

PUBLISHER POLICY

These are general statements pertaining to Penerbit USM's journal publication policy. Please visit the individual journal website for the detailed policy.

EDITORIAL POLICIES

The peer review and editorial processes are facilitated through an online editorial system and a set of email notifications.

Originality and Copyright Policy

Submission of a manuscript implies that it represents original material, has not been published previously (except in the form of an abstract or as part of a published lecture or academic thesis), is not under consideration for publication elsewhere, and that its publication is approved by all authors. Prior publication constitutes any form of publication other than an abstract and includes invited articles, proceedings, symposia, and book chapters. Authors must fully inform the Editor in the cover letter if the submitted manuscript contains data that have been published or submitted for publication elsewhere, supply copies of such material, and explain the differences between the previous and submitted works. If accepted, manuscript will not be published elsewhere in the same form, in English or in any other language, without the written consent of Penerbit Universiti Sains Malaysia.

Publication and Authorship

All submitted manuscripts are subject to a rigorous peer review process by at least two external Reviewers who are experts in the research field of the particular manuscript.

The possible decisions include: (1) Accept, (2) Minor revision, (3) Major revision, and (4) Reject.

If Authors are encouraged to revise and re-submit a submission, there is no guarantee that the revised submission will be accepted.

The manuscript acceptance is constrained by such legal requirements as shall then be in force regarding libel, copyright infringement and plagiarism.

Responsibility of Authors

- Authors are required to agree that their manuscript will be published in open access under the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0).
- Authors must certify that their manuscript is their original work.
- Authors must certify that the manuscript has not been previously published elsewhere.

- Authors must certify that the manuscript is not currently being considered for publication elsewhere.
- Authors should submit the manuscript in linguistically and grammatically correct language and formatted in accordance with the Journal's Guidelines for Author.
- Authors are obliged to provide retractions or corrections of mistakes.
- All Authors mentioned are expected to have significantly contributed to the research.
- Authors must notify the Editor of any conflicts of interest.
- Authors must identify all the sources used in the creation of their manuscript.
- Authors must report any errors they discover in their published manuscript to the Editor.
- Authors should acknowledge all significant funders of the research pertaining to their manuscript and list all relevant competing interests.
- The Corresponding Author should provide the declaration of any conflicts of interest on behalf of all the Authors. Conflicts of interest may be associated with employment, sources of funding, personal financial interests, membership of relevant organisations or others.

Responsibility of Reviewers

- Reviewers are not expected to provide a thorough linguistic editing or copyediting of a manuscript, but to focus on its research quality, as well as for the overall style, which should correspond to the good practices in clear and concise academic writing. If Reviewers recognise that a manuscript requires linguistic edits, they should inform both the Editor and Authors in the report.
- Reviewers are asked to check whether the manuscript is academically sound and coherent, how interesting it is and whether the quality of the writing is acceptable.
- In cases of strong disagreement between the reviews or between the Authors and Reviewers, the Editors can judge these according to their expertise or seek advice from a member of the Journal's Editorial Board.
- Reviewers are asked to be polite and constructive in their reports. Reports that may be insulting or uninformative will be rescinded.
- Reviewers are asked to start their report with a very brief summary of the reviewed manuscript. This will help the Editor and Authors see whether the Reviewer correctly understood the manuscript or whether a report might be based on misunderstanding.
- Reviewers should declare any conflicts of interest. Reviewers should not review manuscripts in which they have conflicts of interest resulting from competitive, collaborative, or other relationships or connections with any of the Authors, companies, or institutions connected to the manuscripts.

- Reviewers should keep all information regarding the manuscript confidential and treat them as privileged information.
- Reviewers should express their views clearly with supporting arguments.
- Reviewers should identify relevant published work that has not been cited by the Authors.
- Reviewers should call to the Editor's attention any substantial similarity or overlap between the manuscript under consideration and any other published paper of which they have personal knowledge.

Responsibility of Editors

- Editors carry the main responsibility for the research quality of the published papers and base their decisions solely on the manuscripts' importance, originality, clarity and relevance to journal's scope.
- Editors should guarantee the quality of the manuscripts and the integrity of the academic record.
- Editors should preserve the anonymity of Reviewers, unless the latter decide to disclose their identities.
- Editors should ensure that all research material they publish conforms to internationally accepted ethical guidelines.
- Editors should act if they suspect misconduct and make all reasonable attempts to obtain a resolution to the problem.
- Editors should not reject manuscripts based on suspicions; they should have proof of misconduct.
- Editors should not allow any conflicts of interest between Authors, Reviewers and the Editorial Board Members.

Plagiarism Policy

Any allegations of plagiarism or self-plagiarism/text-recycling made to the Journal will be investigated by the Journal's Editor, following the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) guidelines. If the allegations appear to be founded, the Corresponding Author of the manuscript will be asked to provide an explanation of the overlapping material. The Publisher, Editorial Board Members and the Author's institution may be requested to assist in the further evaluation of the manuscript and the allegations.

All the manuscripts submitted to the Journal are subject to plagiarism check using the plagiarism checker software. In the event where a high percentage of similarity and plagiarism, manuscripts may be returned to the Authors with a request that they address the issues through appropriate citation, use of quote marks to identify direct quotes, or re-writing. If the similarity is too extensive for revision, the manuscripts may be rejected.

