

PREDATORY PUBLISHING CHECKLIST

At USIU-Africa, we value good scholarship and we're excited by the possibilities presented by the web and open access publishing. We're wary, however, of predatory publishers attempting to exploit academics and scholarly authors. We discourage publication in predatory journals and discourage citation of articles in predatory journals.

Checklist of things to watch out for

There are a number of factors that can be used to assess an individual publisher. **Please note:** none of these factors should be taken in isolation but used alongside good judgement.

1. **Association membership** – if a journal claims to be supporting Open Access then check if it is a member of either the [Open Access Scholarly Publishers' Association \(OASPA\)](#) or the [Directory of Open Access Journals \(DOAJ\)](#). It's also worth checking if they belong to the [Committee on Publication Ethics \(COPE\)](#) which maintains a code of conduct for publishers.
2. **Transparency** – a good publisher will be open about their practices with contact information and a mission statement easily found on their website. Check the sending address of any emails carefully and look for spelling or grammatical mistakes but be aware of cultural differences that may explain overly formal language. Exercise caution if the publisher appears to focus on a huge range of topics as this may indicate a for-profit rather than for-research approach
3. **Indexing** – appearing in typical indexes and databases for their associated discipline is a good sign for a publisher. However remember that there may be perfectly valid reasons why a particular journal is not indexed such as being very niche or new. Authors could also try searching for other titles from the same publisher to overcome this problem.
4. **Quality of previous publications** – assessing previous output from the publisher in question may give an idea of the academic quality of the publication. Check for basic mistakes in spelling or grammar in the work which may indicate a lack of peer review.
5. **Fees** – any author fees should be clearly explained prior to publication and be easily accessible to potential authors. Be wary of any 'hidden' fees which are raised during the publication process.

6. **Copyright** – if the publisher claims to operate under an Open Access model then check whether a [Creative Commons](#) or other type of open license is being applied. The publisher should also be upfront about the rights the author will retain after publication. It is the author’s responsibility to check that these don’t conflict with any funder mandates.
7. **Peer review** - the process of the individual journal should be clearly highlighted and guidelines for both authors and reviewers should be easily accessible. Beware of the promise of fast peer review periods as this may indicate a less than thorough process.
8. **Editorial board** – members should be listed, along with a named Editor in Chief. Authors should consider if the names mentioned are recognized experts in the field the publisher is covering. It may also be worth checking the web presence of some members to see if their membership is mentioned elsewhere.
9. **Website quality** – check if the website looks professional but be aware of cultural differences. What may look sophisticated to someone from a large university in the developed world, may be out of reach of a smaller publisher in another country.

Above all - trust your judgement!

If something doesn’t feel right with the publisher then further investigation is needed. Think of the publishing process as you would online shopping and exercise similar levels of caution – if an online store looks unreliable you are less likely to give them your credit card details until you have investigated further.

Resources for Guidance

1. USIU-Africa LibGuide
<https://usiu-ke.libguides.com/c.php?g=1023114&p=7410703>
2. Principles of transparency and best practice in scholarly publishing compiled by the Committee on Publication Ethics, Directory of Open Access Journals, Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association, World Association of Medical Editors.
<https://oaspa.org/principles-of-transparency-and-best-practice-in-scholarly-publishing/>
3. “Fake”, “predatory”, and “pseudo” journals: Charlatans threatening trust in science. International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. <https://bit.ly/2kg08j3>
4. Laine C, Winker MA. Identifying predatory or pseudo-journals. World Association of Medical Editors. <https://bit.ly/2jWvT0p>

5. Predatory or deceptive publishers – Recommendations for caution. Council of Science Editors. <https://bit.ly/2ISd2UQ>
6. AMWA–EMWA–ISMPP Joint position statement on predatory publishing. American Medical Writers Association, European Medical Writers Association, International Society for Medical Publication Professionals.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03007995.2019.1646535>
7. Predatory publishing. COPE Forum discussion summary. 5 November 2018.
<https://bit.ly/2kzZDRh>
8. Think.Check.Submit. An online guide to help researchers identify trusted journals for their research. <https://thinkchecksubmit.org/>
9. Think.Check.Attend. An online guide to help researchers judge the legitimacy and academic credentials of conferences. <https://thinkcheckattend.org/>

This guide is just that, a guide. Ultimately it is up to each author to make the final decision on where to publish and to decide what they expect from their publishers.

The SGSR& E and the Library welcome feedback and comments from members of the University community. Please send your feedback to gradhelpdesk@usiu.ac.ke OR libraryhelpdesk@usiu.ac.ke