

# Editorial Guidance Workflows on HRB Open Research

## Editorial misconduct on HRB Open Research

If the HRB editorial team suspect potential misconduct with regards to articles that have been submitted or published on HRB Open Research, they will be reported to the National Steering Group.

### HRB Open Research Editorial Policy on misconduct

If a case of suspected research or publication misconduct is brought to our attention, we will follow the guidance and workflows recommended by [COPE](#). In the first instance this will usually involve contacting the person/persons about whom the allegations have been raised to request an explanation. We may also need to contact the involved party's research institution, an ethics committee or other third parties.

Research misconduct includes data fabrication or falsification, or cases where research involving animals or humans has not been carried out within an [appropriate ethical framework](#). Publication misconduct includes duplicate publication of articles or clear plagiarism. Honest errors or differences of opinion are not considered 'misconduct'.

### Workflow for reporting misconduct to the National Steering Group

1. In view of the importance of confidentiality in the publishing process, we follow COPE's suggestions that sharing of information between the National Steering Group will only be undertaken when the HRB Open Research editorial team feels that such sharing is a necessary part of fulfilling HRB Open Research's obligation to prevent and respond to suspected research misconduct.
2. The HRB Open Research editorial team makes all initial enquiries in suspected cases according to COPE guidance/flowcharts, without sharing of information (unless there is a reliable indication of an issue beyond HRB Open Research). Information is only shared if there is no response from the author, the response is inadequate, or more than one publication is thought to be affected.
3. If sharing of information is necessary, disclosure is made to only those National Steering Group members who the editorial team believes may have information or expertise that is pertinent to the case, and the amount of information is limited to the minimum required.
4. Information shared by the editorial team is restricted to factual content only, avoiding conjecture, supposition, or inference. The disclosing editorial team member will include a statement that the information provided does not indicate a judgment of wrongdoing but is merely intended to alert the National Steering Group in case they have other information or expertise that might assist the handling of this case – including to exonerate the investigator/author in question.
5. Communications will be made in such a manner as to preserve confidentiality. While the use of email is an appropriate way of communicating, given the practical difficulties of face-to-face and telephone conversations between in different time zones, the editorial team will take steps to ensure that the National Steering Group recipients are aware of the sensitive nature of the disclosure. Such steps may include adding

the word 'confidential' to the subject of emails and including a rider/ disclaimer to the text to the effect that such communication will be treated as such, and not forwarded beyond the initial circulation list without permission.

6. Editors will alert authors to the potential for such sharing of information by referring to the statement in the HRB Open Research policies that material will be handled in confidence except for the purposes of review AND to investigate possible misconduct.
7. While this workflow is primarily designed to address unpublished submissions, COPE believes that there is no difference between sharing information about a submitted (but as yet unpublished) manuscript and a published article, other than the fact that data in the latter are in the public domain. Accordingly, the National Steering Group follow the same guidelines when sharing information regarding possible misconduct in a published paper.

## **Complex issues on HRB Open Research**

If the HRB Open Research editorial team suspect a potentially controversial paper with complex intellectual, medical, societal, or economic issues, they will be shared with the appropriate National Steering Group member(s) for advice before HRB Open Research accepting the article for publication.

### **HRB Open Research Editorial Policy on complex issues**

HRB Open Research's [Publication Terms and Conditions](#) set out the publishing standards by which we operate. We require that all work sets out to be fair and accurate, differentiates between fact and opinion, is obtained by straightforward and ethical means, and is promptly corrected where inaccurate or misleading. The acceptability of any article shall be decided by HRB Open Research at its discretion. HRB Open Research reserves the right, at its discretion, to not proceed with publication at any time or to remove the Content following publication if there are legal or ethical concerns with the article.

### **Reporting complex issues to the National Steering Group**

1. In view of the importance of confidentiality in the publishing process, we follow COPE's suggestions that sharing of information between the National Steering Group will only be undertaken when the HRB Open Research editorial team feels that such sharing is a necessary part of fulfilling HRB Open Research's obligation to prevent publishing an article that could potentially have complex issues.
2. The HRB Open Research editorial team will discuss articles internally and complete the necessary research into the authors and subject area before contacting the National Steering Group. Information will be shared if the editorial team feel they need a subject level expert to help with the editorial acceptance decision.
3. If sharing of information is necessary, disclosure will be made to only those National Steering Group member(s) who they believe may have information or expertise that is pertinent to the article, and the amount of information will be limited to the minimum required.
4. Information shared by the editors will be restricted to factual content only, avoiding conjecture, supposition, or inference. It is recommended that the disclosing editorial team member include a statement that the

information provided does not indicate a judgment of wrongdoing but is merely intended to alert the National Steering Group in case they have other information or expertise that might assist the handling of this case – including suggesting the article does get published.

5. Communications will be made in such a manner as to preserve confidentiality. While the use of email is an appropriate way of communicating, given the practical difficulties of face-to-face and telephone conversations between in different time zones, the editorial team will take steps to ensure that the National Steering Group recipients are aware of the sensitive nature of the disclosure. Such steps may include adding the word 'confidential' to the subject of emails and including a rider/ disclaimer to the text to the effect that such communication will be treated as such, and not forwarded beyond the initial circulation list without permission.
6. While these guidelines are primarily designed to address unpublished submissions, COPE believes that there is no difference between sharing information about a submitted (but as-yet unpublished) manuscript and a published article, other than the fact that data in the latter are in the public domain. Accordingly, the National Steering Group will follow the same guidelines when sharing information regarding a controversial published paper.