

RESPONSIBLE AI IN ACADEMIC PUBLISHING

A practical guide for authors

01 Protect the record Human accountability remains attached to every scholarly claim.	02 Protect the process Confidential manuscripts and data stay within approved environments.	03 Make use visible Material AI assistance is disclosed in specific, reproducible terms.
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Prepared by Alina Avram

A practical framework for responsible AI use

AI creates value when it improves speed, clarity and discovery while people retain intellectual ownership, verification duties and final judgment.

The decisive issue is the role assigned to AI, rather than the mere presence of an AI tool. Assistance can be proportionate. Authorship, peer judgment and editorial accountability remain human functions.

Four controls define responsible practice

CONTROL	PRACTICAL STANDARD	EVIDENCE AT THE GATE
Human agency	A named person owns each claim, interpretation, review recommendation and editorial decision.	Author approval, reviewer rationale and editor sign-off.
Transparency	Material use is disclosed with the tool, version, purpose, location and validation steps.	Submission declaration and published statement.
Verification	Outputs are checked against original data, primary sources and disciplinary methods.	Source log, analysis record and retained prompts where relevant.
Data stewardship	Protected content enters only approved systems with suitable retention and training terms.	Tool assessment, access controls and documented consent.

Why this matters in practice

- Generative outputs can reproduce bias, invent references, misstate real sources and vary across repeated prompts. Human verification is therefore part of research quality, rather than a final cosmetic check (Avram, 2026; European Commission, 2026; UNESCO, 2023).
- AI-supported editorial systems can improve matching, language checks, similarity review and workflow progression. Final acceptance, rejection and integrity decisions require direct editorial involvement (COPE Council, 2021).
- Research data, personal information, unpublished findings and intellectual property require controlled handling. This links publication ethics with research security and institutional data governance (UEFISCDI, 2025; POLITEHNICA Bucharest, 2025).

Decision rule. Apply the strongest control where AI touches confidential input, scientific evidence, substantive interpretation or a decision affecting an author.

How authors can use AI responsibly

Authors may use AI to support selected tasks, while every scholarly contribution, factual claim and submitted element remains under their direct responsibility.

ACCEPTABLE WITH HUMAN REVIEW	OUTSIDE ACCEPTABLE PRACTICE
• Brainstorming research angles and organising an author-developed argument. • Language improvement, readability support, grammar and spelling checks. • Literature discovery or preliminary synthesis followed by direct reading and source verification. • Translation support followed by expert review of meaning and terminology. • Explanatory diagrams or conceptual illustrations when journal policy permits them and the figure legend states the AI role. • Reproducible visualisation from authentic data, with documented methods and validation.	• Listing an AI system as author or co-author. • Submitting generated sections without genuine intellectual contribution and full author review. • Fabricating, altering or filling gaps in data, results, quotations or references. • Creating or altering primary research images, including microscopy, histology, clinical images and western blots. • Uploading personal, confidential, proprietary or unpublished material to public tools without a valid protection basis. • Treating an AI answer as evidence or citing the tool in place of the underlying scholarly source.

Author submission checklist

- 01 Confirm the journal policy before using a tool.
- 02 Record the tool name, version, access tier, purpose and affected passages or visuals.
- 03 Verify every reference against the original publication and every factual claim against a reliable source.
- 04 Reproduce calculations and visualisations from the authentic dataset and retain the method.
- 05 Review copyright, privacy, retention and model-training terms before entering content.
- 06 Add a precise declaration and accept full responsibility for the final manuscript.

How reviewers and editors should work with AI

Peer review depends on protected access to unpublished work. AI support therefore begins with an approved environment and ends before scholarly judgment or final editorial authority is delegated.

Reviewer protocol

AREA	PERMITTED PRACTICE	RESTRICTED PRACTICE
Review content	Background search and language polishing within a private, approved tool.	AI-generated scholarly assessment, invented criticisms or generic comments detached from the manuscript.
Confidentiality	Use environments that retain no manuscript content and train no model on inputs.	Uploading a manuscript, excerpt, figure or supplementary file into an external public service.
Detection	Treat detector scores as weak signals and examine the text and evidence directly.	Using a percentage threshold as proof, or sending third-party detector claims directly to the author.

Editor protocol

- Appropriate support includes format checks, duplicate detection, scope triage, background searching, reviewer discovery, language refinement for decision letters and post-acceptance production activities within approved systems (Avram, 2026; COPE Council, 2021).
- Acceptance, rejection, expressions of concern, retractions and institutional referrals remain directly supervised and owned by an editor. The publisher remains accountable for editorial decisions supported by AI (COPE Council, 2021).
- Authors receive transparent information about automated steps and meaningful routes to challenge an AI-supported action through the journal’s established appeal process (COPE Council, 2021).
- Editorial teams test systems for bias, explainability, performance and disparate effects across language, nationality, gender, institution, career stage and location before operational use (European Union, 2024).

OPERATIONAL WARNING A reviewer who uploads a manuscript into a detector may expose confidential material and author intellectual property. The editor should assess the concern independently and manage communication as the journal’s own evaluation.

Practical test. If the task requires access to confidential manuscript content or produces a recommendation with material consequences, the journal needs an approved tool, recorded human review and a named accountable editor.

How to disclose AI use clearly

A useful declaration allows editors and readers to understand the exact contribution of AI. A generic reference to “editing support” provides limited assurance.

Minimum disclosure fields

TOOL	VERSION	ACCESS	LOCATION	PURPOSE	VALIDATION
Name and model	Release or date	Enterprise or free	Sections or visuals	Task performed	Human checks

Ready-to-adapt manuscript statements

LANGUAGE EDITING

During preparation of this manuscript, the authors used [tool and version] to improve grammar, sentence clarity and readability in Sections [X-Y]. The authors reviewed every change against the original meaning and take full responsibility for the final text.

TRANSLATION

The authors used [tool and version] to prepare an initial English translation of [specified material]. A subject specialist reviewed the translation for conceptual accuracy, terminology and consistency with the source text. The authors take full responsibility for the published wording.

IDEA ORGANISATION

The authors used [tool and version] to explore alternative structures for the Introduction and Discussion. The research questions, argument, interpretation and final wording were developed and approved by the authors. All references were checked against the original publications.

DATA SUPPORT

The authors used [tool and version] to assist with code explanation and debugging for [analysis]. The authors executed and validated the final code, reproduced all outputs from the original dataset and reviewed the results independently.

VISUAL SUPPORT

Figure [X] was created with assistance from [tool and version] to illustrate [purpose]. It is a conceptual illustration and contains no generated or altered primary research data. The authors reviewed the figure for accuracy and retain responsibility for its content.

Putting the policy into practice

The most effective policy is short enough to be used at every submission and specific enough to guide difficult cases consistently.

Five actions for the editorial office

1	Publish one role-based policy	Define acceptable support, restricted uses, disclosure thresholds, image rules, confidentiality and human accountability.
2	Add two confirmations	Authors disclose use at submission. Reviewers confirm that manuscript content entered no unapproved external tool.
3	Create an escalation route	Refer suspected fabrication, compromised confidentiality or undisclosed substantive generation to a trained editor for evidence-based review.
4	Approve tools by risk	Assess retention, reuse, training, access, copyright, security, explainability and bias before adoption.
5	Review every six months	Update examples, forms and training as technology, regulation and publisher standards evolve.

Reference list

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