

# Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

## Contents

<b>1. Purpose.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Scope.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3. Principles.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>4. Collection of Personal Information.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>5. Use of Collected Information.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>6. Data Confidentiality in Peer Review.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>7. Editorial Confidentiality.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>8. Data Retention and Storage.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>9. Website and Cookies.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>10. Data Sharing and Third Parties.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>11. Data Protection and Security.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>12. Author and Reviewer Rights.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>13. Handling Breaches of Privacy.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>14. Confidentiality in Research Misconduct Cases.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>15. Compliance with International Standards.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>16. Policy Review and Updates.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>17. Contact Information.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>18. Summary Statement.....</b>	<b>5</b>

## 1. Purpose

The Privacy and Confidentiality Policy outlines how the journal collects, uses, stores, and protects personal and professional information of authors, reviewers, editors, and readers. The policy ensures that all interactions with the journal are handled with integrity, transparency, and strict confidentiality in accordance with recognized international ethical and data protection standards. The journal is committed to safeguarding the privacy, intellectual property, and personal data of all individuals involved in the publication process.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Authors submitting manuscripts to the journal.
- Reviewers participating in the peer review process.

- Editorial board members and staff managing submissions.
- Readers accessing the journal's website or digital content.
- Visitors providing personal information through online forms or communication channels.

It covers all personal, institutional, and manuscript-related data handled by the journal, whether collected electronically or manually.

### 3. Principles

The journal's privacy and confidentiality practices are based on the following guiding principles:

1. **Confidentiality:** All submitted materials and communications are treated as strictly confidential.
2. **Transparency:** The journal clearly communicates how data are collected, used, and stored.
3. **Data Minimization:** Only information necessary for publication and communication is collected.
4. **Integrity and Security:** Personal data are protected against unauthorized access, misuse, or loss.
5. **Ethical Compliance:** The journal adheres to COPE, ICMJE, and GDPR standards on data protection and publication ethics.

### 4. Collection of Personal Information

The journal collects personal data only when necessary for editorial and publication purposes. The following information may be collected:

- **From Authors:** Name, institutional affiliation, contact details, ORCID ID, biography, manuscript files, cover letters, and related submission materials.
- **From Reviewers:** Name, email address, institutional details, reviewing interests, and feedback history.
- **From Editors and Staff:** Professional details needed for journal administration and communication.
- **From Readers and Visitors:** Limited data such as name, email, or subscription preferences, only if voluntarily provided.

All personal data are collected lawfully, fairly, and with the individual's consent.

### 5. Use of Collected Information

The collected information is used exclusively for the following purposes:

- Processing and evaluating manuscript submissions.
- Communicating with authors, reviewers, and editors.
- Managing peer review, editorial decisions, and publication workflow.

- Maintaining reviewer and editorial board databases.
- Providing updates, notifications, or journal announcements.
- Ensuring compliance with publication ethics and legal requirements.

Under no circumstances will personal or manuscript-related data be sold, shared, or used for commercial purposes.

## **6. Data Confidentiality in Peer Review**

The peer review process is conducted under strict confidentiality. The following rules apply:

- Manuscripts under review are confidential documents.
- Reviewers must not share, copy, or discuss the manuscript with unauthorized persons.
- Authors must not contact reviewers directly at any stage.
- Reviewer identities remain confidential unless an open review model is used and the reviewer agrees to disclosure.
- Editors ensure that manuscript files and reviewer reports are accessible only to authorized personnel.

All participants in the review process must respect the confidential nature of the content and communications.

## **7. Editorial Confidentiality**

- Editorial decisions, reviewer identities, and internal communications are confidential and not disclosed outside the editorial team.
- Editors must not use unpublished data from submitted manuscripts for personal advantage or share it with third parties.
- All editors and staff are required to sign or acknowledge a confidentiality agreement as part of their editorial duties.

## **8. Data Retention and Storage**

- Personal data and manuscript materials are securely stored in the journal's editorial management system or encrypted digital archives.
- Only authorized editorial staff and administrators have access to this data.
- Manuscript and review data are retained for a limited period (usually 3–5 years) after publication or rejection to ensure accountability and archiving.
- Upon request, personal data can be updated or permanently deleted in accordance with data protection laws.

## **9. Website and Cookies**

The journal's website may use cookies and analytics tools to improve user experience and gather general statistics (e.g., site visits, traffic sources).

- Cookies do not collect personal or identifiable information unless voluntarily provided.
- Users may disable cookies through their browser settings.
- Any data collected through website analytics are aggregated and anonymized.

The journal ensures that all online data collection complies with global privacy standards.

## **10. Data Sharing and Third Parties**

- The journal does not share or transfer personal information to third parties except when required by:
  - Legal obligations (e.g., copyright or misconduct investigations).
  - Trusted service providers (e.g., plagiarism detection software, indexing platforms) who comply with confidentiality agreements.
- Such third parties are granted access only to the minimum data necessary to perform their function and are bound by confidentiality obligations.

## **11. Data Protection and Security**

The journal employs appropriate technical and organizational safeguards to protect data from:

- Unauthorized access or disclosure.
- Loss, alteration, or destruction.
- Malware or cybersecurity threats.

Security measures include password-protected systems, encrypted databases, secure servers, and limited administrative access.

## **12. Author and Reviewer Rights**

Authors and reviewers have the right to:

- Access the personal data the journal holds about them.
- Request corrections or deletion of inaccurate information.
- Withdraw consent for data processing (where applicable).
- Request confirmation of how their data have been used.

Such requests can be submitted directly to the Editor-in-Chief or Editorial Office, and will be processed promptly in compliance with data protection laws.

## **13. Handling Breaches of Privacy**

In the rare event of a privacy breach or data loss:

- The journal will immediately investigate the issue and take corrective action.
- Affected individuals will be notified within a reasonable timeframe.

- Steps will be taken to prevent recurrence through enhanced technical and procedural safeguards.
- If required by law, the breach will be reported to the relevant data protection authority.

## **14. Confidentiality in Research Misconduct Cases**

If an investigation into ethical misconduct or plagiarism is initiated:

- All communications and evidence will be handled in strict confidence.
- Only the individuals directly involved in the investigation (e.g., editors, institutional authorities) will have access to the case details.
- The journal will ensure that no premature or unwarranted disclosures are made to third parties or the public.

## **15. Compliance with International Standards**

This policy aligns with the principles and recommendations of:

- Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)
- International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE)
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR – EU 2016/679)
- Best Practices for Journal Editors (Elsevier, Springer, Wiley, etc.)

## **16. Policy Review and Updates**

This Privacy and Confidentiality Policy is reviewed annually or as required by changes in legislation, technology, or editorial practices.

Any updates will be published on the journal's website and communicated to authors, reviewers, and editors as necessary.

## **17. Contact Information**

For questions, requests, or concerns regarding privacy or confidentiality, please contact:

[journals@spingharuniversity.edu.af](mailto:journals@spingharuniversity.edu.af)

All queries will be handled promptly and with full respect for confidentiality.

## **18. Summary Statement**

The journal is dedicated to ensuring that:

“All personal data, manuscripts, and communications are treated with the highest level of privacy, security, and ethical responsibility.”

By upholding this policy, the journal strengthens trust among authors, reviewers, readers, and the wider research community.