



# Ethical Guidelines<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Preamble

Heidelberg University Publishing (heiUP) is committed to adhering to the highest ethical principles and standards, which should also be observed by all others involved in the publication process (in particular, authors, editors, proofreaders and reviewers).

The following ethical guidelines are based on the [Core Practices](#) and, more notably, on the [Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors](#) of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

## 2. Publishing Ethics of the Publisher

### 2.1 Manuscript Acceptance

The [publisher's advisory board](#) makes autonomous and independent decisions about the acceptance of monographs and edited volumes proposed for publication, provided they do not appear in series, as well as series and journals (as such).

The advisory board only considers academic value (relevance, originality, validity, clarity), regardless of the author's country of origin, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, faith and religious or political views. The publisher ensures that all those involved in the publication process have the opportunity to take note of the requirements placed on them.

The selection of manuscripts to be published in anthologies, series or journals is the responsibility of the editors of those anthologies, series or journals.

### 2.2 Peer Review Process

The organisation and implementation of a peer review process for manuscripts published in series (monographs and edited volumes) or journals is the responsibility of the respective series or journal editors (see Point 3.2 below).

If the publisher organises a peer review process, it shall ensure that the process is conducted fairly, impartially, anonymously and within the agreed timeframe.

Academic monographs and edited volumes that are not published as part of a series are generally evaluated by two external and independent reviewers. If necessary and appropriate, the publisher will arrange for one or more further evaluations by external and independent reviewers. The publisher selects reviewers who have suitable

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<sup>1</sup> Status: 10/12/2025; all links also last accessed on the date stated.

knowledge and experience in the respective subject area and who comply with the Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers developed by COPE.

All recommendations made by the reviewers, such as suggestions for self-citation, are checked for possible conflicts of interest (see Point 2.4 below).

## **2.3 Confidentiality**

The publisher treats submitted manuscripts and all related information and communication in this regard as strictly confidential. Disclosure to third parties is limited to the circle of those involved in the publication process with sufficient certainty. This includes, in particular, possible reviewers and editors. Disclosure will only take place if, and insofar as, it is necessary.

## **2.4 Dealing with Conflicts of Interest; Transparency**

A conflict of interest is a “a conflict between the private interests and the official responsibilities of a person in a position of trust” (Merriam-Webster).<sup>2</sup> In the context of a publication process, a conflict of interest can be assumed to exist if a (professional) decision (e.g. the decision to accept a manuscript) affects, or even threatens to affect, a private interest or other self-interest of the person acting or making the decision in a not insignificant way, and the mere possibility of taking this extraneous interest into account could have a detrimental effect on the objectivity required in the decision-making process.

In this respect, the publisher undertakes to disclose possible conflicts of interest as early as possible, i.e. at the first appearance, to all other parties involved in the relevant decision or affected by it.

In particular, the publisher does not ask authors to refer to other publications that have already been published.

## **2.5 Plagiarism Check**

Plagiarism can take many forms. The publisher therefore uses professional internet-based plagiarism detection software that compares every manuscript submitted and intended for publication with other texts from several extensive databases and checks for copied text passages. Text passages that deviate noticeably from the rest of the writing style are also checked.

## **2.6 Proofreading**

If the publisher carries out proofreading or has it carried out, it shall ensure that the proofreaders (internal or external) have suitable knowledge and experience and treat the information entrusted to them and all related information, as well as the communication thereof, with the necessary confidentiality.

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<sup>2</sup> “Conflict of interest.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conflict%20of%20interest>. Accessed 19 Jan. 2024.

## **2.7 Advertising**

Convinced that the genesis of scientific knowledge – from data collection and analysis to publication – should be free from any exertion of influence unrelated to the subject matter and/or field, the publisher firmly rejects any form of external (commercial or non-commercial) advertising on its website and in its publications in order to preserve the publisher's and, above all, scientific autonomy, integrity, neutrality and objectivity.

## **3. Guidelines for Editors**

### **3.1 Manuscript Acceptance**

Editors should decide autonomously and independently on the acceptance of submitted manuscripts.

Editors should review submitted manuscripts solely for their academic merit (relevance, originality, validity, clarity), regardless of the author's country of origin, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, faith, or religious or political beliefs. The editors should ensure that all those involved in the publication process have the opportunity to take note of the requirements placed on them.

