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Path **2** Integrity

Y7 — Researchers withdraw from involvement when conflicts of interest arise! (cf. ECoC 2017, p. 7)

Description and background

This learning unit:

- *Introduces researchers to review and editing*

- *Enables an understanding of conflict of interest in review and editing*

- *Challenges researchers to learn how to properly manage conflicts of interest*

- *Emphasises the importance of transparency in research*

An advocate for research integrity

Albrecht Beutelspacher

Keywords

Reviewing; editing; evaluation; conflict of interest; peer review; publishing; transparency

This unit has been prepared for interdisciplinary learning groups.

Learning objectives

1 *Explain how conflicts of interest can bias peer review and editing*

2 *Practice understanding and being understood in a dialogue*

3 *Evaluate different mechanisms to manage conflicts of interest*

4 *Listen actively and suggest how conflicts of interest may be settled*

5 *Learn to respect and accept the aims and wishes of others*

Learning stages

1 *Become familiar with the topic*

2 *Dive into an interesting story*

3 *Discuss different forms of peer review*

4 *Come to an agreement*

5 *Evaluate options to resolve conflicts of interest*

"**Our goal should not be to simply publish as many papers as possible. We need experts in the field, who take a close look at the publication and evaluate it.**"
(Albrecht Beutelspacher, an advocate for research integrity)

Y7 Path 2 Integrity

1 Become familiar with the topic:

Homework (before the unit starts) or reading session

Read the paragraph on reviewing, evaluating and editing in "The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity" and the "COPE Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers".

Discuss the meanings of any unknown words.

In your own words, what are the responsibilities of peer reviewers?

> **European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity:**

> **COPE Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers:**

2 Dive into an interesting story:

Read or recall Hannah's protocol and briefly flesh out what happened in the meeting. Now imagine the following:

Some weeks after the meeting Hannah meets a colleague who complains that an article he had submitted the year before to a leading journal in his field was rejected, whereas a similar article reaching the same conclusions was published in the latest issue. The first author of the published article states in the CV on her website that she is a reviewer for the journal.

Although the review process was anonymous, he suspects that the first author of the published paper reviewed his manuscript and recommended its rejection, not on grounds of quality, but because she wanted to publish a similar paper that otherwise would have lacked originality. Hannah's colleague is enraged and feels betrayed by the peer review system.

3 Discuss different forms of peer review:

Form groups of three to four students from different disciplines. Discuss in the group what forms of peer review you are familiar with and which forms of peer review are most common in your discipline.

How do you define, for example, a review process that is known as
- single-blind,
- double-blind,
- collaborative,
- open or
- post-publication?

> **Conflicts of interest can have different causes:**
>
> Financial conflicts of interest
> - Direct payment from sponsor of study
> - Holding stocks in sponsoring company
> - Receiving financial remuneration for services
> - Other financial relationships with the producer of the investigational product
>
> Non-financial conflicts of interest
> - Personal conflicts of interest
> - Intellectual conflicts of interest
> - Medical conflicts of interest
>
> (ENERI Classroom, Overlapping issues: Conflict of interest)

4 Come to an agreement:

Imagine Hannah's colleague approaches you and asks whether you think he should raise his suspicion with the journal editors. What would you recommend him to do?

Create a mind map together as a group and share your recommendations. Draw a creative landscape with keywords, thoughts, sketches or symbols on a piece of paper.

Discuss your ideas in the group and agree on the three most important recommendations.

Write them on a piece of paper and pass them on to another group so that they can supplement your recommendations with their own.
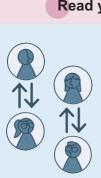
Put one of the collections on the wall and meet in front of it as a class.

Read your recommendations aloud!

5 Evaluate options to resolve conflicts of interest:

Discuss the following questions together as a class, and copy bullet point answers into your notebook:

- What consequences do your recommendations have?
- What safeguards against conflicts of interest are you aware of? Do you consider them sufficient and effective? If yes, why? If no, why not?
- Who should be responsible for managing, avoiding and resolving conflicts of interest in the review process?