



## Guide for the Publication of Expression of Concern

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### ***Also see:***

[SciELO Ethics](#)

[Guidelines on Best Practices for Strengthening Ethics in Scientific Publication](#)

[Guide for the Publication of Addendum](#)

[Guide for the Publication of Erratum](#)

[Guide for the Publication of Retraction](#)

## 1 INTRODUCTION

An Expression of Concern is a document published by the editor with the purpose of alerting readers to doubts or concerns about the content of a published document. This measure is adopted when there is significant concern, but not yet sufficient information to justify a [retraction](#) (total or partial) or correction ([erratum](#)). In general, an Expression of Concern is used while awaiting the conclusion of an institutional investigation or other inquiries that may confirm or dismiss the raised suspicions.

The publication of the Expression of Concern may be recommended by editors, editorial board members, authors, institutions, or other stakeholders whenever there are reasonable indications of misconduct, serious error, or any situation that compromises the integrity of the published document. Its main objective is to safeguard transparency in the editorial process, preserving trust in the scientific literature while the situation is properly analyzed.

## 2 PROCEDURES FOR REGISTERING AND PUBLISHING AN EXPRESSION OF CONCERN

The process of publishing an Expression of Concern in SciELO must begin with the journal editor sending an email communication, informing about the need to publish this type of document in relation to already published content.

The communication must be addressed to the [SciELO Ethics](#) Committee, via the email <[etica@scielo.org](mailto:etica@scielo.org)>, and must include the following information: link to the document in SciELO, journal name, volume, issue, document title, DOI number, and a detailed description of the identified problem.

In addition to the email, the communication may also be submitted through the [Misconduct Report Form in Scientific Communication](#). The submission may be identified or may be made anonymously.

The [SciELO Ethics](#) Committee will review the request and decide on the pertinence of publishing the Expression of Concern.

Once the need for publication has been confirmed, the Expression of Concern must be included in the current issue and/or volume of the journal. Expressions of Concern must not be published in retroactive volumes or issues.

The creation and delivery of the Expression of Concern, together with the related document (referred to as the “Expression of Concern Package”), must be carried out by the XML service provider contracted by the journal. This process is the responsibility of the journal itself. (For more details, see the section **DELIVERY AND PUBLICATION OF THE “EXPRESSION OF CONCERN PACKAGE.”**)

### 3 EDITORIAL FLOW OF AN EXPRESSION OF CONCERN

#### A. Publication of the Expression of Concern

- a. **Purpose:** To alert readers about significant doubts regarding the content of a published article.
- b. **Characteristics:**
  - i. Published with its own DOI.
  - ii. Remains visible and linked to the original article.
  - iii. It is not a definitive retraction or correction (erratum).

#### B. Institutional Investigation

- a. **Purpose:** To assess the suspicions or doubts raised in the Expression of Concern.
- b. **Responsible party:** The institution(s) involved in the study or publication.

#### C. Results of the Investigation

- a. **If suspicions are confirmed:**
  - i. A [retraction](#) or [erratum](#) is published, depending on the severity of the problem identified.
- b. **If suspicions are dismissed:**
  - i. An **exoneration note** is published, clarifying that the investigation found no evidence to support the concerns raised.
  - ii. Published with its own DOI.
  - iii. Remains visible and linked to the original article.
  - iv. Declares that no evidence was found to support the concerns raised.

#### D. Ensuring Transparency

- a. All documents (Expression of Concern, Retraction, Erratum, Exoneration Note) remain published and **linked** to the original article.
- b. This ensures **transparency** of the editorial process and **traceability** of the decisions made.

### 4 TEXT OF THE EXPRESSION OF CONCERN

The Expression of Concern must be written clearly and objectively. Offensive language must not be used, and the content must be free of defamatory or accusatory statements. It must transparently communicate the following points:

- The **reason for the concern**, describing the indications of possible failure, inconsistency, dishonesty, or any issue that may affect the reliability of the document.
- **The issuer of the Expression of Concern**, identifying the editor-in-chief, editorial board, or responsible team.
- The document in question, with **full citation** according to the journal's bibliographic style.
- **The provisional nature of the Expression of Concern**, stating that it is a precautionary measure while awaiting the results of an institutional investigation or other inquiries.
- The request for a **formal investigation** and information that any conclusions will be communicated to readers.

