COPE has many resources to assist publishers and editors in making decisions about ethical issues in publication, including guidelines, flowcharts, discussion documents, sample letters, eLearning modules, and an audit tool. This overview is a suggested guide for approaching organisation of the editorial office to comply with COPE guidelines.

Ethical issues are often complex and the approach will vary depending on the specific problem and the resources of the journal. In general, COPE expects that member journals will adhere to these basic principles to resolve misconduct.

**FOR NEW JOURNALS JUST ESTABLISHING AN EDITORIAL OFFICE, BEGIN WITH THE COPE CORE PRACTICES AND GUIDELINES FROM THE PUBLISHER.**

Established and new journals should consider developing a training program for editors and editorial board members using the eLearning course, available for COPE members, on the COPE website (www.publicationethics.org/resources/e-learning) or other appropriate resources.

**FOR ESTABLISHED COPE MEMBER JOURNALS WISHING TO EVALUATE CURRENT PROCESSES, BEGIN WITH THE PUBLICATION ETHICS AUDIT TOOL.**

Based on the results of the audit, develop or locate resources to address issues uncovered. For example, if authorship criteria are not clearly articulated in policies, review resources such as the ICMJE Authorship Criteria and studies on journals’ instructions to authors (Core Practice #2).

**Journal guidelines and processes must be transparent.**

Systems must be in place to promptly attend to and resolve all complaints related to publication ethics. Clearly identify contact information for the person responsible for handling allegations of misconduct.

**Editorial staff must be committed to correcting the literature when needed and following through on requests from institutional investigations.**

**Develop guidelines for authors and reviewers based on core practices #2 and #9.**

**Develop internal processes to support identification of ethical concerns.**

**Develop guidelines for promptly responding to suspected ethical breaches by authors, reviewers, and editors (Core Practice #3).**

**Provide links to COPE guidelines, flowcharts, and other materials.**

Examples include ICMJE Authorship and Conflict-of-Interest Guidelines. These items will clearly inform authors, reviewers, and readers of the processes of submission, review, publication, and grievances.

**Establish editorial office guidelines about who responds to complaints.**

Examples include involvement of legal staff and the publisher. Also knowing when and how to liaise with other editors and institutions.


Some journals have an ethics committee, others rely on a sole editor to handle these issues.

**Assure that resources such as COPE retraction guidelines, flowcharts, and access to legal advice if needed are available to those tasked with resolving ethics issues.**