

## Competing financial interests

The policy outlined on this page applies to *Nature* journals (those with the word "Nature" in their title). NPG publishes many other journals, each of which has separate publication policies described on its website. A current list of these journals, with links to each journal's homepage [is available](#).

### Nature journals' competing financial interests policy

In the interests of transparency and to help readers to form their own judgements of potential bias, Nature journals require authors to declare to the editors any competing financial interests in relation to the work described. The corresponding author is responsible for submitting a competing financial interests statement on behalf of all authors of the paper. Authors submitting their manuscripts using the journal's online manuscript tracking system are required to make their declaration as part of this process and to specify the competing interests in cases where they exist. In other cases, usually for articles that have been commissioned by an editor, the journal office will send the author a form to complete and sign before publication of the article. [A sample of the form](#) sent to authors by the journal office is available. Authors who have made a competing financial interest declaration as part of the online manuscript submission process do not need to complete and send a separate form.

Authors are required to include a statement at the end of their article to declare whether or not they have any competing financial interests. If the statement is more than a few lines long, the details will be made available in the online version of the article.

[Top of page](#)

### Definition

For the purposes of this statement, competing interests are defined as those of a financial nature that, through their potential influence on behaviour or content or from perception of such potential influences, could undermine the objectivity, integrity or perceived value of a publication.

They can include any of the following:

**Funding:** Research support (including salaries, equipment, supplies, reimbursement for attending symposia, and other expenses) by organizations that may gain or lose financially through this publication.

**Employment:** Recent (while engaged in the research project), present or anticipated employment by any organization that may gain or lose financially through this publication.

**Personal financial interests:** Stocks or shares in companies that may gain or lose financially through publication; consultation fees or other forms of remuneration from organizations that may gain or lose financially; patents or patent applications whose value may be affected by publication.

It is difficult to specify a threshold at which a financial interest becomes significant, but note that many US universities require faculty members to disclose interests exceeding \$10,000 or 5% equity in a company (see, for example, B. Lo *et al.* *New Engl. J. Med.* **343**, 1616-1620; 2000). Any such figure is necessarily arbitrary, so we offer as one possible practical alternative guideline: "Any undeclared competing financial interests that could embarrass you were they to become publicly known after your work was published."

We do not consider diversified mutual funds or investment trusts to constitute a competing financial interest.

[Top of page](#)

### Application to authors

Unless/until the article is published, authors' declarations will be considered confidential, and will not be disclosed to peer-reviewers.

The published article (Article, Letter, Brief Communication, Review, Perspective, Insight) indicates the authors' response using one of the following standard sentences:

- The authors declare competing financial interests: details accompany the full-text HTML version of the paper at (url of journal website).
- The authors declare no competing financial interests.

The online declaration should include an itemized list of the competing financial interests.

For publications with more than one author, the corresponding author (the person responsible for communication with the journal) should provide a declaration on behalf of all authors.

We recognize that some authors may be bound by confidentiality agreements. In such cases the editors will investigate further and may at their discretion invite the authors to state in the online version, in place of itemized disclosure: "The authors declare that they are bound by confidentiality agreements that prevent them from disclosing their financial interests in this work."

We do not require authors to state the monetary value of their financial interests.

[Top of page](#)

## Application to referees

The Nature journals invite peer-reviewers to exclude themselves in cases where there is a significant conflict of interest, financial or otherwise. However, just as financial interests need not invalidate the conclusions of an article, nor do they automatically disqualify an individual from evaluating it. We ask peer-reviewers to inform the editors of any related interests, including financial interests as defined above, that might be perceived as relevant. Editors will consider these statements when weighing reviewers' recommendations.

[Top of page](#)

## Application to editors

All Nature journal editorial staff are required to declare to their employer (Nature Publishing Group) any interests — financial or otherwise — that might influence, or be perceived to influence, their editorial practices. Failure to do so is a disciplinary offence.

[Top of page](#)

## Application to publishing policy

The Nature journals thrive on their independence. Their strict policy is that editorial independence, decisions and content should not be compromised by commercial or financial interests, or by any specific arrangements with advertising clients or sponsors. Our policy is to disclose such arrangements where there is any risk of a perception of compromise. A list of [all sponsors](#) associated with Nature Publishing Group is available.