Examples of text:

Example 1

The Editorial Team of the journal <journal title> issues this Expression of Concern regarding the article:

<full citation of the document in the bibliographic style adopted by the journal>

After inconsistencies were identified in the data of Figure 3 and it was not possible to verify the original submitted version.

This Expression of Concern is provisional and will be updated once the institutional investigation of the presented data is concluded.

<name of editor-in-chief>

Editor-in-chief

Example 2

The Editorial Board of the journal <journal title> communicates the publication of this Expression of Concern regarding the article:

<full citation of the document in the bibliographic style adopted by the journal>

There are indications of possible unauthorized use of images or unacknowledged sources. We have requested that the authors' institution conduct a formal investigation.

This is a precautionary measure while awaiting the institution's response.

Editorial Board of <journal title>

Example 3

The editor-in-chief of the journal <journal title> publishes this Expression of Concern regarding:

<full citation of the document in the bibliographic style adopted by the journal>

We have detected possible irregularities in the ethical approval protocol, still without complete documentary verification.

This notice will be revised as soon as the audit results are made available by the responsible institution.

<name of editor-in-chief>

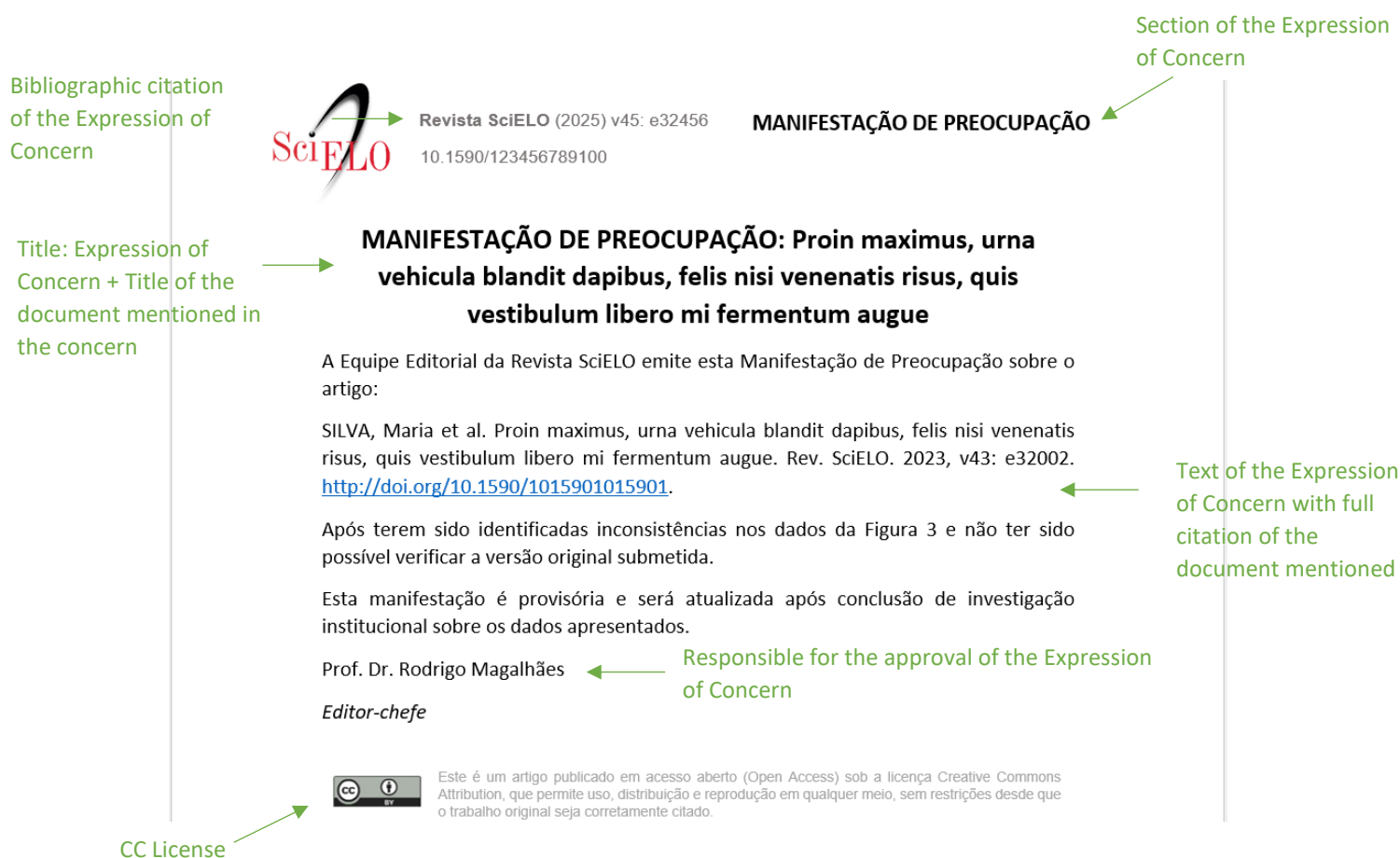
Editor-in-chief

## 5 PDF OF THE EXPRESSION OF CONCERN

The layout of the Expression of Concern must be treated by the journal's editorial team as any other scientific document, even if it has not undergone peer review, and must contain (**Figure 1**):

1. A DOI number specific to the Expression of Concern (*different from the DOI of the document subject to the concern*);
2. Section for the Expression of Concern (*respecting the language of the Expression of Concern text*);
3. Title of the Expression of Concern plus the title of the document subject to the concern (*respecting the language of the retraction text*);
4. Text of the Expression of Concern with the full citation of the document subject to the concern;
