

## 2023 Guidelines for the retraction of publications at Leiden University and LUMC

### Preamble

Honest and trustworthy academic research plays a key role at Leiden University and LUMC; people must be able to trust that our research is conducted in a thorough, honest, verifiable, impartial, and independent manner. If it is established that academic integrity has been violated in a research study, based on the advice of the Committee on Academic Integrity, the Executive Board of Leiden University or the Executive Board of LUMC may decide that any publications based on the research in question should be withdrawn. This decision will be based on specific advice thereto of the Committee on Academic Integrity.

## Section 1 Definitions and guiding principles

### Article 1. Guiding principles

Journals publish academic publications. When warranted, a request can be submitted to retract or withdraw a publication. This request may come from the author themselves, for example if they discover an error. The request may also come from another person, for example the author's employer. Such a request can be motivated by demonstrable plagiarism, data manipulation or fabrication, or other breaches of academic integrity.

*Points of attention and explanation: These guidelines are intended to facilitate decision-making and communication around retraction requests involving breaches of academic integrity, and indicate what steps can be taken within the institution. In this context, these guidelines contribute to:*

- maintaining the integrity of academic practice
- preserving trust in science
- protecting those involved, including co-authors

*These guidelines are intended to support decision-making and communication by the Executive Board of Leiden University and the Executive Board of LUMC. These guidelines can be consulted by anyone within Leiden University and LUMC.*

### Article 2. Definitions

**Retraction of an article:** When a violation of academic integrity occurs (e.g., in cases of false claims of authorship, plagiarism, or manipulation of data), it may be necessary to retract a publication. The original publication remains unchanged and retrievable/accessible. The publication is accompanied by a retraction note.

**Withdrawal of an article:** When a publication is defamatory, infringes on legal rights of others, or by court order, or when a publication, if acted upon, may pose a serious health risk, it may be necessary to delete it altogether. The publication is then no longer retrievable/accessible, although the metadata are retained.

**Board:** The Executive Board of Leiden University, or the Executive Board of LUMC.

**Committee on Academic Integrity:** Committee established by the Boards, to which anyone can submit a complaint when they have a reasonable suspicion that an employee or former employee of Leiden University or LUMC has violated academic integrity. The committee investigates complaints

and advises the applicable Executive Board. (See [Academic integrity complaints regulation Leiden Universit & Leiden University Medical Center](#)).

**Retraction:** Withdrawal or deletion of publications.

## **Section 2 Procedure**

### **Article 3. Committee for Academic Integrity**

Honest and trustworthy academic research plays a key role at Leiden University and LUMC; people must be able to trust that research and research results affiliated with Leiden University and LUMC are conducted and obtained in a thorough, honest, verifiable, impartial, and independent manner.

A retraction request due to a breach of academic integrity often follows a final recommendation from the Committee on Academic Integrity.

Leiden University and LUMC have a Committee on Academic Integrity. Anyone can submit a complaint to the Committee when they suspect that a current or former employee of Leiden University or LUMC has violated academic integrity. The Committee investigates the complaint and advises the Executive Board. When the complaint relates to a member of the Executive Board, the Committee addresses its advice to the Supervisory Board.

The Committee can also investigate suspected breaches of academic integrity at the Board's request. The advice to the Board may include measures proposed to be taken.

After receiving the advice, the Board formulates its opinion on the matter in an official proposed decision. If the defendant is or was employed by both institutions, the Boards reach a joint decision. The complainant and defendant are notified in writing and may, within six weeks of being notified by the Board, request that the LOWI (National Institute for Scientific Integrity) Advisory Committee issue a recommendation concerning the Board's decision. When advice has been requested from the LOWI Advisory Committee, the Board reconsiders its decision after receiving this advice. This may result in the Board upholding, modifying, or withdrawing its decision.

### **Article 4. Steps following recommendation to retract**

When, in a recommendation officially adopted by the Board, the Committee on Academic Integrity advises that a publication be retracted or withdrawn, the following steps are taken:

1. The defendant(s) and co-authors are informed by the Board in writing of their decision, and that the publisher will be requested to retract or withdraw the publication in question.
2. The publisher or editor-in-chief is informed by the Board in writing about their decision, and asked to retract the publication .
3. Once the author(s) and publisher/editor-in-chief have been informed, a press release is issued concerning the request to retract or withdraw the publication.
4. The request to retract or withdraw the publication is publicly announced on the website of Leiden University/LUMC. This information is published in the same location as the CWI recommendations, in Dutch and in English. It includes the full title of the article, as well as the name of the journal in which the article was published, and a link to the article (a DOI link where possible). It also includes a short description of the grounds for the retraction request. A reference to the link of the relevant CWI recommendation is also included.

5. A check takes place to see whether the publication is included in the repository of Leiden University or LUMC. If so, this version is also retracted or withdrawn. The Strategy and Academic Affairs Directorate regularly checks whether the publication has been retracted or withdrawn. When the publication is not withdrawn within six months, the publisher or editor-in-chief is sent a written reminder on behalf of the Executive Board of Leiden University or LUMC.

### **Article 5. Related publications**

Requests to retract or withdraw a publication may also affect other related publications, such as preprints, or edited versions of the article

*Points of attention and explanation: if the request concerns a chapter in a PhD dissertation, the Doctorate Board decides on retraction and any further steps surrounding the PhD dissertation.*

## **Section 3. Protection of those involved**

### **Article 6. Anonymisation**

The full title of the article, as well as the name of the journal in which the article is published and a link to the article (a DOI link where possible) of the publication to be retracted or withdrawn are made public (see Article 4.5). This clears academia as quickly as possible (it should be borne in mind that retractions may take years and fall outside the universities' sphere of influence), promotes transparency, and prevents misplaced suspicion. In this way, the co-authors are not mentioned directly, although they can be found by further searches. This is deemed an acceptable aspect since authors engage with the public domain through their publications. When several authors appear on a single publication, they all bear and accept responsibility for the publication. In this context, this kind of disclosure is not an extension of their presence in the public domain.

## **Section 4 Responsibilities**

### **Article 7.**

The Executive Board is responsible for implementing these guidelines.

## **Section 5 Other provisions**

### **Article 8.**

If there is reason to do so, these guidelines may be revised at the request of the Executive Board of Leiden University or the Executive Board of LUMC.

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