

Impartiality and independence

In science, there are ample opportunities for potential conflicts of interests to arise. These can be personal, academic, political, commercial or financial – but have in common that they can corrupt science. Staff members are expected to act with integrity in every aspect of their work as researcher, reviewer, editor, and teacher¹. They should be impartial and independent from commissioning or interested parties, from ideological or political pressure groups, and from economic or financial interests. Conflicts of interest should be revealed in scientific papers and on one's personal UvA website under Ancillary Activities. Below we advise best practice for several main conflicts of interest.

1. Predatory Journals and meetings

Scientists, in particular early-career scientists, experience tremendous pressure to publish their work and present it at scientific conferences. Predatory journals and meetings exploit this need for their own profit, while weakening the scientific enterprise by accepting papers/talks without (proper) peer review or editorial control.

Predatory journals exploit open-access publishing for their own profit by publishing articles without (adequate) peer review for high fees. These journals and publishers mislead researchers, whose scientific reputation can be seriously damaged when publishing in these journals. Researchers should check if a given journal is considered predatory and are expected not to publish in, review for, or serve on editorial boards of predatory journals. For a comprehensive list of predatory journals, see: <https://predatoryjournals.com/journals/>

Predatory meetings have the appearance of legitimate scientific conferences, but lack proper editorial control over presentations. Scientists are vetted, most often via (flattering) emails, to give talks or be a keynote speaker, often without any background checks. Upon acceptance, scientists are required to pay high registration fees. Researchers are advised to not support this exploitative business model and not present at predatory meetings. At this time, no list of predatory meetings exists, but some active publishers in the field include OMICS, Bentham, and imedPub.

¹ VSNU De Nederlandse Gedragscode Wetenschapsbeoefening

2. Reviewing and editorial issues

In their roles as editor and reviewer, researchers should adhere to the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity: “an editor or reviewer with a potential conflict of interest should withdraw from involvement with a given publication or if the conflict of interest is minor, disclose the conflict to the readership. Reviewers should provide accurate, objective, substantiated and justifiable assessments, and maintain confidentiality. Reviewers should not, without permission, make use of material or ideas in submitted manuscripts. Reviewers who consider applications for funding, or applications by individuals for appointment or promotion or other recognition, should observe the same guidelines.”

3. Open communication and transparency

Researchers should strive to be transparent and open in their communication about their research, to other scientists, in their publications, and to the general public. This openness presupposes a proper storage and availability of data, code and materials, and accessibility for interested colleagues, and facilitates replication, critique, extension, and application, i.e., is critical for scientific progress. Researchers are also advised to preregister their study (if no cross-validation approach is taken).

4. Working with third parties

In collaborations with third parties, conflicts of interests should be avoided. Collaborations with third parties should be open, controllable, independent, and serve no other interest (commercial, political, etc.) than science.

5. Valorisation

Researchers should follow the Valorisation policy of the University of Amsterdam, and their 'Regulations Governing Valorisation 2014' and 'Regulations Governing Ancillary Activities 2014'. Documentation can be found here:

<http://www.uva.nl/en/about-the-uva/uva-profile/policy-papers/valorisation-at-the-university-of-amsterdam/valorisation-at-the-university-of-amsterdam.html>

See also:

<https://www.gezondheidsraad.nl/sites/default/files/codedigital2012EN.pdf>

Innovation Exchange Amsterdam (IXA) can provide valorisation support for UvA researchers (<http://www.ixa.nl/en/for-scientists.html>)