5. Bibliographic citation of the Expression of Concern:
  - a. Journal title;
  - b. Volume and/or issue (*always in the current volume and/or issue of publication*);
  - c. Year of publication (*always the current publication year*);
  - d. Pagination or e-location ID of the Expression of Concern;
6. Name of the editor-in-chief and/or journal editorial team responsible for approving the Expression of Concern (*do not include signature for security reasons*);
7. Creative Commons (CC) license (the same adopted by the journal).

**Figure 1:** Example of an Expression of Concern PDF



## 6 PDF OF THE DOCUMENT SUBJECT TO THE EXPRESSION OF CONCERN

The document subject to the Expression of Concern must include the two elements below in its PDF file. The journal's editorial team has the freedom to decide where to insert them (**Figure 2**).

1. Approval date of the Expression of Concern in the document's history dates.
2. Text indicating that the document has an Expression of Concern with the DOI link of the Expression of Concern. As a suggestion, we recommend the following text:
  - i. **Portuguese:**
    - a. Este documento possui uma manifestação de preocupação: [DOI link of the Expression of Concern]
  - i. **English:**
    - a. This document has an expression of concern: [DOI link of the Expression of Concern]
  - i. **Spanish:**
    - a. Este documento tiene una expresión de preocupación: [DOI link of the Expression of Concern]

To create the DOI link of the Expression of Concern (prior to publication), simply insert the DOI that will be assigned, preceded by <https://doi.org/>.

For more information, consult [Display guidelines for Crossref DOIs](#), item **How to display a Crossref link** and [Guidance for creating a DOI](#) (Portuguese only).

**Figure 2:** Addition of text with Expression of Concern link + history date in the PDF of the document subject to the Expression of Concern



## 7 TEXT OF THE EXONERATION NOTE

The Exoneration Note must be written clearly and objectively, and free of defamatory or accusatory content. Its purpose is to inform readers, in a transparent manner, that an investigation has been concluded and that no evidence was found compromising the integrity or reliability of the previously questioned document.

