

Publication Ethics, Editorial Integrity and Responsible AI Handbook

2026 Draft for Editorial Policies

Developed for IJREL in accordance with COPE Core Practices, COPE Position Statements, COPE Flowcharts and Infographics, the Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing, and current guidance on the responsible use of generative AI in scholarly publishing.

Document status and recommended use

This handbook is a practical editorial policy draft for IJREL. It should be reviewed by the Editor-in-Chief, Editorial Board, publisher, and legal/ethics advisors before formal publication on the journal website. The document is not an official COPE document and does not reproduce COPE flowcharts verbatim; it adapts COPE principles to IJREL procedures.

Recommended website placement: Editorial Policies; Publication Ethics; Peer Review Process; AI Policy; Appeals and Complaints; Corrections and Retractions.

Alignment with external standards

Standard	IJREL implementation	Where addressed
COPE Core Practices	Clear procedures for misconduct, authorship, appeals, conflicts, peer review, ethics, intellectual property, journal management and post-publication corrections.	Sections 2-6; Flowcharts 1-10
COPE Position Statements	Author withdrawal, authorship changes, suspected undisclosed conflicts of interest, AI authorship and accountability.	Sections 3-5; Flowcharts 1, 2, 3, 5, 6
Principles of Transparency and Best Practice	Transparent website policies on ownership, editorial board, peer review, fees, archiving, copyright, ethics and complaints.	Section 6 checklist
Responsible AI guidance	Human accountability, disclosure, confidentiality, non-authorship of AI tools, editorial independence.	Section 5; Flowcharts 5-6

1. Editorial ethics principles

IJREL is committed to transparent, fair, independent and accountable editorial decision-making. All submissions are evaluated according to scholarly merit, relevance to the journal aims and scope, methodological quality, ethical compliance and contribution to the field of e-learning, digital education and educational technologies.

All parties involved in publication - authors, reviewers, editors, editorial board members and the publisher - are expected to act according to the principles of research integrity, transparency, confidentiality, accountability, respect for participants, and responsible communication of scholarly findings.

Where publication ethics concerns arise, IJREL will seek evidence, document all steps, give authors a fair opportunity to respond, protect confidentiality where appropriate, and correct the scholarly record when necessary.

2. Roles and responsibilities

- **Editorial Office:** Receives submissions, records declarations, screens files, documents ethics cases, communicates standard requests and maintains the audit trail.
- **Handling Editor:** Manages peer review, identifies potential ethical concerns, recommends actions and ensures reviewer independence.
- **Editor-in-Chief:** Makes final decisions on complex ethics cases, appeals, withdrawals after acceptance, authorship disputes and post-publication actions.

- **Ethics Advisor / Ethics Editor (recommended):** Advises on complex or novel cases, AI-related concerns, image/data concerns and conflicts of interest.
- **Publisher / University:** Supports editorial independence, archiving, corrections, retractions, complaints processes and website transparency.

3. Core policies for IJREL

3.1 Allegations of misconduct

IJREL will take allegations of misconduct seriously, whether raised before or after publication. Allegations may concern plagiarism, redundant publication, fabrication or falsification, image manipulation, unethical research, peer review manipulation, undisclosed conflicts of interest or irresponsible AI use. The journal will conduct an initial assessment, contact relevant parties when appropriate, seek additional evidence, and decide whether to continue review, reject, correct, retract or refer the matter to an institution.

3.2 Authorship and contributorship

All authors must be human individuals who have made a substantial scholarly contribution and accept responsibility for the integrity of the work. IJREL encourages contributorship transparency, preferably using CRediT roles. Authorship changes after submission require written explanation and written agreement of all authors, including any author added or removed.

3.3 Peer review

IJREL uses peer review to support editorial quality and research integrity. Reviewers must treat manuscripts as confidential documents, declare conflicts of interest, provide constructive and evidence-based feedback, and not use confidential content for personal advantage. Editors remain responsible for editorial decisions.

3.4 Conflicts of interest

Authors, reviewers and editors must disclose relationships or circumstances that could influence, or appear to influence, judgement. Conflicts may be financial, institutional, academic, personal, ideological or competitive. Disclosure does not automatically prevent publication, but unmanaged conflicts may require reassignment, additional review, correction or rejection.

3.5 Research ethics and data protection

Submissions involving human participants, students, children, teachers or institutional data must provide appropriate ethical approval or exemption, informed consent where applicable, data protection safeguards and anonymisation. For educational studies with minors, IJREL expects particular attention to parental/guardian consent, child assent and school permissions.

3.6 Intellectual property and originality

Authors must submit original work, properly cite sources, obtain permissions where needed and avoid plagiarism, duplicate submission, redundant publication and inappropriate text recycling. Preprints and conference versions must be disclosed and cited when relevant.

3.7 Post-publication corrections

IJREL will correct the scholarly record through corrections, expressions of concern or retractions when necessary. Post-publication concerns will be assessed proportionately, with attention to evidence, author response, institutional findings and reader protection.

4. Manuscript withdrawal policy

Authors may request withdrawal in writing. The request must include the manuscript ID, title, reason for withdrawal and confirmation that all authors agree. Before peer review or during early screening, withdrawal will normally be approved. During peer review, after revision, after acceptance or after production has started, IJREL will assess whether the reason is legitimate and whether withdrawal would constitute misuse of the editorial process.

Withdrawal after acceptance, copyediting, typesetting, DOI registration or issue scheduling will be considered only in exceptional circumstances. If the article has already been published online, withdrawal is not normally available; the journal will instead consider correction, expression of concern or retraction where appropriate.

5. Responsible use of generative AI

5.1 Authors

AI tools cannot be listed as authors because they cannot be accountable for the work, approve the final version, consent to publication or take responsibility for integrity. Authors remain fully responsible for all AI-assisted content, including accuracy, citations, originality, privacy, copyright and absence of bias. Any substantive use of generative AI in writing, analysis, translation, coding, image generation or data processing must be disclosed.

5.2 Reviewers

Reviewers must protect manuscript confidentiality. They should not upload manuscripts, figures, tables, data or review content to external AI tools unless the journal has explicitly permitted it and confidentiality, data protection and copyright conditions are met. Any permitted AI use in preparing a review must be disclosed to the editor.

5.3 Editors

Editors may use AI-supported tools for administrative support, screening or language assistance only where confidentiality, data protection and human oversight are preserved. Editorial decisions must not be delegated to AI systems. Editors must assess AI outputs critically and remain accountable for decisions.

