Inclusive name change policy for publishers (guiding checklist)

1. **How an author requests a change**
   - Is your name change policy available on the website? (it should be freely accessible)
   - Does your policy show the clear steps required in advance of an author contacting the journal?
   - Is there a named person to contact regarding the change? (e.g. editorial office, a named individual who has had D&I/trans inclusion training is preferable)
   - Is there a privacy statement or notice to protect the identity and personal data of the author requesting the change from the point of first contact? (authors may not request for fear of their name change request and the implications of it being shared more widely)
   - Is there more than one way for an author to contact you with a name change request? (this is necessary for accessibility reasons)

2. **Initial response from publishers**
   - Do you have a standard style first response template that can be adjusted depending on the reason for name change?
   - Do you have an internal policy and guidance available for all staff to guide them? (this shouldn’t be ad-hoc or up to editor discretion as then an empathetic/inclusive experience is entirely dependent on who the author communicating with. This needs to be an organisation’s response, not an individual’s)

3. **Evidence required to process change**
   - Is the evidence required for a name change listed in your publicly available policy?
   - Will you accept multiple forms of evidence? (legal documentation could include a name change certificate issued by deed-poll or equivalent government body. Alternative acceptable documents could include a letter from employer/supervisor on official letter-head verifying that the name-change has taken place at their workplace and/or payroll)

4. **Technical aspects of change**
   - Will the DOI remain the same?
   - Will the author change be propagated to all public domain versions?
   - Will any files holding the previous name be stored and how securely? This may be necessary for legal reasons but should have a time limit and additional privacy notice about who can access this.
   - Will the name change be applied to all versions of the article and supplementary files? (this may need to be manually applied and checked depending on your system)

5. **Communicating the change**
   - Will the change be notified on the publication record as a name change, not an erratum or correction? (We recommend developing standard text of ‘notification of change’. Publishers should look to work together in future to standardise this. By removing the need to issue a correction notice, the author (and their co-authors) are not subject to the embarrassment that is commonly associated with it)
Is there clarity as to who the change will be notified to? This allows an author requesting a name change to know what process they are consenting to.

- It’s recommended only the corresponding author needs to be notified. The author requesting the name change has a right to privacy, please consider that when thinking about who needs to know of the change and the implications of sharing this information.

- Suggested text for policy: ‘Researchers may wish to inform their co-authors of the change, for example so that they use an updated offline copy or change the way they cite the publication. Or researchers can rely on our notification to the corresponding author alone and the updated online version. Please inform the editorial office if we should wait until a particular date to enact the name change to give researchers time to communicate with co-authors if desired.’

6. Indexing

- Do you take responsibility to resend updated files to indexers?
- Are you able to follow up with indexers to implement the change across their database?

A worked example (F1000 Research)


Internal policy
Name change policy F1000

Purpose

To provide an internal workflow across platforms to implement name changes for authors of articles, posters, documents and slides, peer reviewers and commenters (referred to collectively as ‘researchers’) as the need arises. Researchers may change their names for many reasons, including marriage or divorce, religious conversion, and gender identity recognition, and allowing name changes will support researchers by removing barriers for inclusion and author credit.

Background

Across most of the publishing industry there are no existing policies for changing an author’s name after publication, unless a mistake has been made, which then leads to a correction being issued. COPE and the ICMJE do not have specific policies on name changes when no mistake has been made. However, one [previous COPE case](https://journalcopetemplate.org/previous-cases) stated that ‘An author should be allowed to have charge of their name, and if they wish to change it, then the editor should accommodate this request by publishing a simple erratum or corrigendum.’

The Association of Computer Machinery has a detailed [policy about name changes](https://www.acm.org/about/policies). They allow updating a name, linking two identities and separating identities. For the purposes of F1000, their updating a name part of the policy is the most useful.
Anecdotally, in the event of a name change request, PLOS replaces the initial published version of an article with a new version that has the new author list. In their guidelines: ‘In very rare cases, we may choose to correct the article itself and re-post it online. If that course is taken, a correction notice will also be created to document the changes to the original article’.

F1000 seeks to make a policy for name changing to remove barriers for researchers surrounding inclusion and credit. Keeping an up to date ORCID profile and linking ORCID to their articles/peer review reports published on F1000 platforms should always be emphasised. Caution should be emphasised, as researcher testimonials have indicated that connecting ORCID IDs may capture unwanted attention to name changes.

