

Publication Ethics and Malpractice Statement¹ for the International Scientific PhD Students Conference MendelNet

The International Scientific PhD Students Conference **MendelNet** provides a platform to discuss new trends in plant and animal production, plant and animal biology, fisheries and hydrobiology, agroecology and rural development, food technology, techniques and technology, and applied chemistry and biochemistry with participants from European educational and research institutions.

The editor-in-chief of the conference proceedings is responsible, among other things, for preventing publication malpractice. Unethical behaviour is unacceptable and **MendelNet** does not tolerate plagiarism in any form. **MendelNet** and this **Publication Ethics and Malpractice Statement** are a good occasion to present examples of misconduct to explain the possible mistakes that the conference participants – PhD students – should avoid.

All authors and co-authors who submit their contributions to proceedings of the **MendelNet** conference agree with publishing of their reviewed texts on the webpages of the **MendelNet** conference and with submission of the conference proceedings containing their full text contributions in order to be evaluated for coverage in international scientific databases.

Editors, authors², and reviewers are to be fully committed to good publication practice and accept the responsibility for fulfilling the following duties and responsibilities:

I. DUTIES OF THE EDITOR

1. Publication Decisions: The editorial board can accept the contribution, reject it or send it back for modifications. The editorial board initially examines the originality of the contribution and its suitability for inclusion in an appropriate conference section.

2. Review of Contributions: After the contribution passes the test of originality and suitability for one of the **conference sections**, it is handled in a two-step review. The single-blind process (the authors do not know the identity of the reviewers) is as follows:

- Formal control within which the first reviewer assesses the compliance to the guidelines for authors.
- Next, the content as such is forwarded for a peer review by the second reviewer.

Each reviewer will fill in the on-line evaluation form with following recommendations; the first reviewer: to accept the contribution for further evaluation, to modify or to reject it for formal reasons; the second reviewer: to publish the contribution, to modify or to reject it.

Editor treats reviewers' evaluations with appropriate dignity. Likewise, the editor considers all possible conflicts of interests the reviewer might have. Should the reviewer make an error, it is dealt with within the editorial board.

3. Fair Review: The editor ensures that each contribution received is evaluated solely on its intellectual content without regard to authors' sex, gender, race, religion or citizenship.

4. Confidentiality: The editor must not disclose any information about a submitted contribution to anyone other than the corresponding (first) author, reviewers, potential reviewers, other editorial advisers, and the publisher, as appropriate.

5. Disclosure and Conflicts of Interest: The editor must not use unpublished materials, disclosed in submitted contribution for his/her own research, without prior written consent of the author(s).

II. DUTIES OF THE AUTHORS

1. Reporting Standards: Authors present research results of maximum possible accuracy and objectivity. Any fraudulent or knowingly inaccurate statements constitute unethical behaviour and are unacceptable. A contribution should contain sufficient detail and references to permit others to replicate the work.

2. Originality: Authors must ensure that their contribution (or main parts of their contribution) is entirely original.³

3. Multiple, Redundant, or Concurrent Publications: Authors must not publish the submitted contribution or its parts in its form, content and scope in other journal or conference proceedings.⁴

4. Acknowledgement and Sources: Proper acknowledgment of the work of others and of their own must always be given. Authors should cite all and only publications that have been influential in determining the nature of the reported work.⁵

5. Authorship of the Contribution: Authorship is limited to those who have made a significant involvement to the conception, design, execution, or interpretation of the contribution. All those who have made such a significant assistance must be listed as co-authors.⁶

6. Disclosure of Financial Support: All sources of financial support, if any that really have been used to achieve the results included must be disclosed.⁷

7. Fundamental errors in published work: Should an author discover a significant error or inaccuracy in his/her own published contribution, it is the author's obligation to promptly notify the editor and cooperate to retract or correct the contribution.

III. DUTIES OF REVIEWERS

1. Contribution Quality: Peer review assists the editor in making editorial decisions and through anonymous communications with the authors may also assist the author in improving the contribution.

2. Confidentiality and Conflicts of Interests: All information or ideas obtained through peer review must be kept confidential and not used for personal advantage. Reviewers must reject to consider contributions in which they have conflicts of interest.

3. Acknowledgement of Sources: Reviewers should identify relevant published content that has not been cited by the authors and bring it to the attention of the editor and/or the author(s).⁸

4. Standards of Objectivity: Reviews must be conducted objectively. Personal criticism of the author is inappropriate. Reviewers must express their views clearly with supporting arguments.

5. Promptness: If a reviewer believes it is not possible for him/her to review the research reported in a contribution within the designated guidelines, or within stipulated time, he/she must notify the editor, so that the accurate and timely review can be ensured.

Notes:

¹This Publication ethics and malpractice statement is mainly based on the Code of Conduct and the Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors (Committee on Publication Ethics, 2011). Parts of the text were adapted from the [Nature Policies](#).