5.4 Prohibited uses

IJREL does not permit fabricated references, AI-generated data presented as real, undisclosed AI-generated images or screenshots, automated peer review without human assessment, or any AI use that compromises confidentiality, participant privacy, copyright or research integrity.

6. Transparency and best practice checklist for the IJREL website

Website element	Required transparent information	IJREL status / action
Journal title	Use one consistent full title and abbreviation.	To verify / update on website
Website	Ensure navigation, links, ethics statements and author instructions are accurate and functional.	To verify / update on website
Publishing schedule	State publication frequency, continuous publication model if applicable, and archive access.	To verify / update on website
Editorial board	List full names, institutional affiliations and countries/regions.	To verify / update on website
Aims and scope	Define the scholarly field and article types clearly.	To verify / update on website
Peer review process	Describe type of peer review,	To verify / update on website

	reviewer selection, decision responsibility and expected timelines.	
Publication ethics	Publish policies on misconduct, authorship, conflicts, AI, data, corrections, retractions, appeals and complaints.	To verify / update on website
Copyright and licensing	State copyright holder, license, author rights and repository policy.	To verify / update on website
Fees	State any article processing charges or confirm no fees.	To verify / update on website
Archiving	Describe digital preservation and indexing/archiving arrangements.	To verify / update on website
Ownership and management	Identify owner/publisher and editorial independence safeguards.	To verify / update on website
Contact information	Provide current editorial and technical contact addresses.	To verify / update on website

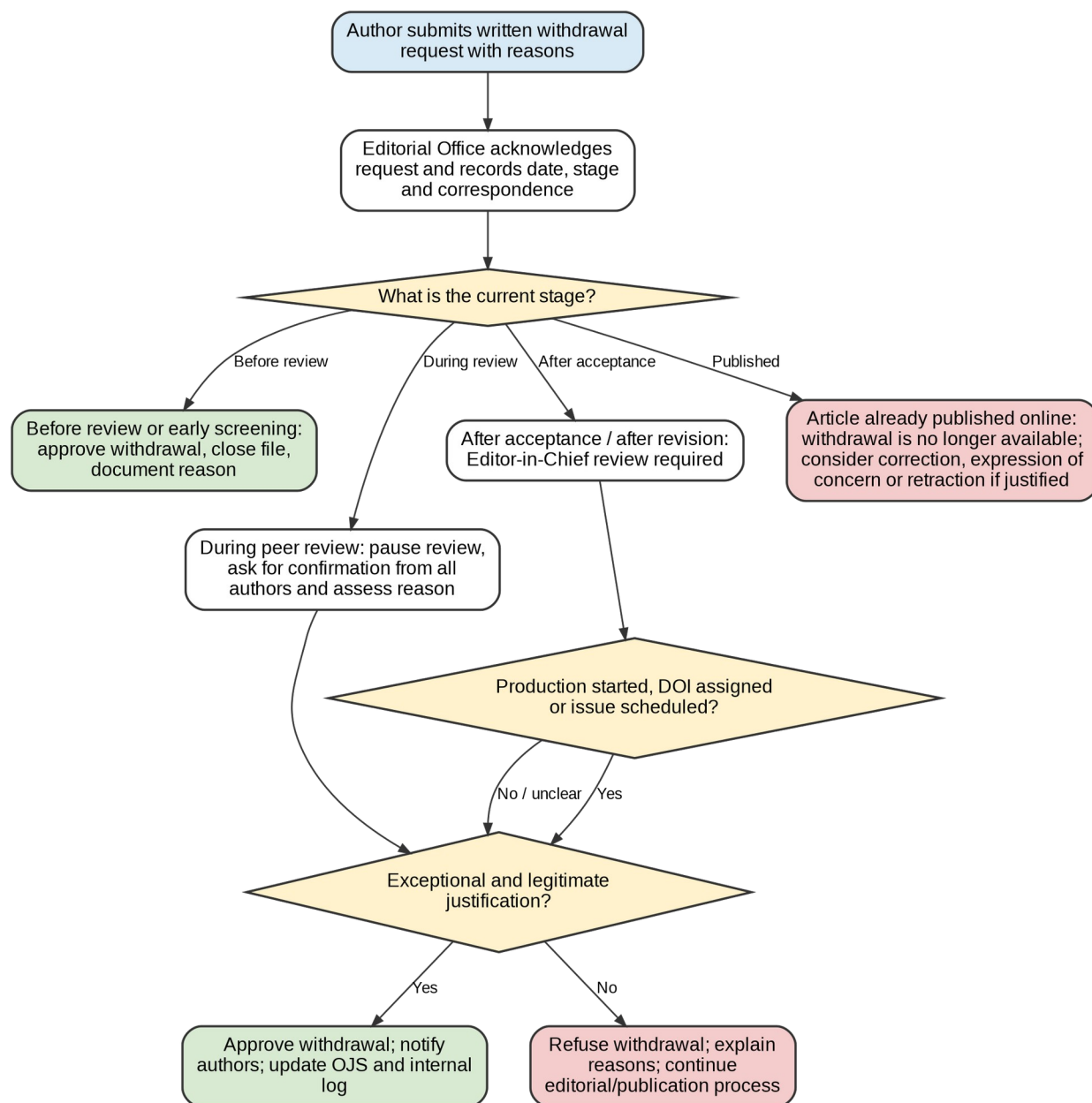
7. IJREL Editorial Ethics Flowcharts

The following flowcharts are designed for use as standalone website graphics or as part of the IJREL Publication Ethics policy. They are COPE-informed adaptations for IJREL and should not be described as official COPE flowcharts.

IJREL Flowchart 01. Author Withdrawal Request

Purpose: Applies to requests before review, during review, after acceptance, after production, and after online publication.