### **3.2 Peer Review**

Editors should ensure that the peer review process they organise is fair, impartial, as anonymous as possible and takes place within the agreed timeframe. They should only select reviewers who have appropriate knowledge and experience in the respective subject area and who comply with the [Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers](#) developed by COPE.

Editors should check all recommendations made by the reviewers, such as suggestions for self-citation, for possible conflicts of interest (see Point 2.4 above).

### **3.3 Confidentiality**

Editors should treat submitted manuscripts and all related information and communication in this regard as strictly confidential. Disclosure to third parties should be limited to the circle of those involved in the publication process with sufficient certainty. This includes, in particular, possible reviewers and editors. Disclosure should only take place if, and insofar as, it is necessary.

### **3.4 Dealing with Conflicts of Interest; Transparency**

Editors should transparently disclose potential conflicts of interest (see Point 2.4 above) as early as possible, i.e. at the first appearance, to all other parties involved in or affected by the relevant decision. This also includes the publisher in all cases.

In particular, editors should not be significantly involved in the selection of contributions that they or their relatives or other persons close to them have written.

### **3.5 Awareness of Academic Misconduct**

Editors should pay attention to whether there are indications in the manuscript that it violates the rules of good academic practice in whole or in part, for example, by appropriating the intellectual work of others (plagiarism), and should make a report to

the publisher in the event of a suspected violation. Corresponding notifications should be accompanied by suitable evidence, for example, relevant references in the case of plagiarism. Even if indications of academic misconduct only become known (or are made known) after publication, editors should support the publisher in clarifying and investigating claimed violations and in communicating with the authors of manuscripts under investigation and, if they are sufficiently qualified in the respective subject area, also cooperate (in an advisory function) from a professional point of view.

## **4. Guidelines for Reviewers**

### **4.1 Appraisal**

Peer review is an important part of quality assurance. However, criticism in the reviews should always and without exception remain objective; criticism that relates exclusively to the person whose manuscript is being reviewed or that otherwise crosses the boundaries of becoming personal is inappropriate. The publisher therefore expects the reviewers to treat the authors and their works in the same way as they themselves would wish a manuscript they have written to be treated in peer review.

If it is (or becomes) apparent to the intended reviewer that a timely review cannot be carried out with sufficient certainty within the specified timeframe, the publisher should be informed of this. The following guidelines also apply to reviewers who decline a requested evaluation.

### **4.2 Confidentiality**

Every manuscript received for review should be treated in strict confidence. This also applies to all related information (including information of a communicative nature). Furthermore, neither this information nor the particular contents of the manuscript should be passed on to third parties or discussed with them unless the publisher has expressly agreed to this in writing in advance. Without the express written consent (i.e. *prior* agreement) of the publisher, reviewers should also not contact the authors personally.

Reviewers should not use the peer-reviewed content in their own research or otherwise, unless the authors have expressly agreed to this in writing in advance.

### **4.3 Awareness of Academic Misconduct**

Reviewers should pay attention to whether there are indications in the manuscript that it violates the rules of good academic practice in whole or in part, for example, by appropriating the intellectual work of others (plagiarism), and should make a report to the publisher in the event of a suspected violation. Corresponding notifications should be accompanied by suitable evidence, for example, relevant references in the case of plagiarism.

### **4.4 Dealing with Conflicts of Interest; Transparency**

Reviewers should strive for objectivity during the review and, therefore, be able to express their opinion clearly and objectively and base it on suitable arguments. Reviewers who do not consider themselves sufficiently qualified to review the research results to be reviewed, who consider themselves biased or who fear that they may be

involved in a conflict of interest (see Point 2.4 above) of any kind during or as a result of the review should inform the publisher of this immediately, i.e. without culpable hesitation.

In particular, reviewers should only suggest that authors refer to their own or third-party publications if this can be justified solely on academic grounds. Suggestions should not be made with the intention of increasing the number of citations or the visibility of a work by the reviewer or a third party.

