

Publication ethics: educational content for Research Integrity Officers (RIOs) at universities and research institutes

Background

COPE is a not-for-profit organisation, registered as a charity in the UK. **COPE** is committed to educate and support editors, publishers and those involved in publication ethics, with the aim of moving the culture of publishing towards one where ethical practices become a normal part of the publishing culture. Our approach is firmly in the direction of influencing through education, resources and support of our members, alongside the fostering of professional debate in the wider community.

As of 2020, **COPE** has published a new **strategic plan** which will see membership extended to include universities and research institutions. The decision to move **COPE** in this direction is in direct response to member feedback where it became clear that our journal editors and publishers would like **COPE** to work more closely with these bodies, and to help educate and promote an understanding of the principles of publication ethics to faculty, other researchers and students.

Subsequently, **COPE** conducted a feasibility survey with six universities based in Australia, Canada, Hong Kong and the USA, where they also strongly expressed the need for those who are responsible for research integrity issues and training in universities to become more confident in publication ethics issues. **COPE** has therefore decided to meet its strategic objective by delivering at least two educational resources on publication ethics issues to facilitate the training of research integrity officers (RIOs), or their equivalents, in universities and research institutes.



Purpose of this brief

The purpose is to contract with an individual or organisation (UK based or with a UK based representative) to provide the content for an online training course (“eLearning”), plus associated training manual, on the subject of publication ethics, for RIOs based in a university or research institute setting.

The online training course will cover a series of different publication ethics topics which will be supplemented by the training manual. This will be used to deliver workshops for university RIOs (or their equivalents) where **COPE** representatives will use the training manual to deliver practical workshops based on the content in the eLearning modules. The training manual can then be used by RIOs to implement their own training sessions in their university or research institute.

The eLearning course is expected to cover a number of different modules involving a variety of publication ethics issues. **COPE** is therefore seeking to invite interest from qualified individuals/organisations with expertise in developing content for online learning aimed at a scholarly audience. Please note: we are only looking for the content for the modules to be written, **COPE** will then take this content and offer it on its website or an e-learning platform.

What does COPE want to achieve?

COPE would like to develop a series of online learning modules (“eLearning”), supplemented by a training manual and in person seminars/workshops. Each module will cover a different publication ethics topic. Publication ethics issues are a continuum of research ethics - the majority of the topics will be recognisable to RIOs from their research integrity practices. In this course, the RIO will learn explicitly about the relation between research ethics and publication ethics issues, and how research misconduct manifests as publication ethics issues further down the line during the publishing process.

The RIOs will do the course, by advancing through the elearning modules, supplemented by the in person seminars/workshops if needed. The RIOs will then use their knowledge, plus the training manual, to train faculty, other researchers and students in their institutions in publication ethics issues - a “train the trainer” model.

COPE has identified five topics for phase I, with the first module, an ‘Introduction to publication ethics’, to be delivered first.

The topics are:

- 1 | Introduction to publication ethics
- 2 | Authorship
- 3 | Fabrication and falsification (data; image manipulation)
- 4 | Plagiarism
- 5 | Retractions

PHASE I

Each module will draw on existing COPE content, with external content sourced by the content developer. It is also important that the content developer takes into account discipline specific variations in practice - COPE does not prescribe a single standard to be used across all disciplines as different disciplines may have different practices.

The content will follow a specified framework (an example outline for one module is below) but we would also be keen for the developer to make suggestions, as appropriate.

For phase II, we would like the online course to be CPD certified (<https://cpduk.co.uk/>) and would suggest that the content developer keep this in mind when developing the module.

Initially, we will offer a certificate of completion.

PHASE II

Audience

The content will be aimed at RIOs (or their equivalents) who we expect will be grounded in research ethics but will have little or no experience of publication ethics issues.

Example outline framework for “Introduction to publication ethics” module (this will be developed further in conjunction with the content developer).

Content:

- 1 What is publication ethics?
- 2 The publication process
- 3 Publication models (eg, preprints, open access/subscription, etc)
- 4 Best practices in publications
- 5 The journal editor and publisher perspective
- 6 The university, research institution, RIO, researcher and student perspectives
- 7 Understanding the legal framework*

* Understanding that the law varies significantly between jurisdictions, but to include broad themes and general legal questions around copyright, for example, would be helpful.

We anticipate that the content will include a number of tools to facilitate learning:

- COPE cases:
<https://publicationethics.org/guidance/Case>
- COPE guidance:
<https://publicationethics.org/guidance>
- Scenarios, developed from the COPE cases and guidance, with associated Q&A
- Possible use of video and audio (from either the COPE resources or appropriate external sources)
- Infographics (COPE uses the services of a graphic designer who will be able to design any infographics)
- Example policy documents
- External resources: such as input from RIOs and researchers

We anticipate that each online module will take the user no longer than 30 minutes to complete.

Deliverables

Phase I: Content for one online module (“Introduction to Publication Ethics”), plus a training manual. The module will be tested in a number of pilot universities and, when deemed successful, the content developer will move to **Phase II** and produce the content for the remaining four modules, as outlined in the section “What does COPE want to achieve?”. A schedule for delivery of the remaining four modules will be developed in conjunction with the content developer.

Response required

The individual/organisation is required to submit a formal response to this proposal in the form of a PDF. We expect to see examples of previous work as well an overview of how you would approach the content. Shortlisted individuals/organisations may be required to attend a telephone interview with representatives of COPE and its expert advisers.

Budget

We expect that for all five modules, plus associated training manuals, the budget will come in at £10,000 or less.

Timeline

We are keen for work to commence as soon as possible and would be hoping for the first draft of the deliverable to be delivered by the end of December 2020, but this can be discussed with the successful candidate(s). A more detailed schedule will be created in conjunction with the individual/organisation to review milestones before the due date.

Deadline for response

Responses to this proposal due by close of business on **4 November 2020**.

Contact

To discuss in more detail, please contact:

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Disclaimer

COPE reserves the right to:

- Reject any or all offers and discontinue this RFP process without obligation or liability to any potential vendor;
- Accept other than the lowest priced offer;
- Award a contract based on initial offers received, without discussions or requests for best and final offers, and;
- Award more than one contract.