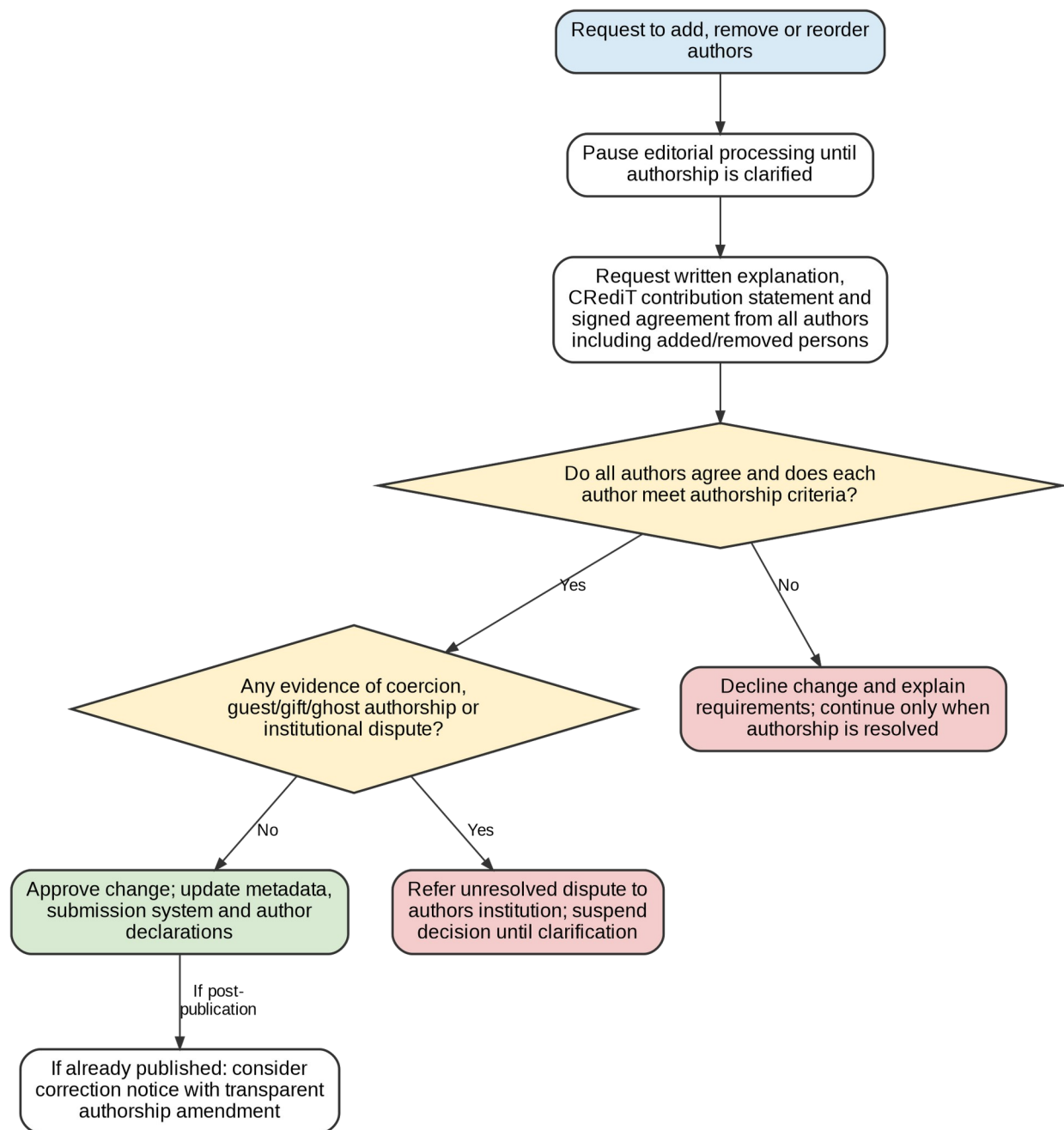
Basis: COPE Position Statement on handling author requests to remove submissions (2024); COPE Core Practices.



IJREL Flowchart 02. Changes in Authorship

Purpose: Covers addition, removal, reordering, corresponding author changes, and post-publication correction requests.

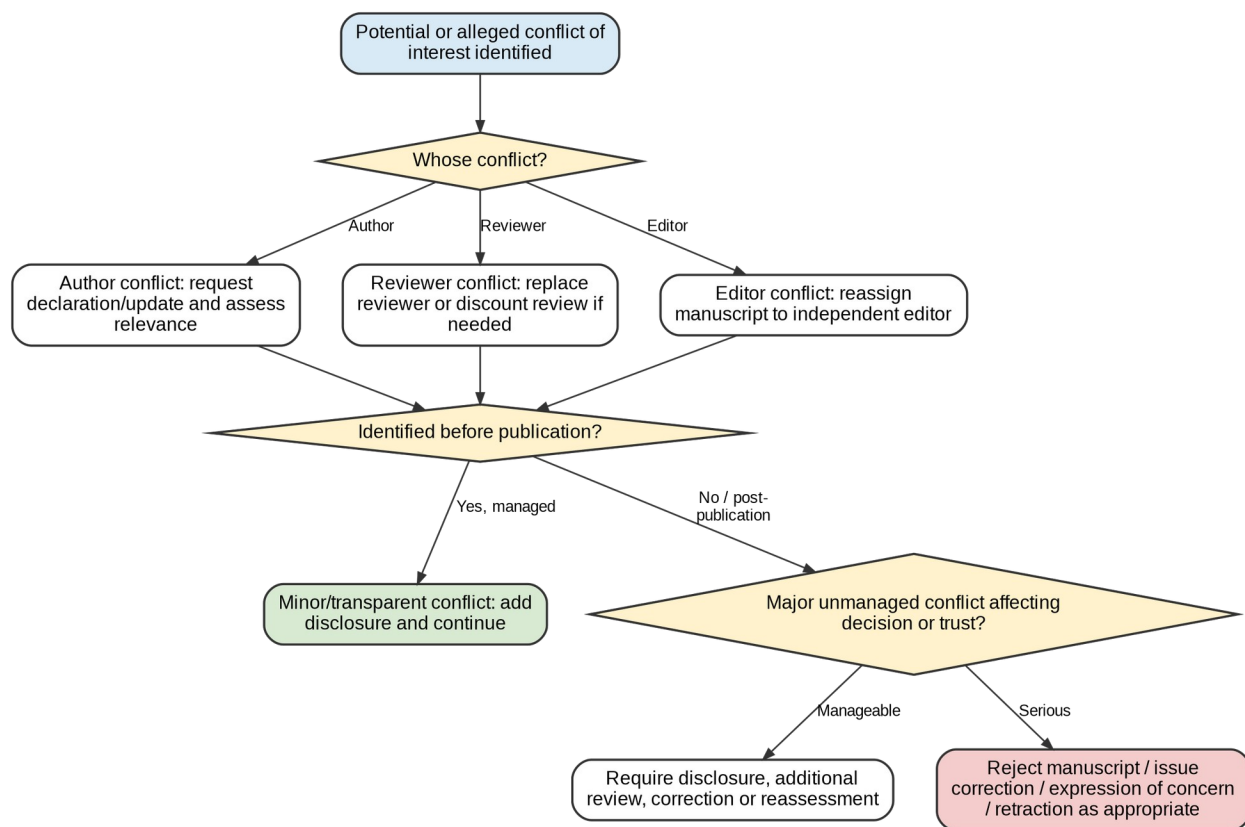
Basis: COPE Position Statement on handling changes to authorship lists (2024); ICMJE authorship recommendations.



