

Handling complaints and appeals

1. Scope

This policy applies to complaints from authors, reviewers, readers, or other parties about the editorial or peer-review process, decision-making, publication ethics, or behaviour of editorial staff, reviewers, or the publisher; and appeals by authors against editorial decisions when they believe that due process was not followed or that a mistake was made.

2. Principles

In line with COPE advice, Pomorstvo will ensure that complaints and appeals are handled fairly, transparently, promptly and objectively. The process will avoid conflicts of interest, ensure confidentiality of sensitive information, and treat all parties with respect.

3. Contact

Complaints or appeals should be submitted in writing (email) to the Editor-in-Chief of Pomorstvo. If the complaint concerns the Editor-in-Chief, the complainant may alternatively address the Faculty of Maritime Studies, University of Rijeka (publisher). The submission should include the name of the complainant, a clear description of the issue or decision being appealed, including dates, manuscript identifier (if applicable), and parties involved, and any supporting documents or evidence. On receipt, the journal will send an acknowledgement within 5 working days. We recognise that complaints may be raised anonymously (e.g., whistle-blower concerns). These will be carefully considered, but the lack of a named complainant and the inability to seek further information may limit the investigation. The identity of the complainant (if known) will be treated confidentially.

4. Initial assessment

Upon receipt, the Editor-in-Chief (or their delegate) will conduct an initial check to determine whether the complaint/appeal falls within the scope of this policy, whether there is sufficient information to proceed, and whether there is any immediate action required (e.g., to prevent further publication or to issue an expression of concern). If necessary, the Editor may convene an Editorial Ethics Committee (EEC) comprised of at least two Editorial board members not previously involved with the manuscript/issue, and (if needed) an independent advisor with ethics expertise.

5. Investigation and decision-making

The Editor or EEC will gather relevant facts, which may include contacting authors, reviewers, editorial staff, or the author's institution for comment or investigation. The parties involved will be given an opportunity to respond to the complaint or appeal. The investigation will follow COPE flowcharts and guidance where appropriate. Conflicts of interest must be avoided or managed; if the Editor or a board member is involved in the complaint, they will recuse themselves and the matter will be handled by independent members. A decision will be made and communicated in

writing to all relevant parties (complainant, authors, reviewers, as applicable). The outcome may include one or more of the following:

- Dismissal of the complaint or appeal, with reasoning.
- Correction of the published record (erratum, corrigendum, expression of concern, retraction).
- Revision of the manuscript (in the case of an appeal of review/decision).
- Other remedial action (e.g., appointment of new reviewers, editorial process review).

The decision will include a timeframe for implementation and notification of any published changes. Pomorstvo aims to conclude most cases within three months, but more complex investigations may take longer; where this is the case, we will keep the complainant informed of progress at least every four weeks.

6. Appeal of a decision

If the complainant (or author) is dissatisfied with the decision, they may submit a secondary appeal within 30 days of the decision communication. The secondary appeal will be reviewed by an independent panel (e.g., two external editorial board members not previously involved, plus one institutional representative) who will reconsider the matter and issue a final binding decision.

7. Confidentiality, record-keeping & transparency

All documentation will be maintained securely by the journal for at least 5 years. While the journal will protect the confidentiality of individuals involved, any outcomes that affect the published literature will be publicly noted and linked to the original article.