## **5. Guidelines for Authors**

### **5.1 Publication Requirements and Principles**

Authors should present their research carefully and discuss its academic significance objectively. Data from the research should be fully and properly presented and labelled in the manuscript at the appropriate place and in the appropriate manner. This applies in particular to the literature reviewed and/or discussed in the manuscript and the references to it; (third-party) publications that have influenced the manuscript must be cited and contextualised in the academic context. Others, i.e. those involved in the publication process but also later readers, should be able to understand the development of the work and (for example) compare it with the state of research as well as the literature reviewed and/or discussed elsewhere and the data on which the research is based.

Authors must also comply with the applicable statutory and legal provisions as well as the rights of third parties and completely fulfil the corresponding requirements placed on them. If the use, editing or redesign of legally protected third-party content requires consent to be obtained (prior consent), authors must arrange for the necessary steps to be taken and may not rely on the existence of presumed consent or the granting of authorisation (subsequent consent).

Information obtained by other means, such as through conversations or discussions with third parties or through conventional or electronic correspondence, may not be used without the express written authorisation (prior consent) of the person providing the information.

Manuscripts that predominantly describe the same research should not be published more than once. Exceptions, such as translations, can be discussed with the publisher and agreed upon on a case-by-case basis. The first publication should be cited in the second.

### **5.2 Keeping Data Available**

Authors should keep their research data belonging to the manuscript available for peer review, but also for the (specialised) public after publication, and observe the minimum retention periods based on the rules of good academic practice as well as legal provisions (e.g. data protection law).

The publisher provides authors and editors of edited volumes, series and journal editors with the repositories heiDATA (research data), heiICON (research media) and heiARCHIVE (long-term archiving), which meet the requirements of sustainability.

### 5.3.a (Co-)Authorship; Responsibility for Content

The author is legally the creator of the work (Section 7 UrhG (German Act on Copyright and Related Rights)); works are only to be understood as personal intellectual creations (Section 2 (2) UrhG). Authorship of the content of a manuscript is, therefore, limited to the natural person who, even (un)knowingly or (un)wilfully, performs a "personal intellectual creation in their own person" (*Loewenheim/Pfeifer*, in: *Schricker/Loewenheim, Urheberrecht*, 6th ed. 2020, UrhG Section 7 para. 5 et seq.). "The term creation is generally associated with a creative process that has a certain level of design, a quality content [...]. One usually only speaks of a creation when something not yet existing is created" (*Schulze*, in: *Dreier/Schulze, Urheberrechtsgesetz*, 7th ed. 2022, UrhG § 2 para. 16). With regard to scientific linguistic works (Section 2 No. 1 UrhG) in particular, what is eligible for protection is "in principle not what is presented, but how the scientific topic is specifically organised and dealt with" (*Schulze*, loc. cit., UrhG Section 2 para. 93). If several natural persons have jointly created a work, they are generally co-authors of the work (Section 8 (1) UrhG).

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Co-authors are to be listed as co-authors. Persons who did not contribute to the act of creation in a copyright-relevant manner but were only involved in certain parts of the publication (e.g. reviewers, editors or proofreaders) should not be listed as co-authors. If necessary, they can be mentioned in a separate section or (sub)chapter of the manuscript, for example, in the "Acknowledgements" or in the "Foreword".

All co-authors must have seen the final version of a manuscript before it is published and must have consented (prior consent) to its submission for publication.

The (co-)author(s) is/are also (solely or jointly) responsible for the content.

### 5.3.b Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

System software or internet software applications that use so-called generative artificial intelligence on the basis of *large language models/deep learning models/machine learning models* to independently create texts, images, results of automated data analysis or other content according to specifications (*prompts*) cannot fulfil the legal and factual requirements for authorship, as they are not natural persons. Consequently, they cannot assume any responsibility for the content generated. Furthermore, they cannot recognise any conflicts of interest (see Point 2.4 above) and cannot guarantee compliance with legal requirements or requirements based on licence agreements – at least, not with sufficient certainty, according to the current state of the art. Corresponding system software or internet software applications may not, therefore, be cited as (co-)authors.