IJREL Flowchart 03. Conflict of Interest / Competing Interests

Purpose: Applies to authors, reviewers, editors, editorial board members, guest editors and publisher representatives.

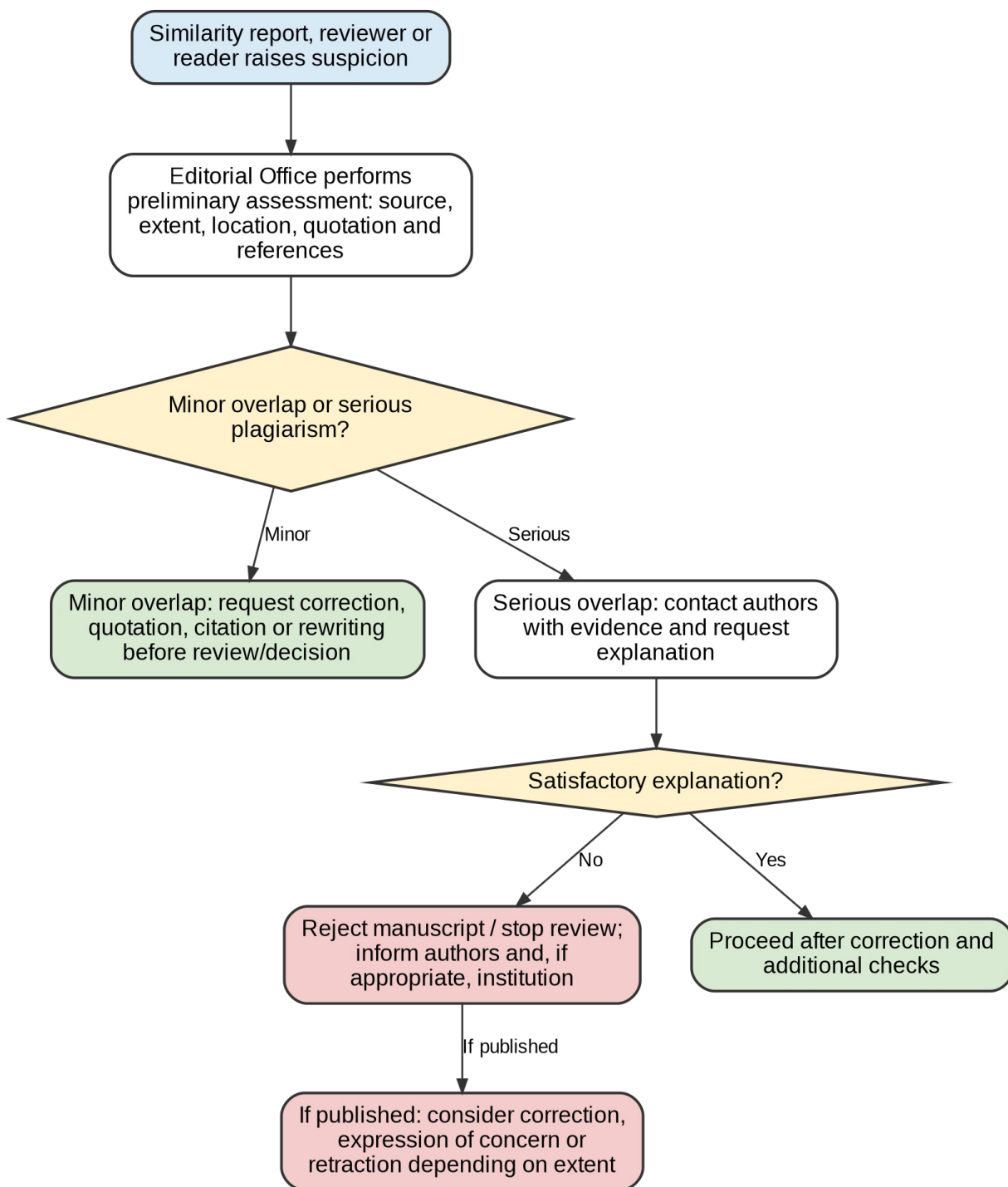
Basis: COPE Core Practices; COPE Position Statement on suspected undisclosed conflicts of interest (2024); COPE flowcharts on Col.



IJREL Flowchart 04. Suspected Plagiarism

Purpose: Includes text plagiarism, mosaic plagiarism, unattributed translation, and plagiarism detected before or after publication.

