## 1. Why is an editorial policy important?

An editorial policy is a document framed by a journal that conveys all the important information about the journal to authors and others interested in the journal.

## 2. What does it reflect?

On reading the editorial policy of a journal, a reader can make a judgment about the following aspects of the journal.

- Mission
- Quality
- Style
- Editorial process

## 3. What are the components of an editorial policy?

An editorial policy should communicate the following aspects about the journal.

### a. Basic Information
- Mission
- Date of establishment
- Ownership
- ISSN number
- Publication cycle
- Target audience
- Publication format (electronic or paper)
- Editorial board members
- Correspondence details

This information will be especially helpful to those who are new to the journal and are possibly submitting a paper to the journal for the first time.

### b. Journal's research focus, format, and style (could be displayed as *Information for Authors*)
- Research focus
- Types of articles: Review Articles, Case Reports, Letters, News, etc.
- Average length of articles
- Selection of right journal and article type
- Manuscript format (paper size, font, etc.)
- House style (use of abbreviations, symbols, citation style, etc.)
- Quality of language (grammar, tone, jargon, etc.)
- Number and format of illustrations, photographs, graphs, tables, and charts
- Special instructions: ethics policy, submission of supplementary data, multiple submissions, conflict of interest, copyright and reprints, etc.

It is extremely helpful to clarify expectations in a clear and direct manner. Comprehensive details will increase the efficiency of the submission and acceptance/rejection process. For example, *Journal of Biological Chemistry*, among the top 10 journals in 2004, provides in its editorial policy a list of ~14 types of studies that will be rejected without review (e.g., manuscripts describing just the purification and/or characterization of an enzyme or protein if the same enzyme or protein has been described from another tissue or organism) because they don't satisfy the criteria for publication in the journal.

When defining a house style, refer to eminent journals in your field and adopt a uniformly accepted style. You could also mention the name of a suitable style guide in your field that authors can refer to. For example, the *Council of Science Editors* (life sciences) and the *American Medical Association* (medicine) have style guides for their respective subjects. We have included some references at the end that will help you learn more about style.

editage™

### c. Editorial Process
- Submission and resubmission process
- Peer review process
- Editorial decisions
- Guidelines on conduct, ethics, etc.
- Additional fee or charges for publication, reprints, images, etc.
- Possibly, a section called "Why publish with us"

Transparency about processes and policies helps to minimize a lot of inquiry-related communication. This section can also be used to clarify the journal's stand on conduct, ethics, etc. For example, the *British Medical Journal* has a section on forms and statements (e.g., Patient Consent Form and Conflict of Interest Statement) that need to be submitted along with a manuscript. (See Suggested Reading.)

*Nature* guidelines detail each process with a brief explanation, its importance, responsibility or tasks, and the outcome. They also have downloadable documents on a few processes and guidelines (e.g., formatting) and hyperlinks to relevant queries (e.g., office and e-mail addresses). Moreover, to aid non-native authors, the editorial guidelines have been made available in Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Italian, Korean, and Spanish.

## 4. Checklist
While preparing, revising, or evaluating an editorial policy, ask yourself the following questions.
- How does this proposed editorial policy differ from that of the established journals in this field?
- If it is radically different, is the policy realistic both in terms of the ease with which it can be achieved and in terms of its acceptability to a broad range of authors and readers?
- Does it address all the concerns an author may have?
- Does it help in making the submission process more efficient for the author, editor, and reviewer?
- **Specifically on language quality:** How much copyediting is necessary in this field? (Authors from some disciplines write well, others don't; depending on their English writing skills, some require a little or considerable assistance to improve their writing, others do not.)

**Suggested Reading**
Detailed editorial policy: http://www.nature.com/nature/authors/get_published/index.html
(Japanese version)        http://www.natureasia.com/japan/information/authors/

House style:        http://bmj.bmjjournals.com/advice/stylebook/basics.shtml
Ethics:        http://bmj.bmjjournals.com/advice/editorial_policies.shtml

ed!tage