JPPS

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AFRICAN JOURNALS ONLINE
AJOL

Guide to the
**Journal Publishing
Practices and Standards**
(JPPS) framework

Summary

Journals in the developing world face challenges in becoming known and respected in the international research landscape. Since 1998 the Journals Online project has established a network of local journal platforms to help Southern journals gain an online presence and increase their global visibility. The framework described in this document is a response to the second part of the challenge: that of increasing respect for Southern journals.

Concerns are often raised about the perceived quality and transparency of publication processes for Southern journals. This, in turn, limits the perceived credibility of the research published within those journals.

The Journal Publishing Practices and Standards (JPPS) framework provides detailed assessment criteria for the quality of publishing practices of Southern journals and is initially being used to assess the journals hosted on JOL platforms.

Journals assessed against the JPPS criteria are given one of six levels: inactive title; new title; no stars; one star; two stars; and three stars. The assigned JPPS levels serve a dual purpose. For readers, they provide assurance that the journals meet an internationally recognized set of criteria at a particular level. For journal editors, the detailed feedback from the JPPS assessment helps them identify ways to improve their publishing practices and standards with a view to achieving a higher level at the next assessment.

The JPPS framework has been established and is managed by African Journals Online (AJOL) and INASP.

Glossary of acronyms and terms used in this document

JOL	Journals Online, a platform for hosting locally published research established through INASP's JOLs Project and managed by INASP, AJOL or other local partners
JPPS	Journal Publishing Practices and Standards
JPPS framework	All the documentation and processes relating to the JPPS, including this document, the journal application questionnaire, the assessment questionnaire, assessment results, journal assessment reports and levels
Guide to the JPPS framework	This document describing the framework, rationale and criteria
JPPS assessment questionnaire	The questionnaire used by JPPS assessors to evaluate journal publishing practices and standards
JPPS levels	The levels that journals are allocated to as a result of the assessment
JPPS assessment reports	The individual journal reports generated in the process

Introduction

Locally generated research and knowledge is key to addressing local issues in a contextually relevant way. Thousands of journals are published in the developing world but many are not widely known in their countries or beyond.

This means that these journals are less discoverable to readers – and therefore potential users – of the research. It also means that Southern journals are often not included in the lists of titles for consideration in promotion decisions, thereby reinforcing the dominance of publishing activities from Europe and North America in global scholarly communication. Southern journals are significantly under-represented in official international metrics. In addition, legitimate but unfamiliar journals from the developing world can wrongly be labelled as "predatory" or fake journals.

These issues create a situation that is not helpful either to Southern publishing and scholarship or to global research.

In addition to some undeniable biases in the global publishing system, some inequalities arise from the differences in how publishing happens in the North and South. In Europe and North America, scholarly communication is dominated by large, commercial, international publishing houses. These companies publish hundreds or even thousands of journals and may employ thousands of people to manage, edit, produce and market journals.

In contrast, most developing-country journals are stand-alone titles, published by research societies or by universities. The editors and editorial boards oversee the activities of the journal, including the normal functions of a publisher, frequently doing this work themselves after-hours and without payment. Career academics and even university Vice Chancellors do the day-to-day publishing work involved. They may not be fully aware of all the standards, processes, and best practices involved in publishing high-quality research journals.

About the Journals Online project and AJOL

The Journals Online (JOL) project was established by INASP in the late 1990s to redress the challenges discussed here. The Journals Online platforms aim to provide increased visibility, accessibility and quality of peer-reviewed journals published in developing countries so that the research outputs that are produced in these countries can be found, shared and used more effectively.

The JOL project involves embedding an online journal hosting platform in existing institutions in developing countries or regions. It then provides training in publishing best practices, and various other supporting services to the participating research journals hosted on the platforms. The project strengthens the capacity in the local hosting organization to eventually sustainably undertake this ongoing work themselves. In many cases, the JOL platform provides a first opportunity for the research in a journal to be made available online.