The Exoneration Note must communicate, at a minimum, the following points:

- The **initial reason** that led to the Expression of Concern or questioning, in a summarized form and without accusatory language.
- The **conclusion of the investigation**, stating that no failures, misconduct, or improper practices compromising the content were identified.
- **The issuer of the note**, identifying the editor-in-chief, editorial board, or responsible team.
- The document in question, with **full citation** according to the journal's bibliographic style.
- An explicit statement that the **note formally closes the process initiated** by the Expression of Concern or prior questioning.

**Note:** The term “Exoneration Note” is used in this guide for its clarity in Portuguese. In different editorial contexts, this type of communication following an Expression of Concern may also be referred to as “Editor’s Note” or other equivalent terms. In the international context, there is no single consolidated standard; expressions such as Editorial Expression or Expression of Concern resolution may be employed depending on the publication’s practice.

Examples of text:

### Example 1

The Editorial Board of the journal <journal title> informs that the investigation conducted in relation to the following article:

<full citation of the document in the bibliographic style adopted by the journal>

concluded that no failures, misconduct, or improper practices compromising the published content were identified.

With this Exoneration Note, the journal formally closes the process initiated by the previously published Expression of Concern.

Editorial Board of the journal <journal title>

## Example 2

The Editorial Team of the journal <journal title> declares that, after the institutional investigation regarding the article:

<full citation of the document in the bibliographic style adopted by the journal>

No evidence was found affecting the reliability or integrity of the study.

This Exoneration Note supersedes any doubts previously recorded through the Expression of Concern.

