

South African Journal of Science

Editorial Policies

Conflicts of Interest Policy

The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) defines conflicts of interest as “those which may not be fully apparent and may influence the judgement of authors, reviewers and editors”. A conflict of interest can be described as “those which, when revealed later, would make a reasonable reader feel misled or deceived”. Conflicts of interest can be personal, commercial, political, academic or financial. Such interests must be declared by authors, reviewers and editors. In case of uncertainty, rather disclose.

Authors' conflicts of interest

Authors are asked during the submission process to declare any potential conflicts of interest for the Editor-in-Chief's consideration. Examples include employment, funding sources, owning of shares and payment for lectures or travel.

Should a potential conflict of interest exist, it must be declared and will be included in the published version if the article is accepted for publication. A potential conflict of interest does not necessarily mean the submission will be rejected.

Reviewers' conflicts of interest

Reviewers are asked to declare any potential conflicts of interest in the manuscript review form. Examples include submissions by family members or students and discerning the identity of the authors. A conflict of interest does not necessarily invalidate the review report.

Editors' conflicts of interest

The same policy for authors' conflicts of interest applies when editors are the authors of editorials, non-reviewed front section articles and manuscripts for peer review. In addition, with regard to the submission of manuscripts for peer review, the manuscript management system automatically precludes an editor from accessing the manuscript information of manuscripts for which they have been identified as an author.

With regard to assigning reviewers and making a decision on a manuscript, an editor will withdraw as editor for that manuscript if there is a conflict of interest, such as in the case of a submission by a family member or student.

Editorial Advisory Board members

Members of the Editorial Advisory Board are permitted to publish in the Journal. Submissions received from Board members are treated in the same manner as other submissions with respect to blind reviewing and confidentiality.

Confidentiality and media embargoes

Confidentiality

Authors, reviewers and editorial staff should treat all submitted manuscripts and correspondence with the Editorial Office as confidential.

Media embargoes

All manuscripts are considered to be under a media embargo from the time of submission until online publication of the article or rejection of the manuscript. Authors may discuss their articles or findings with the media before publication but must adhere to the media embargo. It is advisable to inform the Editorial Office of any pending media reports so that they can provide assistance, especially with regard to the publication date. The key findings of an article should not be released in the press until online publication of the article, and all media reports emanating from a published article should include the full source or a link to the article online.

The Journal issues media releases summarising the content of the forthcoming issue the week before publication. Full-text articles are provided to the media upon request. The names and contact details of the corresponding authors are provided to the media; authors should inform the Editorial Office in advance if an author other than the corresponding author should be contacted for media-related enquiries. The contents of the media release and the articles are embargoed until the date and time of publication by the Journal.

Peer-review Process

Research Letters, Research Articles and Review Articles are subject to peer review. Although the Editor-in-Chief may solicit an external review at his discretion, items published in the front section of the journal are not subject to peer review.

- Manuscripts are submitted online. All manuscripts undergo an initial assessment by the **Editorial Office** to ensure that they comply with the guidelines.
- Manuscripts are then assigned to the **Editor-in-Chief** to decide whether or not they fall within the remit of the journal. The Editor-in-Chief may also refer to Associate Editors for their assessment. All manuscripts should be written in a style suitable for non-specialists.
- All manuscripts deemed potentially suitable then undergo a **similarity detection process** using iThenticate and CrossRef Similarity Check. When a similarity report is indicative of potential plagiarism, the report and manuscript will be examined by the Editor-in-Chief to determine whether or not material has been plagiarised and, if so, the extent of the plagiarism. In the case of suspected plagiarism, the [Plagiarism Policy](#) will come into effect. When the similarity report indicates no plagiarism detected, the Editor-in-Chief assigns the manuscript to the Associate

Editor responsible for the discipline in which the manuscript falls.

