ATENEO DE MANILA UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH, CREATIVE WORK, AND INNOVATION

Guidelines for Selecting a Journal for the Publication of Scholarly Work

Choosing the right peer-reviewed journal is crucial for reaching the target readership, ensuring the credibility of your publication, and maximizing the impact and visibility of your scholarly work. These guidelines outline key criteria and best practices of journal management that faculty members and students of the Ateneo de Manila University can consider in selecting an appropriate venue for their work.

1. Fit and Scope

Given the wide range of journals in existence even within a single discipline, it is important to find the best fit for your manuscript.

- *Aims and Scope*: Always read the journal's stated Aims and Scope (sometimes under the heading "About the Journal," "Mission Statement," or "Scope"). It can be found usually on the journal's website. In print editions, you will find it usually in the inside front cover. Assess if your paper's topic, methodology, and theoretical approach align with those of the journal.
- *Target Audience*: Identify the primary audience of your paper (e.g., specialists in a subfield, discipline, or geographical area; general practitioners; policymakers; and so on). Publishing in a niche journal is often better for a highly specialized work than in a general one.
- *Recent Content*: Review the most recent issues of the journal to confirm that it is currently publishing work similar to yours in terms of style, sensibility, and overall approach.

2. Academic Reputation

Look for journals with demonstrable scholarly influence, as measured by both quantitative metrics and qualitative reputation.

- *Impact Metrics (IF/CiteScore)*: Check the journal's Journal Citation Reports (JCR) Impact Factor and/or CiteScore (from Scopus). Also look at SCImago (SJR), which provides journal rankings. In general, a journal with a high rank (e.g., Quartile 1 and Quartile 2) in its subject category indicates that the academic community considers the published work in that journal to be authoritative and intellectually significant. You may still choose a journal with low or no impact metrics, depending on your other considerations.

- *Indexing*: Verify that the journal is indexed in major databases relevant to your field (e.g., Web of Science, Scopus, PubMed, PsycINFO) because indexing is an important factor in scholarly recognition. To the extent possible, choose a journal that is indexed in Scopus.
- *Norwegian List*: You can also check the academic standing of a journal by verifying its inclusion in a National Research Evaluation and Classification System such as the Norwegian Register for Scientific Journals, Series and Publishers, also known as the Norwegian List
- *Category C*: You can also use the list of acceptable journals and publishers identified by different Schools in the Higher Education cluster, which you can find here: https://www.ateneo.edu/research/policies/approved-journals-publishers
- *Sponsorship/Publisher*: Consider the reputation of the sponsoring society or publisher (e.g., a university press, a major commercial publisher, or a long-established professional society). Strong institutional backing often correlates with sustained quality of publication.

3. Peer Review Process

The review process is the bedrock of academic publishing. Make sure that you publish your work in a journal that practices credible peer review.

- *Peer Review Policy*: Confirm that the journal has a rigorous peer review process, which is usually double-blind. However, some journals now follow an open review process, in which journal publications include reviewer reports and sometimes the identities of the reviewers. This method aims to increase accountability and integrity by making the review process visible to the public.
- *Quality of Referee Reports*: If you know authors who have published in your target journal, ask them about the quality of referee reports, particularly to know if the review process is helpful in manuscript revision. Choose a journal whose reviewers take the time to read manuscripts and provide constructive feedback.
- *Editorial Board*: Review the composition of the Editorial Board. A strong board consists of established, recognized scholars in the field, which is indicative of respect and rigor.

4. Publishing Timeline, Efficiency, and Periodicity

Choose a journal that has a consistent publication record and one that takes a reasonable amount of time to review manuscripts and reach a publication decision.

- *Periodicity and Regularity*: Verify the journal's stated frequency of publication (e.g., quarterly, bimonthly, and so on). Check the archive to ensure that the journal publishes consistently and on schedule.
- *Time to First Decision*: Check the average time it takes for authors to receive a decision after initial submission. This may vary by discipline, ranging from six weeks to twelve weeks. Avoid journals that complete the review process overnight (likely a predatory journal) and those that have a highly protracted process (likely due to disorganized journal management).
- *Time to Publication* (Acceptance to Print/Online): Find out the typical lag time between acceptance and the article's appearance online ("Ahead of Print"), if that is done, and in a final issue.

5. Online Accessibility and Visibility

A journal's digital infrastructure is crucial for ensuring that published works are easy to find and cite.