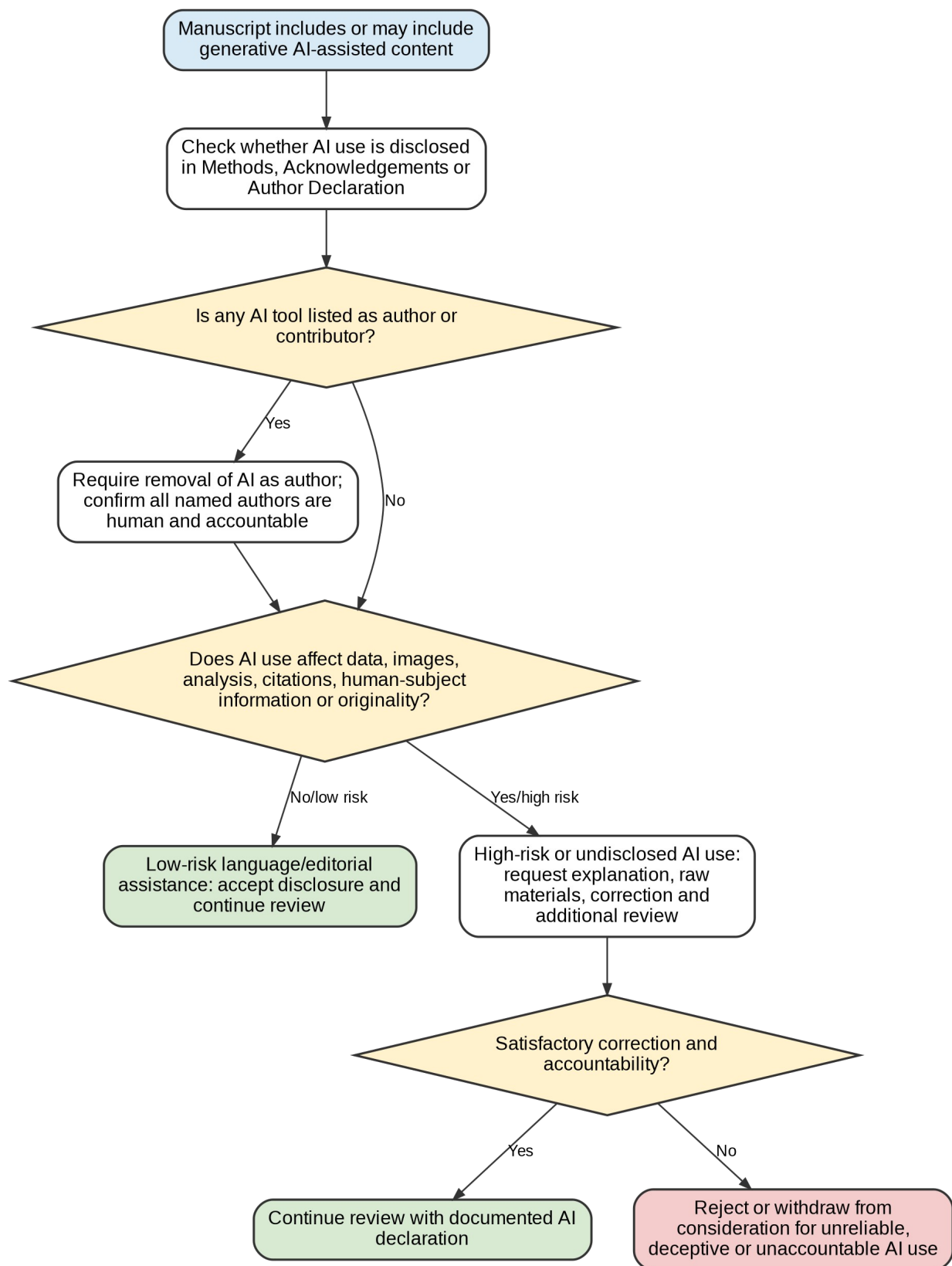
Basis: COPE plagiarism flowcharts; COPE Core Practices on allegations of misconduct and intellectual property.



IJREL Flowchart 05. Use of Generative AI by Authors

Purpose: AI tools cannot be listed as authors; human authors remain fully accountable for content, data, citations and integrity.

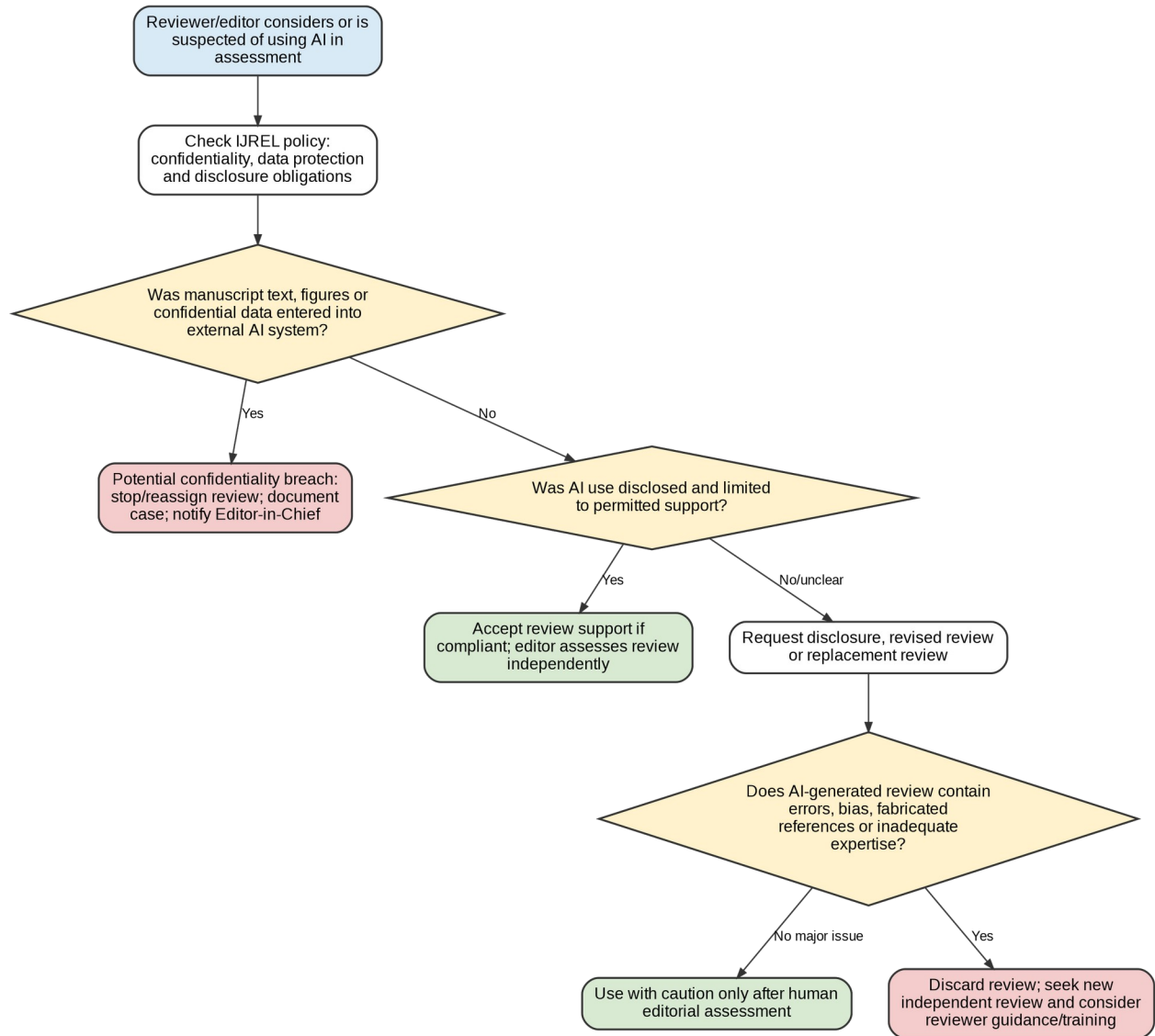
Basis: COPE Position Statement on Authorship and AI tools (2023); Transparency Principles; IJREL responsible AI policy.