Few name changes are expected; however, having this policy in place will avoid confusion when the need arises and shows that F1000 is a leader of inclusivity.

Actions

1. Implement an internal workflow for name changes, which will aid editors to handle these cases ethically and sensitively.

Identification

The [previous COPE case](#) states that ‘It is not unethical to request a change in your name but the editor must be certain that the author requesting the change is in fact the author of the paper, and the editor should insist on proof of identification.’

Two scenarios: (i) researcher requests name change by email using email address stored on article/reviewer/commenter page of EM\(^1\); (ii) researcher sends email from new email address & need to confirm that this is the correct person.

For scenario (ii): request that researcher sends an email to the editorial office using the email address saved on the EM. If this is not possible, the researcher will need to provide proof that they are the researcher published on the article/report/comment, e.g. confirmation from institutional line-manager on letterheaded paper, or provide an updated faculty or ResearchGate page, or updated ORCID profile that depicts that a name change took place.

System process

A PDF copy of the article/report/comment (with the original name) must be downloaded and stored in the author folder on the S drive (if a peer reviewer or commenter, a new folder will be created for name changes). This is so that a copy of the original metadata is kept (metadata will be changed on the EM and no record will be kept of that change) so that it can be made on request if required, e.g. subpoena. The DOI of the article/report will remain the same – the version of the article with the original name will not be available to the public.

\(^{1}\) We understand that many academics (especially ECRs) will be on short term contracts so often have changes to their email addresses. The email address may also not update with a name change in time. Therefore it is important that any policy has multiple methods of identity verification and ways to evidence name changes.
For multiple versions of an article, the name change will need to be implemented across all versions manually.

If an article is indexed, the Production team will manually regenerate the files and resend to all indexers. It is up to the indexers if they update the version they have, and this may not occur – authors will need to be aware of this possible outcome.

On the article, after the name change has been implemented, Production will add a ‘Notice of Change’, not called Erratum etc. due to negativity surrounding this language, to the start of the article. Researcher testimonials have highlighted that a published notice of the author name change would be intrusive and would capture unnecessary attention; therefore, the following standard sentence will be added to the Notice of Change ‘A name change in the author list of this article was requested. The change was implemented on <date>.’

**External notice:**
The F1000Research platform….

**Changes in authorship:** If the author list of an article changes following its publication, a new version of the article can be published with an explanation included in the ‘Amendments’ section at the top of the new version. Any changes in authorship must be confirmed by all authors. If the editorial team is unable to contact an author, the corresponding author is responsible for facilitating communication. In agreement with [COPE guidelines](https://www.copublication.org/guidelines), the editorial team cannot take responsibility for resolving any disputes over authorship; any disagreements amongst the authors must be settled by the authors’ institution(s).

**Changes to author names:** <Platform name> understands that authors, reviewers or commenters may wish to change their names for many reasons, including marriage, divorce, gender identity recognition and other personal reasons. Following a name change request, the editorial office will require confirmation of the identification of the individual, and in the event of a name change on an author list, we will notify the corresponding author. Researchers may wish to inform their co-authors of the change, for example so that they use an updated offline copy or change the way they cite the publication. Or researchers can rely on our notification email to the corresponding author alone and the updated online version. Please inform the editorial office if we should wait until a particular date to enact the name change to give researchers time to communicate with co-authors if desired. Any change of name will not require a new version of the article to be created; all existing versions will be edited to reflect the change and the DOI will remain the same. A Notice of Change will be posted to make readers aware that a name change took place with the following standard text: ‘A name change in the author list of this article was requested. The change was implemented on <date>.’ Please note that <Platform name>

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2 The text in red was agreed to be added to the wording of this policy after its initial publication in September 2020. This is due to the ongoing concern of balancing any ‘need’ to inform co-authors and corresponding authors of the name change with the right to privacy of an author requesting a name change. We are part of a society that unfortunately still has people with transphobic views and behaviours. Therefore, in the instance of gender reassignment as the reason for name change, this notification would ‘out’ an individual as transgender. This could have implications for how the researcher is treated if the corresponding author notified holds transphobic attitudes. This additional wording is not a perfect solution, but hopefully will allow researchers requesting a name change to understand who will be notified and how so they can make the choice as to whether they request the change or not and whether they contact their co-author or not.
considers it a violation of publishing and personal ethics to request to change the name of another individual without their explicit consent. If an author, reviewer or commenter requires a name change, please contact the editorial office.