- *Digital Object Identifier (DOI)*: Check that the journal assigns a DOI to every article to ensure permanent and reliable citation and location.
- *Permanent Archiving*: Verify if the journal uses a robust, long-term digital preservation system (e.g., CLOCKSS or Portico).
- *Search Engine Optimization (SEO)*: Check that articles are published with well-structured metadata (titles, abstracts, keywords) for high discoverability via Google Scholar and other services.

6. Research and Publication Ethics Compliance

A responsible journal adheres to international standards for ethical conduct in research and publishing.

- *Ethical Oversight*: The journal must require documented evidence of ethics committee approval for studies involving human or animal subjects.
- *Plagiarism and Self-Plagiarism*: The journal must have clear policies for plagiarism checks and the acceptable limits of reusing previously published work.
- *Authorship Criteria*: The journal's authorship criteria must align with standards that require genuine intellectual contribution and accountability. The journal's criteria must be consistent with the Ateneo de Manila University's Policy and Guidelines on Authorship and Co-authorship.
- *COPE Membership*: Check if the journal or its publisher is a member of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

7. AI-Generated Content Policy

Select journals whose policies align with the responsible and transparent use of Generative AI tools.

- *Authorship Exclusion*: Verify that the journal's policy does not permit AI tools to be listed as authors.
- *Disclosure Requirement*: The journal should require clear and detailed disclosure in the Methods or Acknowledgments section if AI tools were used to generate, analyze, or modify research data, code, or figures.

8. Publishing Model and Cost

Journal production is not only intellectual labor but a business enterprise also. While some journals are fully open-access resources, others remain subscription-based and may allow some form of open access publication.

- *Open Access (OA) vs. Subscription*: Check the publishing model of your target journal to determine if it aligns with the funding that is available to you.
- *Affordable APC*. Verify if the journal's Article Processing Charge (APC) is affordable. If you will apply for financial assistance to help cover the APC, read and understood the University's "Open Access Publication Grant: Policies and Guidelines."
- *Predatory Journals*: Strictly avoid journals that lack peer review, have excessive APCs without providing legitimate editorial and peer review services, or use fake metrics.

9. Predatory Journals

Avoid predatory journals if you want to protect your work, reputation, and the integrity of your scholarship. A predatory journal prioritizes profit over genuine scholarship.

- *Excessive APCs*: Predatory journals often charge excessive APCs without providing legitimate editorial and peer-review services.
- *Unprofessional Website*: Predatory journals may have a website, but it will look poorly designed and may even have numerous typographical errors. The journal often lacks a physical address or lists a generic, non-institutional email (e.g., Gmail, Yahoo). If a physical address is provided, use Google Maps to check it out. The editor-in-chief may be impossible to find or contact.
- *Questionable Peer Review*: The journal may claim an impossibly fast peer-review process (e.g., "accepted within 48 hours") or give vague promises of review.
- *Open Access*: If the journal claims to be open access, check its inclusion in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), which would guarantee high standards of transparency.
- *Fake/Unqualified Editorial Board*: The editorial board may list famous, high-profile academics who are not aware they are listed, as indicated, for instance, by the journal's absence in their university profile. The board may list academics who are unqualified for the journal's stated scope. Or the same board members appear across dozens of different, unrelated journals published by the same company.
- *Email Invitations*: If you receive an email invitation to submit your work to a journal, proceed only if all the checks confirm the journal's legitimacy.

10. Rights and Repository Policy

Journal publishing involves legal issues, particularly intellectual property rights.

- *Copyright*: Understand whether, in the publication of your work, you retain full copyright or assign it to the publisher.
- *Archiving/Self-Archiving*: As much as possible, select a journal that permits, even when subscription-based, the deposit of at least the Author Accepted Manuscript (AAM) in the University's institutional repository, the Archīum. (*The AAM is the peer-reviewed version of a research paper that has been accepted for publication, but prior to the publisher's copyediting, typesetting, and branding.*) If the uploading of the AAM is not allowed, or if it is allowed only after an embargo period, then choose a journal that allows the deposit of an Author Original Manuscript (AOM) in the institutional repository. (*The AOM is the version of a research paper that is submitted to a journal before it has undergone the peer review process.*)

- *Policy Check*: To find out the journal's policy for depositing the AAM or the AOM in an institutional repository, you may check the journal's website or use Sherpa Romeo, an online resource that helps authors determine the copyright status of their published articles and the open access (OA) archiving policies of journals around the world.

External resources

Elsevier has a "journal finder" (https://journalfinder.elsevier.com/) that may be particularly useful for authors in search of journals in the Health, Life, Physical, and Social Sciences. It leverages advanced Natural Language Processing (NLP) to match a manuscript's abstract and title to the most relevant journals within Elsevier's catalog of over 2,900 peer-reviewed titles.