

# COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS POLICY

## *Pollution and Diseases — International Scientific Journal*

<https://pollution-diseases.org>

*Pollution and Diseases* is committed to maintaining transparent, ethical, and fair editorial processes. Authors, reviewers, readers, and members of the scientific community have the right to raise concerns regarding editorial decisions, journal processes, or potential ethical issues. This policy outlines how the journal handles complaints and appeals in alignment with **COPE Core Practices**.

### 1. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to:

- appeals of editorial decisions;
- complaints about peer review;
- allegations of ethical misconduct;
- concerns about authorship or conflicts of interest;
- concerns about publication ethics, research ethics, or editorial practices;
- complaints from readers regarding published content.

The journal accepts complaints from any individual or institution.

### 2. General Principles

All complaints are handled according to the following principles:

- **fairness** — unbiased and evidence-based evaluation;
- **confidentiality** — personal data and investigation details remain private;
- **transparency** — outcomes are documented and communicated;
- **timeliness** — complaints are acknowledged within 5 working days;
- **independence** — appeals are reviewed by editors not involved in the original decision;
- **COPE compliance** — investigations follow COPE guidelines.

### 3. Submitting a Complaint

Complaints should be submitted via email to the Editorial Office:

**Email:** euukraine@icloud.com

Complaints must include:

- the complainant's name and contact information;
- manuscript title, DOI (if applicable), or submission ID;
- clear description of the issue;
- supporting evidence (emails, documents, reports, etc.).

Anonymous complaints will be considered if enough evidence is provided.

### 4. Types of Complaints

#### 4.1. Editorial Process Complaints

Related to:

- delays,
- communication issues,
- technical problems,
- inconsistent application of policies.

#### 4.2. Peer Review Complaints

Related to:

- suspected bias in a review,
- inappropriate reviewer behavior,
- suspected review manipulation,
- inadequate or unprofessional review reports.

#### 4.3. Ethical Misconduct Allegations

Related to:

- plagiarism,
- data manipulation,
- authorship fraud,
- conflicts of interest,
- ethical violations in research involving humans, animals, or fieldwork.

#### **4.4. Concerns About Published Articles**

Readers may raise concerns about:

- scientific accuracy,
- integrity of data or methods,
- potential ethical violations.

### **5. Appeals of Editorial Decisions**

Authors may appeal a decision if they believe:

- the review contained errors;
- reviewers misunderstood the manuscript;
- a conflict of interest influenced the evaluation;
- new evidence clarifies issues raised during review.

Appeals must include:

- detailed point-by-point reasoning;
- evidence supporting the appeal;
- a revised manuscript (if relevant).

**Note:** Appeals must challenge the *process or evidence*, not simply disagree with an editorial judgment.

### **6. Appeal Handling Process**

#### **1. Acknowledgment**

The journal acknowledges receipt within 5 working days.

#### **2. Initial Assessment**

The Editor-in-Chief reviews the appeal to confirm its validity.

#### **3. Independent Review**

An editor not previously involved examines:

- the manuscript,
- reviewer comments,
- the appeal letter.

#### **4. External Review (optional)**

If needed, a new independent reviewer may be appointed.

#### **5. Decision**

Possible outcomes:

- uphold the original decision;
- request revisions and continue the review;
- overturn the decision and accept the manuscript;
- assign new reviewers.

Decisions are final.

### **7. Handling Complaints Concerning Ethical Misconduct**

All allegations of misconduct follow **COPE flowcharts**, including:

- plagiarism,
- fabricated or falsified data,
- authorship manipulation,
- unethical human or animal research,
- duplicate publication,
- peer review fraud.

Steps include:

#### **1. Preliminary assessment by editors**

2. **Contacting authors for explanation**
3. **Seeking additional evidence**
4. **Consultation with editorial board or external experts**
5. **Contacting institutions when necessary**

Possible outcomes:

- no action (if concern not supported),
- correction notice,
- expression of concern,
- retraction,
- reporting to institutions or funders.

## **8. Complaints About Reviewers**

If a reviewer:

- acted unprofessionally,
- demonstrated bias,
- requested inappropriate citations,
- violated confidentiality,
- engaged in misconduct,

the editor will:

- remove the reviewer from the journal's database,
- disregard the problematic review,
- appoint new reviewers,
- report serious cases to COPE or the reviewer's institution.

## **9. Complaints About Editors**

If a complaint involves an editor:

- the Editor-in-Chief (or a delegated senior editor) conducts the investigation;
- if the complaint concerns the Editor-in-Chief, the issue is reviewed by two independent editorial board members.

Outcomes may include:

- clarification of procedures,
- apology for errors,
- correction of process failures,
- removal of editor from handling future submissions,
- replacement on the editorial board (for severe cases).

## **10. Resolution and Communication**

After investigation:

- complainants are informed of the outcome in writing;
- decisions are final;
- outcomes are documented for editorial records;
- confidentiality is maintained throughout.

If a complaint results in corrections, retractions, or updated policies, the journal will:

- publish a formal notice,
- update metadata and indexing,
- inform relevant institutions where appropriate.

## **11. Protection Against Retaliation**

The journal does **not** tolerate retaliation against individuals who raise complaints or ethical concerns in good faith.

All complaints are handled confidentially and with discretion.

## **12. Timeframes**

The journal aims to resolve:

- general complaints: within 2–4 weeks,
- ethical investigations: within 4–8 weeks,
- complex cases: timelines may be extended but complainants will be informed.

### **13. Record Keeping**

All complaints and appeals are documented and stored securely.

Records include:

- description of issue,
- investigation steps,
- evidence submitted,
- final decision,
- any corrective actions taken.

### **Conclusion**

The *Pollution and Diseases* Complaints & Appeals Policy ensures fairness, transparency, and accountability in all editorial processes. By following COPE standards, the journal provides a clear framework for addressing concerns and maintaining trust in its scientific communication.