a concurrent submission to another journal or a published article. In the case of these or any other ethical concerns, contact the editor directly and do not attempt to investigate on your own. It is appropriate to cooperate, in confidence, with the journal, but not to personally investigate further unless the journal asks for additional information or advice.

Transferability of peer review: Publishers may have policies related to transferring peer reviews to other journals in the publisher's portfolio (sometimes referred to as portable or cascading peer review). Reviewers may be asked to give permission for the transfer of their reviews if that is journal policy. If a manuscript is rejected from one journal and submitted to another, and you are asked to review that same manuscript, you should be prepared to review the manuscript afresh as it may have changed between the two submissions and the journal's criteria for evaluation and acceptance may be different. In the interests of transparency and efficiency it may be appropriate to provide your original review for the new journal (with permission to do so from the original journal), explaining that you had reviewed the submission previously and noting any changes. (See discussion[2] with Pete Binfield and Elizabeth Moylan highlighting some of the issues surrounding portable peer review).

Preparing a report

Format: Follow journals' instructions for writing and posting the review. If a particular format or scoring rubric is required, use the tools supplied by the journal. Be objective and constructive in your review, providing feedback that will help the authors to improve their manuscript. For example, be specific in your critique, and provide supporting evidence with appropriate references to substantiate general statements, to help editors in their evaluation. Be professional and refrain from being hostile or inflammatory and from making libellous or derogatory personal comments or unfounded accusations (e.g. see COPE Case 08-13: *Personal remarks within a post-publication literature forum*).

Appropriate feedback: Bear in mind that the editor requires a fair, honest, and unbiased assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the manuscript. Most journals allow reviewers to provide confidential comments to the editor as well as comments to be read by the authors. The journal may also ask for a recommendation to accept/revise/reject; any recommendation should be congruent with the comments provided in the review. If you have not reviewed the whole manuscript, do indicate which aspects of the manuscript you have assessed. Ensure your comments and recommendations for the editor are consistent with your report for the authors; most feedback should be put in the report that the authors will see. Confidential comments to the editor should not be a place for denigration or false accusation, done in the knowledge that the authors will not see your comments.

Preparing a report continued

Language and style: Remember it is the authors' paper, so do not attempt to rewrite it to your own preferred style if it is basically sound and clear; suggestions for changes that improve clarity are, however, important. In addition, be aware of the sensitivities surrounding language issues that are due to the authors writing in a language that is not their first or most proficient language, and phrase the feedback appropriately and with due respect.

Suggestions for further work: It is the job of the peer reviewer to comment on the quality and rigour of the work they receive. If the work is not clear because of missing analyses, the reviewer should comment and explain what additional analyses would clarify the work submitted. It is not the job of the reviewer to extend the work beyond its current scope. Be clear which (if any) suggested additional investigations are essential to support claims made in the manuscript under consideration and which will just strengthen or extend the work.

Accountability: Prepare the report by yourself, unless you have permission from the journal to involve another person. Refrain from making unfair negative comments or including unjustified criticisms of any competitors' work that is mentioned in the manuscript. Refrain from suggesting that authors include citations to your (or an associate's) work merely to increase citation counts or to enhance the visibility of your or your associate's work; suggestions must be based on valid academic or technological reasons. Do not intentionally prolong the review process, either by delaying the submission of your review or by requesting unnecessary additional information from the journal or author.

If you are the editor handling a manuscript and decide to provide a review of that manuscript yourself (perhaps if another reviewer could not return a report), do this transparently and not under the guise of an anonymous additional reviewer.

What to consider after peer review

If possible, try to accommodate requests from journals to review revisions or resubmissions of manuscripts you have reviewed previously. It is helpful to respond promptly if contacted by a journal about matters related to your review and to provide the information required. Similarly, contact the journal if anything relevant comes to light after you have submitted your review that might affect your original feedback and recommendations. Continue to respect the confidential nature of the review process and do not reveal details of the manuscript after peer review unless you have permission from the author and the journal (e.g. see COPE Case 13-05: *Online posting of confidential draft by peer reviewer)*. See the COPE discussion document Who "owns" peer reviews?[2] for a fuller discussion of the issues.

Peer review training and mentoring

Take advantage of opportunities to enrol in mentorship or training programmes to improve your peer review skills. Offer to mentor early career researchers as they learn the peer review process. Supervisors who wish to involve their students or junior researchers in peer review must request permission from the editor and abide by the editor's decision. In cases where a student performs the review under the guidance of the supervisor, that should be noted and the student should be acknowledged as the reviewer of record. It may also be helpful to read the reviews from the other reviewers, if these are provided by the journal, to improve your own understanding of the topic and the reason for the editorial decision. Sense about Science have a helpful guide for peer review written for early career researchers[3]. There are also training courses available for those starting out in peer review, for example, Publons provide a free online training course[4].

Author Contributions

Tara Hoke, Trevor Lane, Charon Pierson and Elizabeth Moylan revised the 2013 guidelines that were originally conceptualised and written by Irene Hames on behalf of COPE Council. All authors are listed in alphabetical order. We describe contributions to this project as follows:

2013 Version: Conceptualisation – IH, Writing – IH.

2017 Version: Conceptualisation: EM & CP; Writing – original draft preparation: EM & CP. Writing – review and editing: TH, TL, EM, CP. Supervision: CP. Visualisation: EM & CP.

Acknowledgements
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Further reading

1. https://publicationethics.org/files/u7140/Who_Owns_Peer_Reviews_Discussion_Document_Web.pdf
2. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SlOYO4Kau8I
3. http://senseaboutscience.org/activities/peer-review-the-nuts-and-bolts/
4. https://publons.com/community/academy/