²Among the authors of MendelNet contributions are, in many cases, also mentors of PhD students who should contribute to the ethical purity of the submitted work, which is one of their main tasks. The Editorial comment "They did a bad bad thing" in *Nature Chemistry* (**3**, 337; 2011) answers the question: „So what should be done to deter misconduct? As with lab safety, this is something that is best dealt with by researchers themselves – a shared awareness of correct research ethics needs to be fostered and passed on to the next generation. This should be emphasized by formal training from departments and institutions, which must have their own policies and guidelines for allegations relating to misconduct, as well as for expected ethical behaviour. But most of all, it needs to be put into everyday practice and an example of high standards should be shown by mentors." And Maxine Clarke posted her comments in reaction to another Editorial "Borrowing words, or claiming them?" (*Nature Immunology*, **10**, 225; 2009) to a Nautilus blog spot: "Still, the onus is on mentors and laboratory chiefs to serve as examples of good scientific conduct. They should initiate discussions about what constitutes plagiarism and 'self plagiarism', as well as other forms of misconduct, with their trainees. Mentors should recognize their obligation to help trainees to develop and hone good written communication skills that follow high ethical standards. Likewise, colleagues, referees and editors all must accept their responsibility to safeguard scientific literature against the possibility of plagiarism or dual publication. Scientific integrity includes the ability to acknowledge good ideas and to give proper credit due to original authors."

³"The explosion in the number of scientific papers being published, and in the number of journals in existence, is a positive sign of the overall healthy state of research. However, the increasing cost of this growth – both financially and in terms of the increasingly onerous burden on referees – has led to a crisis that threatens the sustainability of scientific publishing as we know it¹. This situation is made worse by the practice of fragmenting single coherent bodies of research into as many publications as possible – the practice of scientific salami slicing.

No one would deny that the desire to publish new results rapidly is legitimate. The urge to do so solely to increase the number of one's publications, however, is not. Much of the problem arises not from an inherent desire among researchers to maximize their publication count, but from the conditions that are set by funding and appointment bodies, which determine what gets funded and who gets tenure. In the 'publish or perish' climate that has evolved over recent decades, overemphasis on the size of an individual's (and, increasingly, entire research group's) publication record as a means of quantifying their research output inevitably rewards quantity over quality. Moreover, this has the effect of abdicating responsibility for such assessment to the journals in which they publish – a responsibility that is neither appropriate nor desired. The challenge then is not only to establish more sophisticated means to assess the worth of a researcher's scientific contribution, but for bodies making such assessments to make it plain that it is scientific rigour and not merely numerical output that will lead to success.” (Editorial “The cost of salami slicing”, *Nature Materials* 4, 1 (2005)). The Nature journal's policy on duplicate publication explains originality in the following way: “If part of a contribution that an author wishes to submit to a Nature journal has appeared or will appear elsewhere, the author must specify the details in the covering letter accompanying the Nature submission. Consideration by the Nature journal is possible if the main result, conclusion, or implications are not apparent from the other work, or if there are other factors, for example if the other work is published in a language other than English.”

⁴However, because most of the journals consider conference proceedings as preliminary presentation, they will publish a paper with very similar content. The Nature journal's policy on duplicate publication seems not to allow to publish full text conference proceedings as a preliminary publication before submitting a paper on the same topic to their journals, but only conference abstracts published prior to sending the work are acceptable as follows from this text: “The Nature journals are happy to consider submissions containing material that has previously formed part of a PhD or other academic thesis which has been published according to the requirements of the institution awarding the qualification. Nature journals allow publication of meeting abstracts before the full contribution is submitted. Such abstracts should be included with the Nature journal submission and referred to in the cover letter accompanying the manuscript. This policy does not extend to meeting abstracts and reports available to the media or which are otherwise publicized outside the scientific community during the submission and consideration process. If an author of a submission is re-using a figure or figures published elsewhere, or that is copyrighted, the author must provide documentation that the previous publisher or copyright holder has given permission for the figure to be re-published. The Nature journal editors consider all material in good faith that their journals have full permission to publish every part of the submitted material, including illustrations.”

⁵This applies also to the case if you would like to publish a presentation from MendelNet in a journal, you not only have to cite MendelNet in the contribution, but you have to explain it also in the cover letter to the editor. “Copying text, even when supplying new data, is not acceptable without clear reference to the process. One duplicate figure in a paper is one too many, if attribution to the original paper or grant is not noted. Oblique reference to a method in a previous publication in an attempt to hide the paper's intellectual precedents is still deceitful and a form of plagiarism.” (Editorial in *Nature*: [Clamp down on copycats](#), *Nature*, **438**, 2 (3 November 2005)).

⁶Where there are others who have participated in certain substantive aspects of the research project, they should be acknowledged or listed as contributors. The corresponding author should ensure that all appropriate co-authors and no inappropriate co-authors are included on the paper, and that all co-authors have seen and approved the final version of the paper and have agreed to its submission for publication.

⁷To acknowledge funding that has not been the source of financing and the money was not assigned to this purpose is unacceptable, and is used only for improving of project score, when there is lack of appropriate results.

⁸“Where plagiarism is found, the author's previous publications must be examined. The evidence shows that an act of misconduct is usually part of a pattern of behaviour rather than an isolated incident, says Richard Smith, former editor of the *British Medical Journal*.” (Editorial in *Nature*: [Clamp down on copycats](#), *Nature*, **438**, 2 (3 November 2005)).