Also in accordance with the [Cope Position Statement on Authorship and AI Tools](#), authors who have used corresponding AI applications in whole or in part in the creation of content should describe the manner and scope of the use of generative artificial intelligence in a separate section or (sub)chapter of their work, for example, in "Research Method", in a transparent and detailed manner, naming (and, therefore, disclosing) the specific application used. Authors who have used corresponding AI applications are also fully responsible (alone or jointly) for the content and other data created through the use of generative artificial intelligence. This responsibility includes the accuracy of the content and other data created by the AI application and, above all, the proper citation of all sources that were processed by the AI application when

generating the content and other data. It also includes compliance with statutory and other legal requirements, also and in particular with regard to the sources processed by the AI application.

#### **5.4 Hazardous Substances and Goods; Human and Animal Testing**

If a manuscript describes tests, experiments or other procedures for the production of hazardous substances and/or dangerous goods or other uses of hazardous substances and/or dangerous goods, i.e. substances and/or goods that pose or may pose (significant) risks to public safety and order, to the general public, to the environment and nature, to important common goods and/or to the life and health of humans, animals and/or property, authors must be able to prove at all times in an appropriate manner (e.g. by submitting any necessary consents and authorisations granted by the competent authorities) that the procedures for the production of hazardous substances and/or dangerous goods have been carried out in accordance with the requirements of the relevant authorities. Authors must be able at all times to prove in an appropriate manner (e.g. by submitting any necessary consents and authorisations granted by the competent authorities) that the processes for the manufacture or other use of the respective hazardous substance or hazardous goods were carried out in accordance with the relevant laws and other legal requirements, but also institutional and/or ethical guidelines. They must also be able to demonstrate at any time in a suitable manner that legal, regulatory, institutional and/or ethical requirements and guidelines do not prevent publication of the manuscript in which the corresponding processes for the manufacture or other use of hazardous substances and/or dangerous goods are described. Finally, they should also clearly characterise and present the hazardous nature of the substances or goods in the manuscript itself at the appropriate place.

The same applies in cases where a manuscript describes (inherently) dangerous procedures or the use of (inherently) dangerous devices and equipment (including, for example, weapons).

If human or animal experiments are described in a manuscript, authors must at all times be able to demonstrate in a suitable manner that the experiment or experiments were carried out in accordance with the relevant laws and other legal requirements, but also institutional and/or ethical guidelines. They must also be in a position at all times to demonstrate in an appropriate manner that legal, regulatory, institutional and/or ethical requirements and guidelines do not prevent publication of the manuscript in which human or animal experiments are described. In the case of human experiments, authors should also declare in a suitable place in the manuscript itself that the test subjects have been fully informed about the experiment and have voluntarily consented to the experiment being carried out in an informed manner, and that other personal rights have also been respected.

In all cases, any consent or authorisation granted must be retained by the authors even after publication and must be able to be presented at any time.

#### **5.5 Dealing with Conflicts of Interest; Transparency**

Authors of monographs should inform the publisher of possible conflicts of interest (see Point 2.4 above) as early as possible, i.e. at the first appearance.

Authors of contributions to an edited volume or to a journal or of monographs that appear as part of a series should inform the editors as early as possible of possible conflicts of interest (see Point 2.4 above).

Editors who write or have written their own contributions as authors to an anthology or journal or their own monographs as part of a series should inform the other editors of the anthology, journal or series of possible conflicts of interest (see Point 2.4 above) as early as possible; in cases where there are no other editors, they should inform the publisher.

In a separate section or (sub)chapter of the manuscript, for example, in the "Acknowledgements" or in the "Foreword", authors should also disclose all financial support for the research on which the manuscript is based and all financial support for the preparation, production and/or publication of the manuscript itself, as well as any other financial but also professional, organisational, institutional or other dependencies that are directly or indirectly related to the performance of the research on which the manuscript is based and/or to the publication of the manuscript. The author must transparently disclose all financial but also professional, organisational, institutional or other dependencies with direct or indirect links to the research on which the manuscript is based and/or to the preparation, production and/or publication of the manuscript.

## **5.6 (Subsequent) Discovery of Significant Errors in the Manuscript**

Authors of monographs who discover or become aware of one or more not insignificant errors or inaccuracies in the manuscript before or after publication should inform the publisher immediately, i.e. without culpable delay; authors of contributions to an anthology or journal or of monographs published as part of a series should, in such cases, inform the publisher and the respective editors accordingly.