



GUIDELINE ON PREDATORY JOURNALS, CONFERENCES AND AWARDS

1. SCOPE/PURPOSE

The purpose of this Guideline is to:

- 1.1 Provide information regarding predatory journals, conferences and awards that may ruin scientific progress as well as tools and interventions in combating predatory practices.
- 1.2 Raise awareness among researchers of the issues relating to predatory journals, conferences and awards and provide resources to help them choose publication outlets and conferences appropriately.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 An article written by Professor Jeffrey Beall and published in the journal Nature in 2012 gave rise to the term "Predatory Journals", which first appeared in PubMed.
- 2.2 In 2021, it was reported that Malaysian academics rank among the highest 'fraudulent' articles discovered in a global database.
- 2.3 Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) in its letter dated 13th July 2023 has prohibited to publish in three international publishers namely Hindawi, Frontier and MDPI using MOHE funding.
- 2.4 The information in question raises doubt in reliability and impacting on both the international university rankings as well as the quality of research conducted in Malaysia.
- 2.5 The advice contained in this Guideline should help inform researchers to ensure they make a careful investigation of publication outlets and conferences as well as awards before choosing a suitable outlet for submission, or a conference to attend.

3. DEFINITION

- 3.1 **Predatory** is the term used to describe the systematic, fraudulent, and for-profit of seemingly scientific information with no concern for quality control.
- 3.2 **Predatory publishing** is an exploitative academic publishing business model that involves charging publication fees to authors only superficially checking articles for quality and legitimacy, and without providing editorial and publishing services that legitimate academic journals provide, whether open access or not.
- 3.3 **Predatory conferences** are meetings set up to appear as legitimate scientific conferences but which are exploitative as they do not provide proper editorial control over presentations, and advertising can include claims of involvement of prominent academics who are, in fact, uninvolved.
- 3.4 **Predatory awards** are a type of fraud that targets researchers and scientific institutions by exploiting their ambitions and hopes of obtaining important and prestigious scientific awards, in order to achieve huge financial profits.

4. CHARACTERISTICS OF PREDATORY JOURNALS, CONFERENCES AND AWARDS

- 4.1 The website lacks an ISSN or uses one that has already been assigned to another publisher or organisation with inaccurate or misleading information
- 4.2 The name of the publication or organisation is similar to or easily mistaken for that of another; its scope or association.
- 4.3 The routine is not specified, and/or the existing material suggests that the schedule is unpredictable.
- 4.4 Despite such assurances, there is no electronic backup or preservation of access to material.
- 4.5 Policies and notices regarding copyright (as well as publishing and user licences) are absent or ambiguous.
- 4.6 In terms of authorship/contributorship, data sharing and reproducibility, intellectual property, ethical oversight, conflicts of interest, and corrections/retractions, there are no published policies.

- 4.7 It is implied that approval process are left out. Application submitted are reviewed by peers insufficiently or not at all.
- 4.8 The access to the content and any associated fees are not specified, and in other cases, the listed materials are not accessible at all.
- 4.9 How allegations of wrongdoing are handled are not described.
- 4.10 Missing, ambiguous, inaccurate, or misleading information about the ownership and/or management is present.
- 4.11 The entire identities and affiliations of the editorial board members are not provided, and there is missing, incorrect, or unsuitable information regarding them.
- 4.12 The editor-in-chief is also the owner or the editor-in-chief is the editor of many other journals, particularly in subjects that are unrelated, therefore full names, affiliations, and contact information for the editorial office are absent.
- 4.13 Mandatory fees are not declared or explained in detail on the website, submission system, or letter of recognition, and/or are only disclosed as a requirement of acceptance in the acceptance letter.
- 4.14 Business models, partnerships, or sources of income are not mentioned; publishing costs or waiver status are associated to editorial decisions.
- 4.15 There is no stated advertising policy, or advertisements are incorporated into content or are tied to editorial/organiser judgements.
- 4.16 Direct marketing is intrusive and disseminates misinformation or falsehoods.
- 4.17 Rapid acceptance of submissions with poor quality control and little or no true peer review.
- 4.18 Acceptance of submissions consisting of nonsense and/or hoaxed content.
- 4.19 Notification of high attendance fees and charges only after acceptance.
- 4.20 Claiming involvement of academics in conference organising committees without their agreement and not allowing them to resign.
- 4.21 Mimicry of the names or website styles of more established conferences including holding a similarly named conference in the same city.
- 4.22 Promoting meetings with unrelated images lifted from the Internet.
- 4.23 The disproportionately high number of awardees, by promoting mediocrity, defeats the whole purpose of instituting awards to encourage brilliance.

- 4.24 Most of these awards are given in vast fields and not restricted to a particular branch of research. For example, “Young Researcher Award”.
- 4.25 The judging process is often shrouded in mystery, as it usually does not involve any floor presentation.
- 4.26 The necessary steps of research, like evaluating plagiarism or checking for ethical violations, are circumvented.

5. TOOLS AND INTERVENTION IN COMBATING PREDATORY PRACTICES

- 5.1 Inform researchers, managers, librarians, and administrators about predatory practices. Verify that your journals follow the Core Practises of Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)/ Directory of Open Access Journal (DOAJ)/ Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OasPA)/ World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) Principles of transparency and best practise in scholarly publishing. (<https://bit.ly/2IZNPYU>) (<https://bit.ly/2m2kFrN>)
- 5.2 Use the 'Think.Check.Submit.' campaign to find reliable journals. (<https://thinkchecksubmit.org/>)
- 5.3 Establish and regularly update community- and discipline-specific journal whitelists/ safelists using precise standards. For example, the 'Directory of Nursing Journals' that were jointly maintained by Nurse Author & Editor and the International Academy of Nursing Editors. (<https://nursingeditors.com/journals-directory/>)
- 5.4 Verify spam invitations to submit manuscripts (such as research papers or invited reviews) or attend conferences that are sent via email, text message, or phone call. Use the DNS Checker to examine any suspected spam's Internet Protocol. (<https://dnschecker.org/ip-blacklist-checker.php>)
- 5.5 Double-check that any claimed metrics, indexed status, and organisational membership are accurate, as well as journal titles, ISSN codes, and URLs. Verify that researcher biographies on LinkedIn or institutional websites mention any stated journal editorship.
- 5.6 Check the quality by reading a sample of old articles or previous conferences or awards from potential target organisations.
- 5.7 Be wary of handing over your copyright to a predatory organisation and paying author fees or participation fees, especially when they are unexpectedly asked as a requirement of acceptance. As a requirement for acceptance, demand a withdrawal if payment is still owing or copyright assignments have not yet been made. (<https://bit.ly/2LaYOY4>)

- 5.8 DNS-based blocklists such as “scientificspam.net” list spammers that target young researchers by retrieving their email addresses from PubMed and other scientific sources.
- 5.9 Hold regular academic sessions on such topics so that budding researchers know about such nuisance in the academic field.
- 5.10 Blacklist such organizations at regular intervals and inform the researchers about the same.
- 5.11 When conducting systematic and meta-analyses, avoid citing predatory journal publications and use caution. Prevent citation of articles from fake journals or associate with any potential predators.

6. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITY

- 6.1 The University has a responsibility to:
 - a. maintain and promote this Guideline;
 - b. provide Researchers with training and awareness of the guideline and their responsibilities.
- 6.2 Researchers, both staff and students, have a responsibility to:
 - a. ensure to publish appropriately and avoid predatory journals, conferences and awards; and
 - b. support their colleagues, including research students, in order that they also publish appropriately.

7. REFERENCE

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8. VERSION CONTROL AND CHANGE HISTORY

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