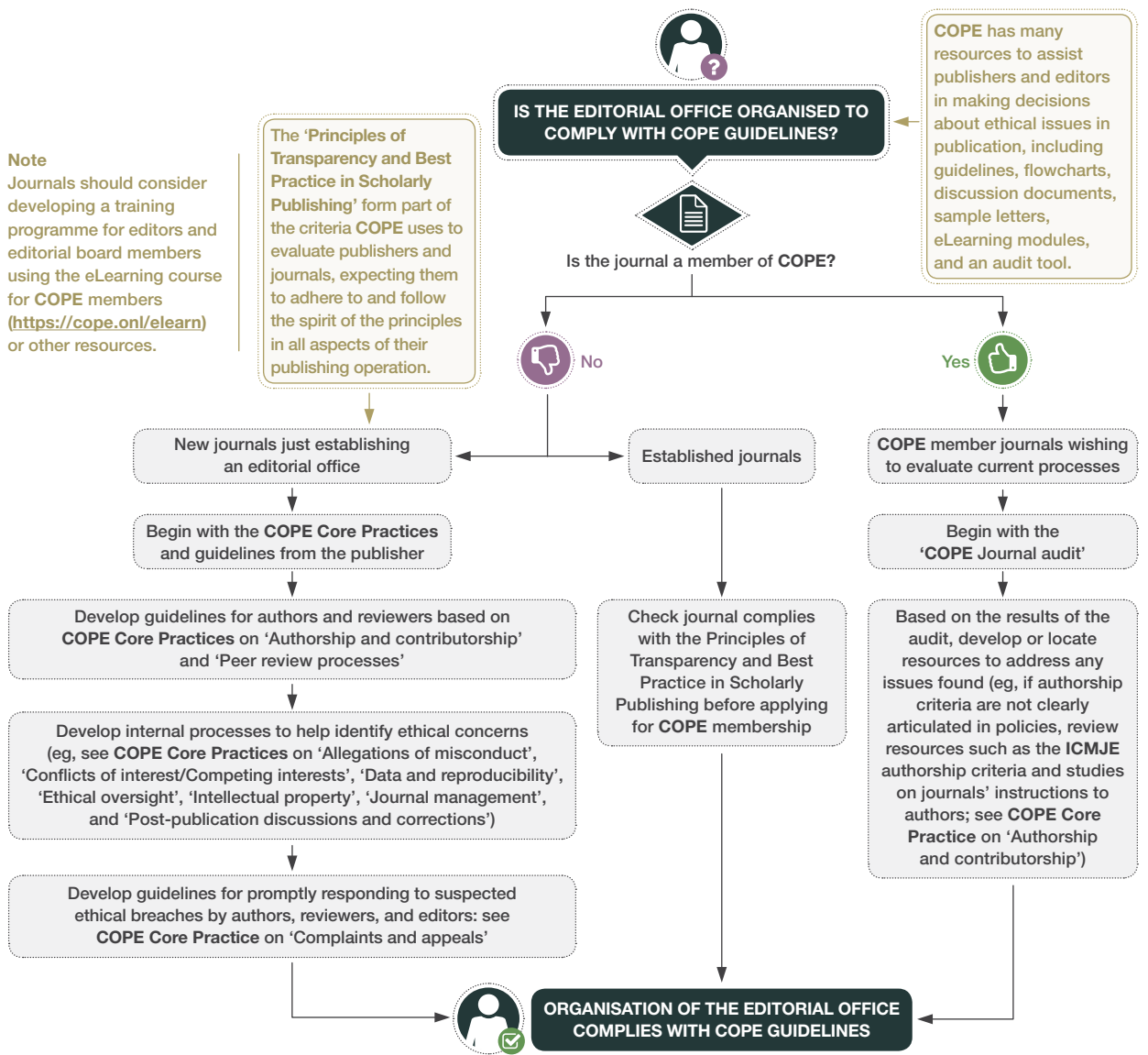


Note
Journals should consider developing a training programme for editors and editorial board members using the eLearning course for COPE members (<https://cope.onl/elearn>) or other resources.

The 'Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing' form part of the criteria COPE uses to evaluate publishers and journals, expecting them to adhere to and follow the spirit of the principles in all aspects of their publishing operation.

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.



Best practice to handle ethical issues

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 three basic principles to resolve ethical issues and cases of alleged misconduct:



Journal guidelines and processes must be transparent

Provide links to COPE Guidelines, flowcharts, and other materials (eg, 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



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

Establish editorial office guidelines about who responds to complaints (eg, in what manner, within what time frame, and what parameters require involvement of legal staff and the publisher). Some journals have an ethics committee; others rely on a sole editor to handle these issues

Know when and how to liaise with other editors and institutions^{1,2}



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

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

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Further reading

- Yentis S, on behalf of COPE Council. Sharing of information among editors-in-chief regarding possible misconduct, version 1, March 2015. <https://doi.org/10.24318/cope.2019.1.7>
- Wager E, Kleinert S, on behalf of COPE Council. Cooperation between research institutions and journals on research integrity cases: guidance from the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), version 1, March 2012. <https://doi.org/10.24318/cope.2018.1.3>