IJREL Flowchart 06. Use of AI by Reviewers and Editors

Purpose: Reviewers must not upload confidential manuscripts to external AI tools without journal permission; any permitted AI use must be disclosed.

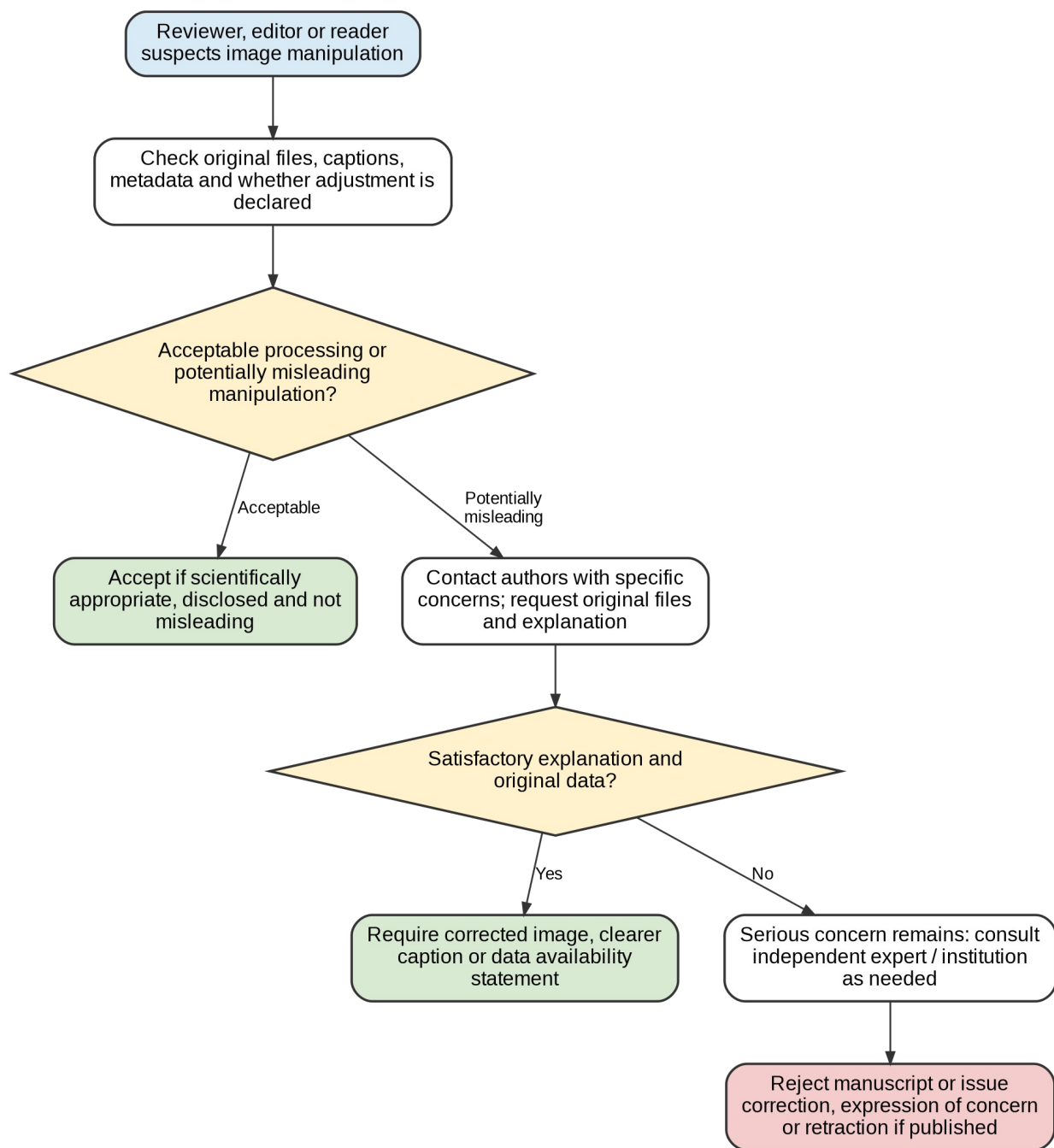
Basis: COPE Position Statement on Authorship and AI tools (2023); COPE peer review confidentiality principles; IJREL peer review policy.



IJREL Flowchart 07. Suspected Image Manipulation

Purpose: Adapted mainly for educational research figures, screenshots, photographs and quantitative visualisations; clinical/biomedical image-forensic cases may require specialist advice.