PEER-REVIEW POLICY

All submissions will undergo a rigorous peer-review evaluation process before the final decision is made. The Editor and the editorial staff shall ensure that the manuscript submitted remains confidential while under review and ensure that the peer-review process is fair and unbiased.

The Editorial Board and the editorial staff may exercise their prerogative to reject a manuscript without peer review if that manuscript is judged to be outside the scope of the Journal, poorly written or formatted or lacking significance.

Reviewers are matched to the manuscript according to their expertise. If a manuscript is found to be of suitable quality and meets the aims and scope of the Journal, it will then be sent to at least two reviewers to reach the first decision as soon as possible. The Reviewers selected may, of course, not necessarily be from the data bank. The Journal also welcomes suggestions for Reviewers from Authors, though these recommendations may or may not be used.

After receiving a request for peer review, Reviewers must respond in a timely fashion, particularly if they cannot do the review, to avoid unnecessarily delaying the process.

In general, Reviewers are tasked to evaluate a manuscript for its originality and significance of contribution, subject relevancy, appropriate coverage of existing literature, the presentation of methodology, results and interpretation, and manuscript organisation. Reviewers are also required to provide anonymous comments to the Authors and confidential comments to the Editor.

ADVERTISING POLICY

The Journal does not endorse any product or service marked as an advertisement or promoted by a sponsor in publications. Editorial content is not compromised by commercial or financial interests, or by any specific arrangements with advertising clients or sponsors. The Editorial Board of the Journal does not accept for consideration and does not print advertising articles (both on a reimbursable and free basis). Authors of the articles cannot link to ads using keywords. The Publisher/Journal reserves the right to decline or cancel any advertisement at any time.

RESEARCH ETHICS POLICY

All research must have been carried out within an appropriate ethical framework. Articles involving human subjects should contain a statement in accordance with the human ethics committee.

The Publisher will ensure that the research material published conforms to internationally accepted ethical guidelines.

The Publisher will seek assurances from Authors that the research has been approved by an appropriate body (e.g., Research Ethics Committee, Institutional Review Board). However, the Publisher recognises that such approval does not guarantee that the research is ethical.

INFORMED CONSENT POLICY

When reporting research involving human subjects, in the Methods section of the manuscript, Authors must indicate that:

- The procedures followed were ethically approved by the responsible committee on research involving human subjects (institutional and national);
- Written informed consent was given by subjects and/or their guardians prior to the study participation. If doubt exists whether the research was conducted in accordance with internationally accepted ethical guidelines, the Authors must explain the rationale for their approach.

ENSURING THE INTEGRITY OF THE ACADEMIC RECORD

The Journal follows the guidelines of COPE (<https://publicationethics.org/guidance>). The Publisher strives to ensure the integrity of the publications. Whenever it is found that a material inaccuracy, misleading statement, or misrepresentation has been published, it will be corrected promptly. If, after proper investigation, the item is found to be fraudulent, it will be retracted. The retraction will be clearly identifiable to readers and indexing systems.

Pursuing Misconduct

- The Publisher and Editor have a duty to act if they suspect misconduct. This duty extends to both published and unpublished papers.
- The Editor should not simply reject manuscripts that raise concerns about possible misconduct. They are ethically obliged to pursue alleged cases.
- The Editor should first seek a response from those accused of misconduct. If they are not satisfied with the response, they should ask the relevant employers or some appropriate body (perhaps a regulatory body) to investigate.
- The Editor should make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a proper investigation is conducted; if this does not happen, the Editor should make all reasonable attempts to persist in obtaining a resolution to the problem. This is an onerous but important duty.

Corrections

The Journal takes every effort in publishing a final article that is error-free and asks Authors to commit to the same. It is expected that the final version of the article can be relied upon as accurate and complete. Authors are provided with a set of page proofs that must be checked carefully for content and correct layout before published.

If happened, errors in published article may be identified in the form of a corrigendum or erratum when the Editor considers it is appropriate to inform the Journal readership about a previous error and makes a correction to the error in the published article.

Retractions

Retractions are considered when there are significant errors in the article that make the conclusions invalid. Retractions are also made in cases where there is evidence of malpractice in publication such as plagiarism, duplication of publication, or unethical research. Please refer to the [COPE Retraction Guidelines](#) for details.

Editorial Expressions of Concern

The [COPE Retraction Guidelines](#) describe when Journals could use expressions of concern. For example, Editors should consider an expression of concern if:

- They receive inconclusive evidence of research or publication misconduct by the Authors.
- There is evidence that the findings are unreliable, but the Authors' institution will not investigate the case.
- They believe that an investigation into alleged misconduct related to the publication either has not been, or would not be, fair and impartial or conclusive.
- An investigation is underway, but a judgement will not be available for a considerable time.

COPE advises that [expressions of concern](#) should be linked to the article and state the reasons for the concern. If more evidence becomes available the expression of concern could be replaced by a retraction notice or an exonerating statement, depending on the outcome.

COPYRIGHT

Upon acceptance of an article, Authors will be asked to transfer all copyright ownership in and relating to the work, in all forms and media, to the Publisher. This transfer will ensure the widest possible dissemination of information. A notification will be sent to the Corresponding Author confirming receipt of the manuscript.

If excerpts from other copyrighted works are included, the Author(s) must obtain written permission from the copyright owners and credit the source(s) in the article.