



publicationethics.org

**GUIDELINES:
EDITORIAL BOARD PARTICIPATION**

GUIDELINES



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GUIDANCE ON EDITORIAL BOARD PARTICIPATION

Roles and responsibilities

Journals should clearly define the roles and responsibilities of their editor(s)-in-chief and all members of the editorial board. New editors, at every level of board involvement, should be provided with clearly defined roles and expectations in terms of the following:

- Number and quality of reviews.
- Number of editorial decisions and whether those decisions are final or subject to approval by another editor.
- Other tasks (eg, identifying reviewers, recruiting new reviewers, editing special issues, writing commentaries, columns, or features, and attending board meetings).

The length of the appointment, the number of times the appointment can be renewed, and the actions (or lack of actions) that would lead to termination of the appointment should also be specified.

Participation in multiple boards

As a consequence of the ever growing number of journals being published worldwide, researchers may often receive invitations to join journal editorial boards. Some researchers might want to accept multiple invitations and to be a member of more than one editorial board at the same time. However, participating in the editorial boards of multiple journals that have similar aims and scope, and thus compete for the same content, has the potential to generate conflicts of interest (ColS) or conflicts of roles, commitments, and loyalties. Therefore, journals should define what they consider the types or levels of ColS that are not permissible for their editors which, if present, should preclude an editor from joining the board or result in an editor's removal if not resolved. These policies should be publicly available.

An example of a Col that is not permissible might be an editor having decision making authority at two or more journals that compete for the same manuscripts. Another example might be an editor accepting an invitation from a competing journal to be a guest editor for an initiative that could be published in the editor's current journal.

Declarations of interests

Given the above context, journals should ask potential editorial board members to provide a list of their potential CoIs. The list should include the potential board member's other commitments and roles involving journals, books, and societies that produce publications (eg, membership of publication oversight committees).

For their part, researchers who respond to an invitation to join an editorial board should declare potential CoIs, including any concurrent editorships and editorial board memberships. Researchers should also disclose any CoIs that arise during their appointment.

Considerations during recruitment

More generally, when journals recruit editors at any level, they might need to decide whether it is appropriate for any individual to be a member of more than one editorial board at the same time. The following questions should be asked:

- Will the multiple editorial board positions represent a CoI, or could they be perceived as such?
- Will the editor handle or review manuscripts for more than one journal? If so, will the total expected number of manuscripts to be handled or reviewed be so high as to overburden the editor and reduce their ability to evaluate manuscripts in a timely and thorough manner?
- Will the editor make the final decision for manuscript acceptance in a specific subject for more than one major journal in the same field? Will doing so give that individual an unfair advantage as a main gatekeeper of published scholarly material in that subject, thereby limiting diversity of opinion and thought in that area?

These concerns are particularly relevant when a potential editor could have overall final decision making authority over editorial content, or policies or strategies for more than one journal. In such situations, there is a possibility for a CoI or conflict of roles, commitments, or loyalties to exist or, at the very least, appear to exist.

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