

Elements of Publication Ethics

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The current flourishing of published academic papers and new journals is shaking the foundations of the peer-review system, which for decades has guaranteed high qualitative standards in scientific publishing. The quest for status within the academic community, through an improper use of bibliometric indicators and, ultimately, the pursuit of quantity rather than quality of publications, is generating bad practice in writing and reviewing manuscripts (e.g. plagiarism, fabricated data, AI-generated manuscript and reviews, exchange of favourable reviews, manipulation of citation counts). This is raising concern within the scientific community and risking to undermine the credibility of the whole academic world.

With this contribution, I share my experience as a Guest Editor of *Elements* [1] and argue how this magazine can represent a virtuous example of academic publishing and spearhead a new wave of high-quality and transparent scientific publications. Contrary to the common practice of many journals, where guest editors are mostly recruited to reach out to potential authors and multiply the number of submitted papers, *Elements* relies on the personal responsibility of guest editors and their continuous feedback with the editorial team, reviewers and authors.

I suggest that the high qualitative standards of the papers published in *Elements* should serve as a benchmark in scientific publishing and, to achieve this, past and present editors should liaise with academic publishers as well as committees and individuals involved in the safeguarding of publication ethics and research integrity.

[1] Valentini, Broekmans, Elsen & Snellings (2022), Cement and Concrete: From the Romans to Mars, *Elements* 18(5)