[Top of page](#)

## Reasons for policy

Before the adoption of the policy described above, the policy of the Nature journals was that no declarations of competing interests were required from authors, and that potential referees should disqualify themselves from refereeing if they felt they had such a conflict. The current policy, [introduced in 2001](#), is not based on any assumption that commercial interests of researchers are likely to lead to a lack of research integrity. Rather, it is based on a recognition of potential problems for three principal reasons.

First, there is suggestive evidence in the literature that publication practices in biomedical research have been influenced by the commercial interests of authors. Examples for [original research](#) and [secondary literature](#) (for example, review articles) are given here. This evidence is consistent with the truism that, although, in principle, science may be objective and its findings independent of other interests, scientists can be imperfect and subjective. There are circumstances where selection of evidence, interpretation of results or emphasis of presentation might be inadvertently or deliberately biased by a researcher's other interests.

Second, there is a more general concern among researchers and others about the possible undermining of the integrity of scientific research by increasing commercial links and consequent influences. We believe that the best way to maintain readers' trust in the integrity of the research and other material we publish is through a policy of transparency. If financial interests are disclosed, readers will be able to make an informed judgment about their significance or lack of significance. We believe this will be to the benefit of readers and authors alike.

Third, many institutions have introduced policies on competing interests that require authors to include descriptions of financial and other interests in publications. We are happy to support them.

We do not expect to police this policy ourselves: we believe that primary responsibility for ensuring that researchers' conduct is appropriate lies with their employers, rather than with journal editors. However, where we believe trust in the published work has been significantly compromised by an author's actions, we will seek to redress the matter by an appropriate combination of sanctions and communication to readers and employers, which may include imposed corrections. Such corrections are linked to the original publication so that those accessing the work online see the correction.

**Nature journals' editorials providing further details about this policy:**

To promote transparency and honesty, it is important for corresponding authors to divulge any financial interests that may affect how their articles are perceived. *Nature Photonics*. [Truth and transparency](#), June 2013.

The US government has changed how biomedical scientists disclose their financial interests. The revised rules are welcome, but Internet access to the identified conflicts should be a requirement. *Nature*. [Accountable and transparent](#), 6 September 2012.

Claims of conflicts of interest highlight the difficulties facing regulators participating in collaborations with industry. *Nature Biotechnology*. [Conflicts and collaborations](#), November 2010.

A one-size-fits-all policy on disclosure of competing interests may not be the way forward. *Nature Reviews Clinical Oncology*. [Conflict of interest disclosures](#), January 2010.

Not all financial interests in drug discovery are detrimental, and many are essential for its success. But focusing on perceived conflicts of interest may cause true scientific corruption to go unnoticed. *Nature Medicine*. [A really serious conflict](#), May 2009.

The distinction between actual and perceived competing interests. *Nature Medicine*. [The doors of perception](#), February 2008.

Scientific endeavors benefit from transparency and open declarations of real or perceived conflicts of interest. *Nature Chemical Biology*. [Keeping it real](#), April 2007.

Declaring competing financial interests when publishing a methods paper is essential to maintaining credibility and transparency. *Nature Methods*. [Nothing to declare?](#) November 2006.

Researchers' disclosures of competing financial interests are undergoing a dangerous transformation from instruments of transparency to evidence of wrongdoing. *Nature Medicine*. [Dealing with disclosure](#), September 2006.

A competing financial interests policy adds transparency to the increasingly elaborate net of financial interests in research. *Nature Cell Biology*. [Nothing to declare](#), June 2004.

The journal extends its conflicting financial interest policy to include review articles. *Nature Neuroscience*. [Financial disclosure for review authors](#), October 2003.

#### Introducing a competing financial interests policy for authors, 2001:

- *Nature Neuroscience*. [A new policy on financial disclosure](#)
- *Nature Immunology*. [Competing financial interests](#)
- *Nature*. [Declaration of financial interests](#)

[Top of page](#)

About NPG

Contact NPG

Accessibility statement

Help

Privacy policy

Use of cookies

Legal notice

Terms

Naturejobs

Nature Asia

Nature Education

RSS web feeds

Search:

go

© 2016 Macmillan Publishers Limited. All Rights Reserved.

partner of AGORA, HINARI, OARE, INASP, ORCID, CrossRef, COUNTER and COPE