- **Associate Editors** can at this stage reject manuscripts that are too specialised or refer manuscripts back to the authors for language editing or re-writing. If a manuscript is deemed suitable for review, the Associate Editor appoints and invites Reviewers online. It is at the discretion of the Associate Editor whether or not Reviewers recommended by Authors are selected; the selection will, however, include Reviewers who are not on the recommended list.
- **Reviewers** are given 30 days to submit a report. At least two reports are required to make a decision. The review process is double blind, that is, both authors' and reviewers' identities are concealed.
- Once at least two reports have been received, the **Associate Editor** makes a decision on the manuscript. If Reviewers' recommendations diverge, the Associate Editor can arbitrate the recommendation or refer the manuscript to a third Reviewer.
- **Authors** are given 30 days to revise a manuscript needing minor revisions and 60 days to revise a manuscript needing major revisions. **Revised manuscripts** are submitted online. You will need to log in and select the article in your submissions page. The resubmission is done in the review stage, there is no need to start a new submission. At the review stage you will need to do two things to resubmit once you have revised your document: Upload the new file in the revisions section. To upload a new file click on 'Upload file.' A new window will open allowing you to upload your file(s). Select the appropriate option from the dropdown menu to indicate that you are not submitting a revision of an existing file.
- **Associate Editors** then make a decision on minor revisions and refer major revisions to one or more Reviewers (the original Reviewer/s when possible) for their recommendations before making a decision.
- **Authors** can appeal a decision in writing to the Editor-in-Chief.
- Accepted manuscripts are received by the **Editorial Office** where they enter the production queue to undergo copy-editing, layout and proofing. Research Letters are given priority and are scheduled for publication in the forthcoming open issue. Research Articles and Review Articles are produced for publication in date order of acceptance, but can, at the discretion of the editors and for compelling reasons, be assigned to a particular issue. See [Production Process](#)

Appeals and complaints

Appeals

Authors have the right to appeal a decision on their submission if they believe the decision was unfair.

To appeal a decision, please submit a letter detailing the nature of the appeal and indicating why the decision is viewed as unfair.

The letter should be submitted to the [Editor-in-Chief](#) within 10 days of the decision.

The Editor-in-Chief will review all relevant documentation relating to the submission, may consult the relevant Associate Editor or Reviewers and may appoint a new Reviewer to evaluate the submission before making a decision.

The decision of the Editor-in-Chief will be final.

Complaints

For complaints relating to the policies and procedures of the Journal or the conduct of editorial staff, please email the details of the complaint to the [Managing Editor](#) or [Editor-in-Chief](#).

All complaints directed through the correct channels will be acknowledged and the resolution will be conveyed to the complainant. Complaints will be resolved as quickly as possible.

Production Process and Publication

- Accepted manuscripts are received by the Editorial Office where they enter the production queue to undergo copy-editing, layout and proofing. Research Letters are given priority and are scheduled for publication in the forthcoming open issue. Research Articles and Review Articles are produced for publication in date order of acceptance, but can, at the discretion of the editors and for compelling reasons, be assigned to a particular issue.
- Manuscripts and supplementary material undergo **copy-editing** to ensure, inter alia, that the language is clear and suitable for a non-specialist reader, that the text conforms to the house style, that the figures are presentable and that the referencing is correct. Authors are given the opportunity to approve the copy-editing changes made and to address any queries at this stage; however, major text changes are not permitted at this stage.
- Edited manuscripts then undergo **layout**. Supplementary material does not undergo layout.
- **Proofs** are checked first by the Editorial Office and then sent to Authors for correction. Only minor corrections such as typos and corrections to layout can be

made at this stage. Figures should be carefully checked as they may have been redrawn or relabelled. Any major changes at proof stage will incur a cost and result in a delay. Final corrected proofs are not returned to authors unless requested. No changes can be made after the proof has been approved for publication. Any *essential* corrections can be published in a subsequent issue. See [Corrections to published articles](#).

- Any delays during the Production Process as a result of missing deadlines or failure to address queries will delay the publication of the article. Major delays will necessitate the manuscript being re-scheduled to avoid delaying the publication of the issue.
- Authors will be informed as soon as their articles are **published online**. Articles are openly accessible from the website and may be distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution Licence](#) and so reprints are not provided. Authors are welcome to deposit the final published version in institutional repositories or personal archives.
- An electronic **Table of Contents**, which includes summaries of selected articles and links to the articles and full digital issue, is sent once the issue has been published.

Corrections Policy

Corrections to articles published in the *South African Journal of Science*

A published article forms part of the published record and will not be altered or removed (see the [Article Retraction Policy](#)).

A correction will be published if a published article contains a significant error that affects, for example, the accuracy of the article. Minor errors, such as typographical errors, will generally not be corrected. Corrections are published as either Errata or Corrigenda. Both Errata and Corrigenda are published at the discretion of the Editor-in-Chief. An Erratum or Corrigendum will be linked to the original article online. Any updates to articles will be indicated on the article landing page via the CrossMark widget.

Errata

An Erratum is the correction of an error introduced by the Journal during editing or production. The Author will be given an opportunity to approve an Erratum before publication.

Corrigenda

A Corrigendum is the correction of an error made by the author/s.

Plagiarism Policy

A definition of plagiarism is included in the [Guidelines to Authors](#) and authors are referred to this policy for the consequences of an offence of this nature. All cases of suspected or alleged plagiarism will be considered seriously and on an individual basis.

