

Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing

COPE is just one of a number of organisations that is seeing a large rise in applications for membership from new journals. Although we very much want to encourage and support legitimate new journals, we are also mindful that many new journals are not currently sufficiently transparent about their business practices and authors in particular may be unable to judge the legitimacy of these journals. Together with [Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association \(OASPA\)](#), [Directory of Open Access Journals \(DOAJ\)](#), and [World Association of Medical Editors \(WAME\)](#) we have therefore compiled a minimum set of criteria that journals will be assessed against when they apply for membership at one of our organisations. The [full criteria can be seen here](#) and we welcome [feedback](#). We encourage authors and anyone else who is unfamiliar with a journal to use these criteria in assessing a journal.

Introduction

The Committee on Publication Ethics, the Directory of Open Access Journals, the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association, and the World Association of Medical Editors are scholarly organizations that have seen an increase in the number of membership applications from both legitimate and non-legitimate publishers and journals. Our organizations have collaborated in an effort to identify principles of transparency and best practice that set apart legitimate journals and publishers from non-legitimate ones and to clarify that these principles form part of the criteria on which membership applications will be evaluated.

These criteria are largely derived from those developed by the Directory of Open Access Journals. Note that additional membership criteria may also be used by each of the scholarly organizations. The organizations intend to share information in order to develop lists of legitimate journals and publishers. We do not intend to develop or publish a list of publishers or journals that failed to demonstrate they met the criteria for transparency and best practice.

This is a work in progress and we welcome feedback on the general principles and the specific criteria. Background on the organizations is below.

About the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE, <http://publicationethics.org/>)

COPE provides advice to editors and publishers on all aspects of publication ethics and, in particular, how to handle cases of research and publication misconduct. It also provides a forum for its members to discuss individual cases. COPE does not investigate individual cases but encourages editors to ensure that cases are investigated by the appropriate authorities (usually a research institution or employer).

All COPE members are expected to follow the Codes of Conduct for Journal Editors and Publishers.

About the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ, <http://www.doaj.org/>)

The mission of the DOAJ is: to curate, maintain and develop a source of reliable information about open access scholarly journals on the web; to verify that entries on the list comply with reasonable standards; to increase the visibility, dissemination, discoverability and attraction of open access journals; to enable scholars, libraries, universities, research funders and other stakeholders to benefit from the information and services provided; to facilitate the integration of open access journals into library and aggregator services; to assist, where possible, publishers and their journals to meet reasonable digital publishing standards; and to thereby support the transition of the system of scholarly communication and publishing into a model that serves science, higher education, industry, innovation, societies and the people. Through this work, DOAJ will cooperate and collaborate with all interested parties working toward these objectives.

About the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA, <http://oaspa.org/>)

The OASPA is a trade association that was established in 2008 in order to represent the interests of Open Access (OA) publishers globally in all scientific, technical and scholarly disciplines. This mission will be carried out through exchanging information, setting standards, advancing models, advocacy, education, and the promotion of innovation.

About the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME, <http://www.wame.org/>)

WAME is a global nonprofit voluntary association of editors of peer-reviewed medical journals who seek to foster cooperation and communication among editors; improve editorial standards; promote professionalism in medical

editing through education, self-criticism, and self-regulation; and encourage research on the principles and practice of medical editing. WAME develops policies and recommendations of best practices for medical journal editors and has a syllabus for editors that members are encouraged to follow.

Principles of Transparency

1. **Peer review process:** All of a journal's content, apart from any editorial material that is clearly marked as such, shall be subjected to peer review. Peer review is defined as obtaining advice on individual manuscripts from reviewers expert in the field who are not part of the journal's editorial staff. This process, as well as any policies related to the journal's peer review procedures, shall be clearly described on the journal's Web site.
2. **Governing Body:** Journals shall have editorial boards or other governing bodies whose members are recognized experts in the subject areas included within the journal's scope. The full names and affiliations of the journal's editors shall be provided on the journal's Web site.
3. **Editorial team/contact information** Journals shall provide the full names and affiliations of the journal's editors on the journal's Web site as well as contact information for the editorial office.
4. **Author fees:** Any fees or charges that are required for manuscript processing and/or publishing materials in the journal shall be clearly stated in a place that is easy for potential authors to find prior to submitting their manuscripts for review or explained to authors before they begin preparing their manuscript for submission.
5. **Copyright:** Copyright and licensing information shall be clearly described on the journal's Web site, and licensing terms shall be indicated on all published articles, both HTML and PDFs.
6. **Identification of and dealing with allegations of research misconduct:** Publishers and editors shall take reasonable steps to identify and prevent the publication of papers where research misconduct has occurred, including plagiarism, citation manipulation, and data falsification/fabrication, among others. In no case shall a journal or its editors encourage such misconduct, or knowingly allow such misconduct to take place. In the event that a journal's publisher or editors are made aware of any allegation of research misconduct relating to a published article in their journal – the publisher or editor shall follow COPE's guidelines (or equivalent) in dealing with allegations.
7. **Ownership and management:** Information about the ownership and/or management of a journal shall be clearly indicated on the journal's Web site. Publishers shall not use organizational names that would mislead potential authors and editors about the nature of the journal's owner.
8. **Web site:** A journal's Web site, including the text that it contains, shall demonstrate that care has been taken to ensure high ethical and professional standards.
9. **Name of journal:** The Journal name shall be unique and not be one that is easily confused with another journal or that might mislead potential authors and readers about the Journal's origin or association with other journals.
10. **Conflicts of interest:** A journal shall have clear policies on handling potential [conflicts of interest](#) of editors, authors, and reviewers and the policies should be clearly stated.
11. **Access:** The way(s) in which the journal and individual articles are available to readers and whether there are associated subscription or pay per view fees shall be stated.
12. **Revenue sources:** Business models or revenue sources (eg, author fees, subscriptions, advertising, reprints, institutional support, and organizational support) shall be clearly stated or otherwise evident on the journal's Web site.
13. **Advertising:** Journals shall state their advertising policy if relevant, including what types of ads will be considered, who makes decisions regarding accepting ads and whether they are linked to content or reader behavior (online only) or are displayed at random.
14. **Publishing schedule:** The periodicity at which a journal publishes shall be clearly indicated.
15. **Archiving:** A journal's plan for electronic backup and preservation of access to the journal content (for example, access to main articles via CLOCKSS or PubMedCentral) in the event a journal is no longer published shall be clearly indicated.

16. Direct marketing: Any direct marketing activities, including solicitation of manuscripts that are conducted on behalf of the journal, shall be appropriate, well targeted, and unobtrusive.

In the event that a member organization is found to have violated these best practices, OASPA/DOAJ/COPE/WAME shall in the first instance try to work with them in order to address any concerns that have been raised. In the event that the member organization is unable or unwilling to address these concerns, their membership in the organization may be suspended or terminated. All of the member organizations have procedures for dealing with concerns raised about member journals.