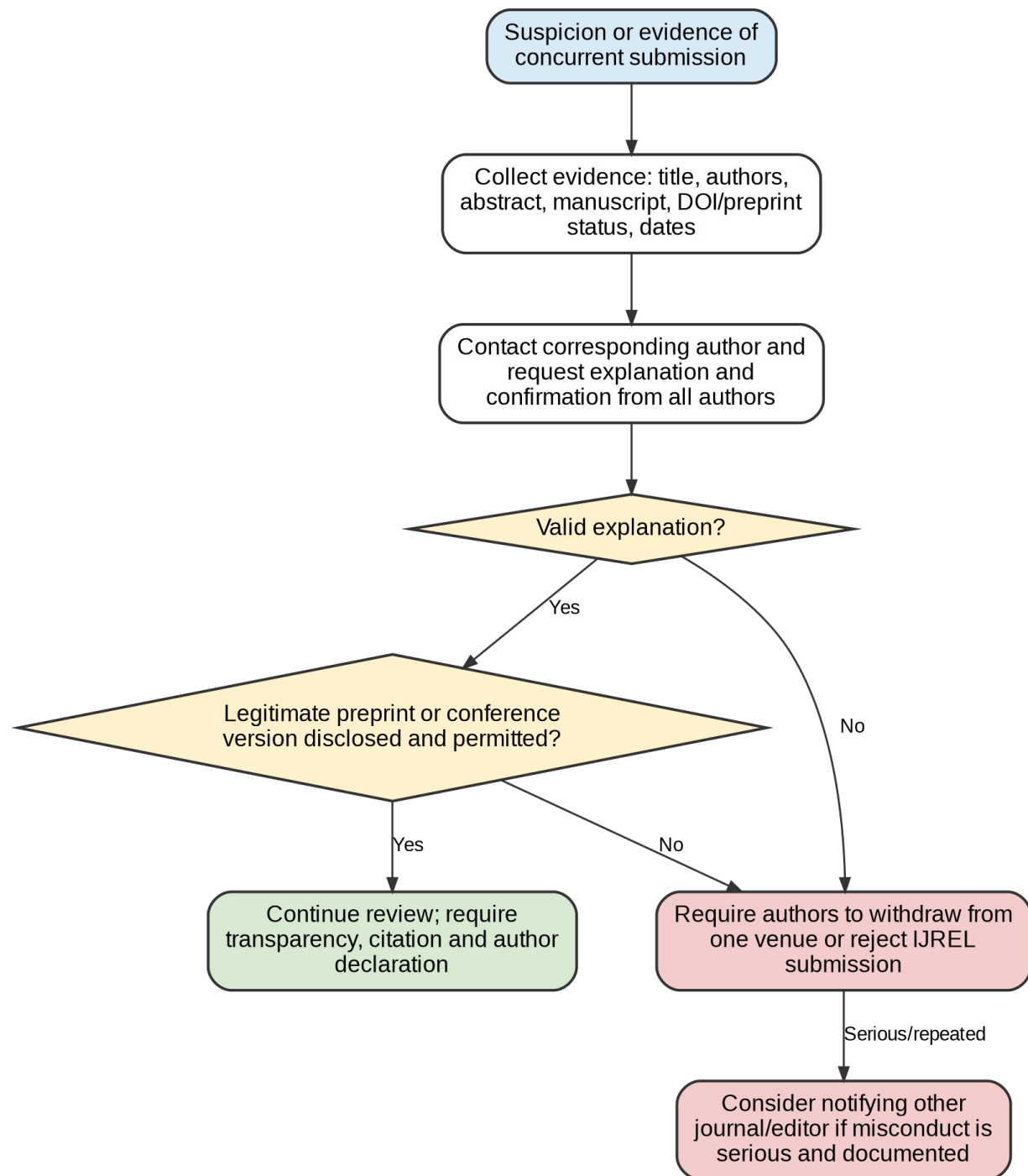
Basis: COPE flowchart on image manipulation in published articles; COPE data and reproducibility principles.



IJREL Flowchart 08. Duplicate Submission

Purpose: Applies when the same or substantially similar manuscript is under consideration in another journal or platform.

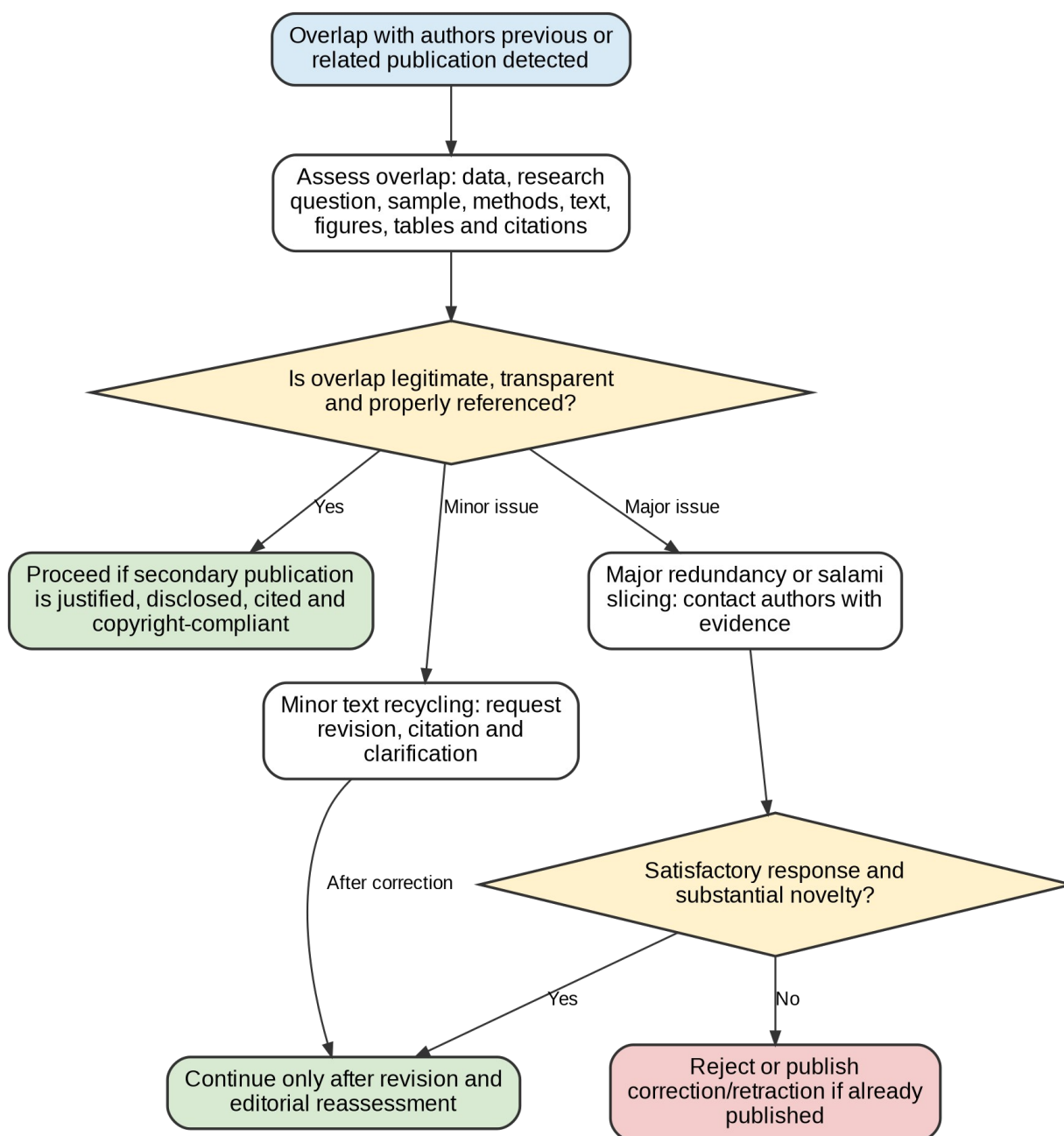
Basis: COPE guidance on concurrent submission and redundant/duplicate publication; IJREL submission declaration policy.



IJREL Flowchart 09. Redundant Publication / Salami Publication

Purpose: Covers overlap with the authors own work, text recycling, translations, conference papers, book chapters and fragmented reporting.