The first JOL platform was African Journals Online (AJOL), established as a pilot in 1998 and formally launched in 2000. Since 2005, AJOL has been managed independently by a team in South Africa and the platform now hosts over 500 journals. JOL platforms in Vietnam and the Philippines are also now managed locally. The JOLs in Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Central America and Mongolia are also in the process of moving to local management.

More information about INASP Journals Online project can be found at **www.inasp.info/journals-online**. More information about AJOL can be found at **www.ajol.info**.

A new framework for assessing publishing practices and standards

The Journals Online platforms (JOLs, see page 3) have always had assessments of all journals applying to join the hosting platforms, but, more recently, wider trends in research communications have led to a need to expand and formalize this assessment process. The result is the Journal Publishing Practices and Standards (JPPS) framework, which is being applied initially to the JOLs journals but could be used to assess other Southern – and global – titles.

The Journal Publishing Practices and Standards (JPPS) framework and assessment process was initially conceptualized by the Director of African Journals Online (AJOL) in 2014. The JPPS framework criteria, processes and implementation plan were then jointly developed by INASP and AJOL. INASP trialled and then implemented the assessments with the journals on several of the largest JOLs during 2016/17.

The JPPS framework assesses journals against a detailed and transparent set of criteria. The framework is intended to give researchers a greater feeling of trust that they are submitting their work to quality publications and will, hopefully, encourage them to submit their work to regional journals. This will ensure that Southern research is easily available to those that need it most.

The JPPS framework provides:

- An educational tool for journals publishing from developing countries towards raised awareness, understanding and implementation of internationally accepted best practice publishing standards

- A more detailed and formal process for deciding on the inclusion or otherwise of new titles to the JOLs platforms

- A clear process by which each journal can improve their practices for improved publishing quality

- Public acknowledgement for JOL journal partners that are already attaining internationally recognized high standards of publishing and editorial best practice

- Clear guidance for researchers using the JOL platforms that partner journals vary in degrees of attaining publishing best practice, and information of the standards attained by each journal

- A means for authors to select trusted titles on and from their own contexts to submit manuscripts to instead of overseas journals. This could make relevant content more easily available to other researchers in that country and region, as well as strengthening the local knowledge sharing system

- A potential tool for developing country university administrators and research offices to ascertain the publication record of their academic staff for job application and promotion purposes.

The JPPS assessment process rates each JOL partner journal into one of the following six rating categories:

One star – has met the basic requirements for at least two years

Two stars – compliant with additional publishing practice quality criteria

Three stars – consistently excellent in all the technical and editorial publishing best practices set out in the assessment criteria of the Journal Publishing Practices & Standards (JPPS) framework

New title - has been publishing for less than two years, but meets basic requirements

Inactive - has not added new content to the JOL platform in over one year

No stars – not currently meeting the basic criteria for inclusion on a JOL platform

JPPS criteria

The criteria developed for the JPPS framework were compiled by looking at the inclusion standards set out by international journal indices and relevant organizations' publishing and editorial guidelines. To ensure relevance to journals publishing from developing countries, INASP and AJOL compiled the framework on the basis of decades of experience of contexts, norms and practices in developing country journal publishing, and also on feedback from journal editors in Africa.

The inclusion criteria and standards set out by the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) from March 2014, SciELO South Africa, Clarivate (formerly Thomson Reuters), Scopus, the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME), the Forum of African Medical Editors (FAME) Editorial Guidelines, and the Committee on Publishing Ethics (COPE) Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing were used as part of the development of the framework. The new JPPS criteria have been developed this way to aid comparison and interoperability of the frameworks internationally, as well as making sure they are attainable and relevant for journals from the South.