The *South African Journal of Science* is a member of [CrossRef Similarity Check](#).

Manuscripts submitted for consideration for publication will be scanned for potential plagiarism before undergoing peer review to verify their originality. Similarity reports will be reviewed on an individual basis.

Submitted manuscripts

- Suspected plagiarism in a submitted manuscript can be brought to the attention of the Editor-in-Chief either through the similarity report of the plagiarism detection scan or through a Reviewer of the manuscript.
- When a similarity report is indicative of a potential offence, the report and manuscript will be examined by the Editor-in-Chief to determine whether or not material has been plagiarised and, if so, the extent of the plagiarism.
- When suspected plagiarism is reported to the Editorial Office, the report will be acknowledged and all relevant documentation/evidence will be retrieved and examined by the Editor-in-Chief, in conjunction with the relevant Associate Editor, to determine whether or not material has been plagiarised and, if so, the extent of the plagiarism.
- If material has been plagiarised, the corresponding author will be informed by the Editor-in-Chief that the manuscript is rejected on these grounds.
- If the extent of the plagiarism is minor and the Editor-in-Chief determines that the author/s did not intend to plagiarise, no further action will be taken. If the plagiarism is extensive or admitted to, the author/s' institution/s and funding bodies will be informed of the offence (the submitted and plagiarised material will be sent to them) by the Editor-in-Chief. Authors will be notified by the Editor-in-Chief that their institution/s will be informed and that they will be banned from submitting to the *South African Journal of Science* in the future.
- The reader or Reviewer reporting the suspected plagiarism will be informed of the outcome of the investigation.

Published articles

- When suspected plagiarism is reported to the Editorial Office, the report will be acknowledged and all relevant documentation/evidence will be retrieved and examined by the Editor-in-Chief, in conjunction with the relevant Associate Editor, to determine whether or not material has been plagiarised and, if so, the extent of the plagiarism.
- If material has been plagiarised, the corresponding author will be informed by the Editor-in-Chief and questioned.

- If the extent of the plagiarism is minor and the Editor-in-Chief determines that the author/s did not intend to plagiarise, a statement indicating the plagiarised material and appropriate reference will be published online and the article online will be linked to the statement and vice versa.
- If the plagiarism is extensive or admitted to, the article will be retracted (see [Article Retraction Policy](#)) and a statement published acknowledging the original author/s.
- The author/s' institution/s and funding bodies will be informed of the offence (submitted and plagiarised material will be sent to them) by the Editor-in-Chief. Authors will be notified by the Editor-in-Chief that the relevant institution/s will be informed and that they will be banned from submitting to the *South African Journal of Science* in the future.
- The original author/s and publisher will also be informed of the offence.
- The reader or Reviewer reporting the suspected plagiarism will be informed of the outcome of the investigation.

Article Retraction Policy

Published articles should remain extant and intact. However, under exceptional circumstances involving plagiarism (see [Plagiarism Policy](#)) and redundant publication or data error, articles may need to be retracted, removed or replaced in order to protect the integrity of the literature. The need for a retraction will be determined by the Editor-in-Chief, but may be initiated, in cases of flawed data or conclusions, at the request of the author/s.

To retract an article, a notice of retraction will be published in the next issue. This notice of retraction will:

- include the title and authors of the article, the reason for the retraction and who is retracting the article
- be linked to the article online
- be indicated on the article landing page via the CrossMark widget.

Preprints, digital archiving and preservation policy

Preprints

Authors may post their manuscripts on a recognised preprint server prior to submission. Authors are required to disclose preprints in their cover letter at submission.

Self-archiving

Authors may not deposit the final version of their manuscript into a subject or institutional repository until the manuscript has been published. Authors may deposit the published version in an institutional repository. Authors may deposit the submitted or accepted

version in subject repositories or on personal web pages before publication, but these versions must be replaced by the published version after publication.

Digital archiving and preservation

The digital content of the Journal is extremely valuable and measures are in place to ensure both its current accessibility and long-term preservation.

On the website

All digital Journal content is stored on a secure server which is backed up frequently. In the event of a problem, the back-up will be restored within 24 hours.

On other sites

South African Journal of Science articles in digital format are archived on [SciELO SA](#) and in the [Sabinet Open Access Collection](#). All content within SciELO SA is digitally preserved through [Portico](#). Portico is a leading digital preservation service worldwide. The content is preserved as an archival version and is not publically accessible via Portico, but is provided when required under specific conditions, such as discontinuation of the collection or catastrophic failure of the website.