<name of editor-in-chief>

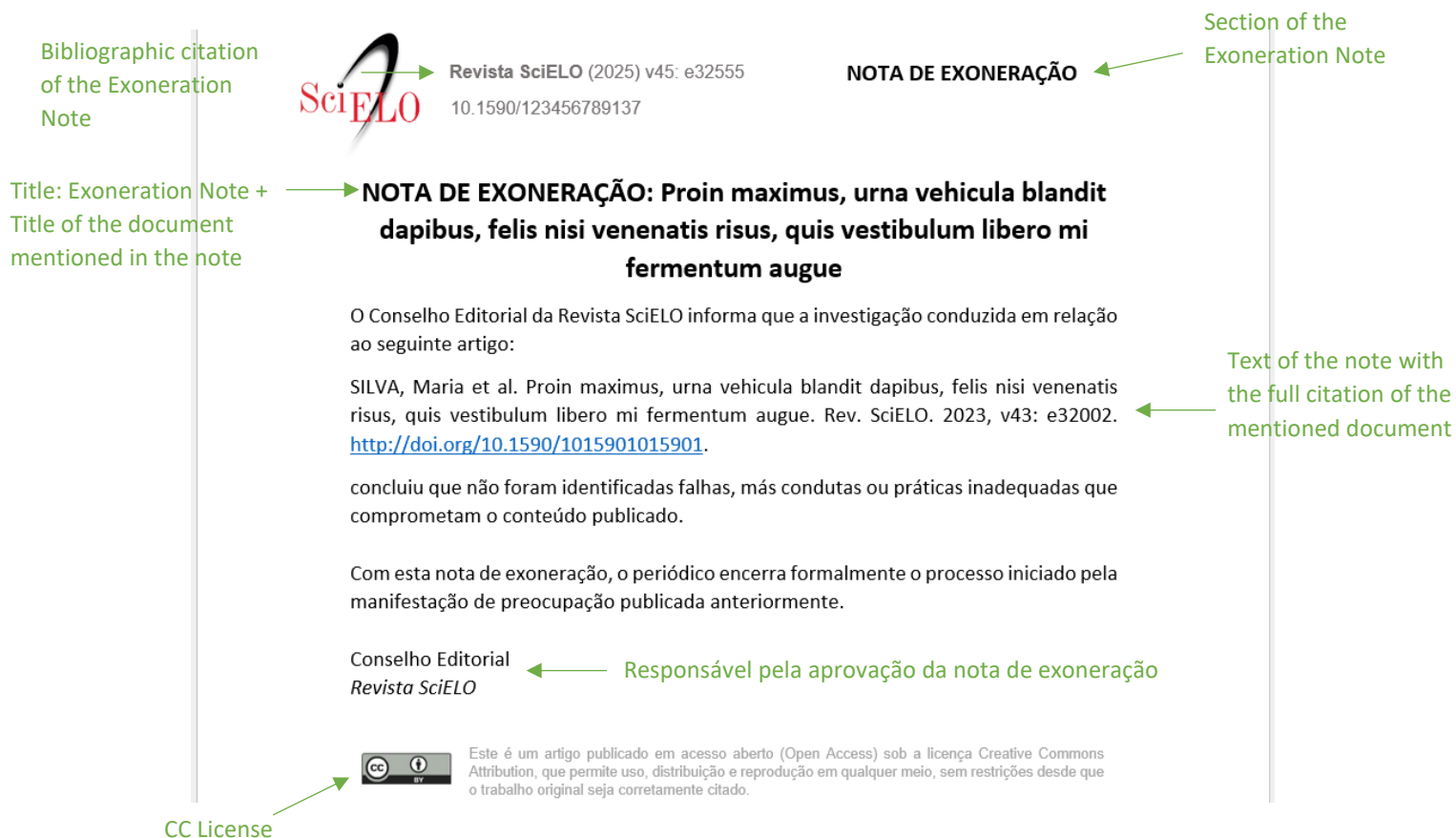
Editor-in-chief

## 8 PDF OF THE EXONERATION NOTE

The layout of the Exoneration Note must follow the same standards as any other scientific document published by the journal, even if it is not subject to peer review. The PDF must contain **(Figure 3)**:

1. A DOI number specific to the Exoneration Note (*different from the DOI of the mentioned document*).
2. Section of the Exoneration Note (*respecting the language of the note text*).
  - a. *For more details on the use of the term “Exoneration Note,” see the note in Section 7.*
3. Title of the Exoneration Note plus the title of the mentioned document (*respecting the language of the note text*).
4. Text of the Exoneration Note with the full citation of the mentioned document.
5. Bibliographic citation of the Exoneration Note:
  - a. Journal title;
  - b. Volume and/or issue (*always in the current volume and/or issue of publication*);
  - c. Year of publication (*always the current publication year*);
  - d. Pagination or e-location ID of the Exoneration Note;
6. Name of the editor-in-chief and/or editorial team of the journal responsible for approval (*do not include signature for security reasons*);
7. Creative Commons (CC) license adopted by the journal.

**Figure 3: Example of an Exoneration Note PDF**



## 9 PDF OF THE DOCUMENT MENTIONED BY THE DISCLAIMER

The document that received a disclaimer must include, at a minimum, the two elements below in its PDF file. The editorial team has the freedom to decide where to insert them (**Figure 4**). It is important to emphasize that the previously included data regarding the expression of concern remain in the document, and the disclaimer data are added. One should not replace the other:

1. Approval date of the disclaimer in the document's history dates.
2. Text indicating that the document has a disclaimer, with the DOI link of the disclaimer. Suggested text (For more details on the use of the term "Disclaimer," see Note in Section 7):
  - a. Portuguese:
    - i. Este documento possui uma nota de exoneração: [DOI link of the disclaimer]
  - b. English:
    - i. This document has a disclaimer: [DOI link of the disclaimer]
  - c. Spanish:
    - i. Este documento tiene una nota de exoneración: [DOI link of the disclaimer]

To create the DOI link for the disclaimer (before publication), simply insert the DOI that will be assigned, preceded by <https://doi.org/>.

For more information, consult [Display guidelines for Crossref DOIs](#), item **How to display a Crossref link** and [Guidance for creating a DOI](#) (Portuguese only).