The assessor's internal JPPS report for each journal verifies all the criteria implemented by the journal, as well as whether compulsory criteria (defined for each level) are being attained. Criteria that journals are assessed against include:

- Publication of original research

- A functional or well-working editorial board, with members who have been verified as being actively involved with the journal by an assessor; and the majority of whom are based primarily in the area served by each JOL

- Accurate and verified involvement of the editorial board, advisory board and any other committees associated with the journal

- Verification and assessment of an active and accurate description of the peer-review process and quality-control processes, including journal plagiarism checks

- Availability of authors' guidelines, and how well these are implemented, particularly with regard to the information appearing on the first page of each article, and quality of language and layout

- Reviewers' guidelines

- The display of editorial and publishing policies

Part of the assessment process includes an evaluation of whether an Open Access journal might appear to be a fake, or so-called predatory, Open Access journal. If journals appear problematic to the assessor, the report to the journal will enquire whether they are aware of the problems and what their response has been. If the assessor is not satisfied that the issues have been resolved then the journal will not be awarded any JPPS stars.

Inclusion on internationally recognized journal lists is not a requirement nor a guarantee of a journal gaining a particular JPPS star level but this inclusion is noted as part of the assessment. Claims of fake impact factors on journal websites are researched within the JPPS assessment process; it is disadvantageous for a journal to claim inclusion in these fake metrics measures.

In the interests of consistency and impartiality, the initial assessments for all actively publishing journals in each JOL will have been conducted by an expert in developing country publishing who is based in the UK.

Outputs of the JPPS process

Assessment outputs include:

- An assessment record for each journal to be kept by the JOL

- A report sent to the journal editor on any areas of the journal that need improvement, emphasizing those criteria that need to be met to qualify for a higher level

- A display of the JPPS level for each journal on the JOL website, with a link to a document explaining what that means in terms of the publishing practices and standards that are actually being achieved by the journal at the time of assessment

Six months to a year after initial assessment, journals will be allowed to apply for re-assessment and to provide verifiable evidence that they are by then attaining the criteria recommended for being assigned a higher JPPS level.

PLEASE NOTE: *the JPPS assessment **DOES NOT** assess the quality of the research content, but rather the publishing and editorial practices of the journal itself.*

*Official JPPS levels are only provided by AJOL and INASP. If in doubt about a JPPS claim, please check the journal's listing via the JPPS webpage (**www.journalquality.info**) or an official JOL site.*

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JPPS

ONE STAR
(of a possible three)

This journal has been compliant with the JPPS basic (new journal) criteria for at least two years

Criteria

1. The journal is published within the JOL country or region (the publishing, peer review management, business development and production is all handled in-country).

2. The journal publishes original research (in addition to other content).

3. The journal has a clearly-stated aim, focus and scope.

4. The masthead ("about the journal" information) includes:

   4.1. The journal title.

   4.2. The ISSN, registered with the ISSN International Centre.

   4.3. The name of the publisher, institution and/or society by which the journal is published (with all relevant contact details, including physical address, phone numbers, email addresses and website address). Journals are encouraged to use official or institutional email addresses rather than Yahoo or gmail email addresses.

   4.4. The copyright statement.

   4.5. The licensing statement (if the journal is Open Access, it needs to have selected an official licensing statement, for example the Creative Commons licence).

   4.6. Details of the Editor and an Editorial Board with identifiable members. All details about the Editor and Editorial Board must be up to date and **accurate**. Names and titles should be written out in full, and all persons listed should be actively and verifiably involved with the journal.

   4.7. Accurate publishing frequency, which is clearly stated (number of issues published per year, or an explanation of the process if the journal is publishing article-by-article).

5. The journal provides clear and comprehensive instructions to authors, including:

   5.1. An explanation of the types of manuscript that a journal will consider.

   5.2. A detailed style guide (that includes referencing style).

   5.3. A description of how to submit an article.

   5.4. A functional and frequently-checked contact email address for the journal.

6. Basic information displayed on the front page of each article, whether print or online, includes:

   6.1. The article title.

   6.2. The name(s) of author(s).

   6.3. The abstract (or summary, in the case of some humanities journals).

7. All articles relate to the focus and scope of the journal.

8. Each article includes complete bibliographic information for all cited references.

9. The journal sends the JOL (or another appropriate platform in the future) digital, English-language (and any other language, in addition) titles, abstracts, article keywords and PDFs of the full text of each issue in a timely manner, immediately after publication (or loads its own content, if trained to do so).