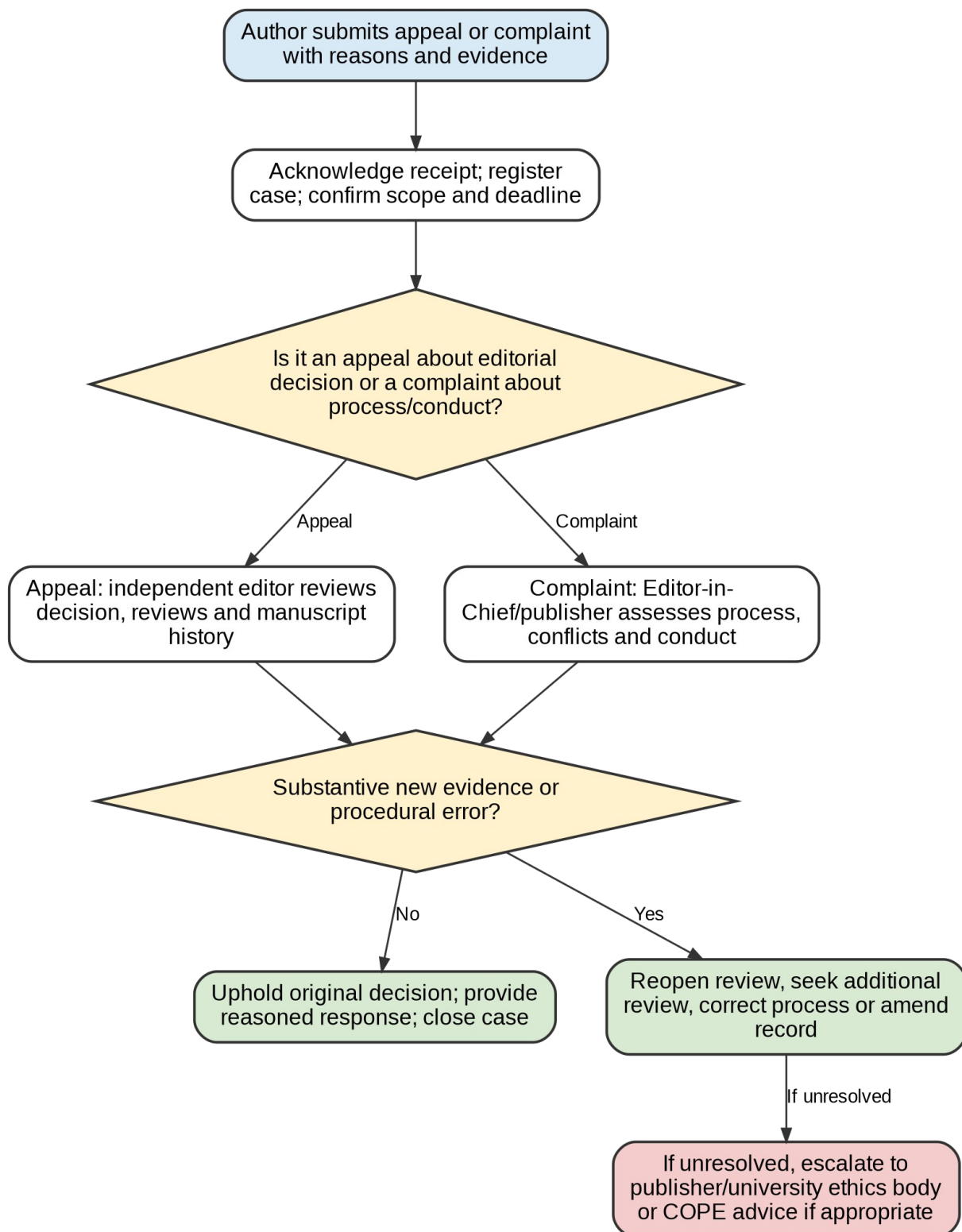
Basis: COPE redundant/duplicate publication flowcharts; Transparency Principles; IJREL originality policy.



IJREL Flowchart 10. Appeals and Complaints Against Editorial Decisions

Purpose: Covers appeals against rejection, complaints about process, reviewer conduct, editorial conduct and publication ethics handling.

Basis: COPE Core Practice on complaints and appeals; COPE editorial office guidance; Transparency Principles.



8. Standard editorial record template for ethics cases

Field	Entry
Manuscript ID and title	

Developed for IJREL; COPE-informed adaptation, not an official COPE document.

Date concern received	
Source of concern	
Editorial stage	
Files/evidence reviewed	
Authors contacted and date	
Author response	
Reviewers/editors consulted	
Decision maker	
Final action	
Communication sent	
OJS/internal notes updated	
Follow-up required	

9. References and source basis

- COPE Core Practices: <https://publicationethics.org/resources/cope-core-practices/>
- COPE Position Statement: Authorship and AI tools (2023): <https://publicationethics.org/guidance/cope-position/authorship-and-ai-tools>
- COPE Position Statement: Handling author requests to remove their submission (2024): <https://publicationethics.org/guidance/cope-position/handling-author-requests-remove-their-submission>
- COPE Position Statement: Handling changes to authorship lists (2024): <https://publicationethics.org/guidance/cope-position/handling-changes-authorship-lists>
- COPE Position Statement: Handling suspected undisclosed conflicts of interest (2024): <https://publicationethics.org/guidance/cope-position/handling-suspected-undisclosed-conflicts-interest>
- COPE Flowchart: Redundant / duplicate publication in a submitted manuscript: <https://publicationethics.org/guidance/flowchart/redundant-duplicate-publication-submitted-manuscript>
- COPE Flowchart: Redundant / duplicate publication in a published article: <https://publicationethics.org/guidance/flowchart/redundant-duplicate-publication-published-article>
- COPE Flowchart: Undisclosed conflict of interest in a submitted manuscript: <https://publicationethics.org/guidance/flowchart/undisclosed-conflict-interest-submitted-manuscript>
- COPE Flowchart: Undisclosed conflict of interest in a published article: <https://publicationethics.org/guidance/flowchart/undisclosed-conflict-interest-published-article>
- Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing, version 4 (2022): <https://publicationethics.org/guidance/guideline/principles-transparency-and-best-practice-scholarly-publishing>
- DOAJ: Principles of Transparency and Best Practice: <https://doaj.org/apply/transparency/>
- ICMJE: Defining the Role of Authors and Contributors: <https://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html>