**Figure 4:** Addition of text with disclaimer link + history date in the PDF of the document that received a disclaimer



## 10 TEXT AND PDF OF ERRATUM, RETRACTION, AND DOCUMENT MENTIONED BY THEM

If the suspicions raised by the expression of concern are confirmed, a Retraction or Erratum must be published depending on the severity of the identified issue. The complete guides for publishing these documents must be consulted:

- [Guide for the Publication of Erratum](#)
- [Guide for the Publication of Retraction](#)

## 11 XML

For XML tagging of the expression of concern, disclaimer, and the document mentioned by both [Guide for the use of XML elements and attributes in documents following the SciELO Publishing Schema implementation and other relevant publishing information](#), sections:

- [Expression of Concern](#)
  - [Expression of Concern XML](#)
  - [XML of the Document Mentioned by Expression of Concern](#)

## 12 DELIVERY AND PUBLICATION OF THE “EXPRESSION OF CONCERN PACKAGE”

The creation and delivery of the expression of concern, together with the document related to it (called the “Expression of Concern Package”), must be carried out by the XML service provider contracted by the journal. This process must be performed by the journal itself, and the package must include (the same rules below apply to the delivery of the “**Disclaimer Package**”):

1. XML of the Expression of Concern + images, if any;
2. PDF of the Expression of Concern;
3. XML of the document mentioned by the expression of concern + images, if any;
4. PDF of the document mentioned by the expression of concern.

The expression of concern must be published in the current volume/issue of the journal; they are not published in past volumes/issues.

The file name of the document mentioned by the expression of concern that is already published in SciELO must be the same as the previously submitted file.

The delivery of the Expression of Concern Package must follow the rules of the e [Package Delivery Guide for Publication \(Portuguese Only\)](#), and the expression of concern must be included in a [continuous publication](#) (CP) batch or in a regular issue (in this case, the expression of concern must be included in the table of contents).

The expression of concern must be published in all languages in which the document subject to the concern exists.

For questions, please contact the SciELO team at [<publicacao@scielo.org>](mailto:publicacao@scielo.org) and [<etica@scielo.org>](mailto:etica@scielo.org).

## References

The procedures followed by SciELO for the registration and publication of erratum, retraction, addendum, expression of concern, and note of exoneration are based on standards recommended by the following ethics, indexing, and scientific publishing committees.

- **SciELO**
  - [SciELO Ethics: Ethics and Good Practices in Research Communication Office \(SciELO\)](#)
  - [Guidelines on Best Practices for Strengthening Ethics in Scientific Publication \(SciELO\)](#)
  - [Guide to the Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools and Resources in Research Communication on the SciELO Network](#)
- **NISO: National Information Standards Organization**
  - [Communication of Retractions, Removals, and Expressions of Concern - CREC \(NISO\)](#)
- **COPE: Committee on Publication Ethics**
  - [Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing \(COPE\)](#)

- [COPE Retraction guidelines \(COPE\)](#)
- [Guidance \(COPE\)](#)
- **PubMed**
  - [Errata, Retractions, and Other Linked Citations in PubMed \(PubMed\)](#)
- **PMC: PubMed Central**
  - [Policies: Article Types \(PMC\)](#)
- **CSE's: Council of Science Editors**
  - [Recommendations for Promoting Integrity in Scientific Journal Publications \(CSE's\)](#)
- **ABEC: Associação Brasileira de Editores Científicos**
  - [Diretrizes do CSE para Promover Integridade em Publicações de Periódicos Científicos \(ABEC\)](#)
- **ICMJE: International Committee of Medical Journal Editors**
  - [Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals \(ICMJE\)](#)
  - [Publishing and Editorial Issues Related to Publication in Medical Journals \(ICMJE\)](#)
  - [Corrections and Version Control \(ICMJE\)](#)
- **FAPESP: Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo**
  - [Code of Good Scientific Practice \(FAPESP\)](#)
- **Equator Network**
  - [Enhancing the quality and Transparency Of health Research \(Equator Network\)](#)
- **World Economic Forum**
  - [Code of Ethics for Researchers \(World Economic Forum\)](#)
- **ORI: The Office of Research Integrity**
  - [Handling Misconduct \(ORI\)](#)

## How to cite this document

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