10. The journal has an established publishing track record (of at least two years).

11. The journal publishes at least one issue per year, and/or at least five articles yearly, and publishes issues on time, according to the stated publishing frequency.

TWO STARS
(of a possible three)

In addition to the criteria for a one-star journal, this journal is compliant with additional JPPS criteria for publishing practice quality

Criteria

NOTE: *These items are in addition to the criteria of the one-star level.*

1. The journal has an editorial policy statement (including an accurate and detailed explanation of the validity of the peer-review and the quality-control processes applied to all manuscripts or authors' texts submitted for publication).

2. The masthead ("about the journal" information) includes:

   2.1. An eISSN for the online version of the journal registered with the ISSN International Centre.

   2.2. As well as the Editorial Board member information, any other oversight body involved with the journal, for example an International Advisory Committee, are named with up to date and **accurate** information. Names and titles are written out in full, and all persons listed are actively and verifiably involved with the journal; the list also includes the primary and up to date institutional affiliation (or connection with a larger organization, for example a society or university) of each person listed. **NOTE:** *The JOLs require journals to provide accurate contact details, including institutional (and other) email addresses for ALL persons listed on the masthead, as part of the review process.* These contact details will not be made publicly available by the JOL unless instructed to do so by the journal/publisher.

3. The journal provides clear and comprehensive instructions to authors, including:

   3.1. Information about copyright (please note the importance of telling authors whether the journal will be the copyright holder after publication of an article, or whether copyright remains with authors).

   3.2. If the journal charges readers subscription fees, or charges authors or authors' institutions any handling fees, publication fees or similar, the amount/s should be clearly stated and publicly available on the JOL website as well as on the journal's own website (if it has one) and in the journal's hard copy (if it has one).

4. Basic information displayed on the front page of each article includes:

   4.1. The journal title; volume and issue number; page numbers.

   4.2. Article keywords.

   4.3. The article DOI (digital object identifier, which is a string or set of numbers that uniquely identifies a published article).

5. The journal publishes at least one issue per year and/or at least **eight** articles per year, and publishes issues on time, according to the stated publishing frequency.

6. The journal has a publicly-available, accurate and detailed description of its peer-review process on the JOL and on its homepage, if it has one.

7. Language and copy editing provide clarity for readers; layouts are consistent; tables, graphs and images are of good quality; and the same style is consistently used throughout the journal.

8. The cover of the journal looks professional or competent (no clip art or pre-made pictures, or low-quality images).

9. If the journal or publisher has its own website or is included on websites other than the JOL (for example, on a university website), the website quality is good (having a professional and functional or well-working site design with no garish or over-decorated, flashing images), and the journal content is up to date.

Recommendations

10. The journal is strongly recommended to have clear and comprehensive instructions to peer reviewers, which are also placed on the journal's own website and/or its JOL homepage.

THREE STARS
(of a possible three)

In addition to all of the criteria for one-star and two-star journals, the journal also consistently (for at least three years) meets the following criteria

Criteria

1. The journal includes copyright and licensing information on the first page of each article.

2. The journal includes author ORCIDs (for at least the corresponding author, but preferably for all authors). See orcid.org for more information on ORCIDs.

3. The journal includes funding acknowledgements by authors is displayed on the first page of each article (but may be on the last page).

4. Submission, acceptance and publication dates are included on the first page of each article.

5. The DOIs of referenced articles are included in the bibliographic references of each article.

6. Information about subscription fees, handling fees, publication fees or similar are included in the author instructions. If there are no fees, then this should be stated.

7. If the journal has its own website then the primary institutional affiliations of its full Editorial Board as well as of any other governance committees, such as advisory committees are included.

8. The Editorial Board (and any supporting committees) is institutionally and, geographically diverse (or varied) and ideally with a good gender balance.

9. The journal has a clearly-stated policy on authors' permissions to deposit the article in a personal, institutional, thematic and/or other Open Access repository, including whether the permission is for the post-publication version or pre-publication version of the article.

10. The journal implements, and publicly and transparently shares, its policies on publication ethics (codes of moral and correct publishing conduct) and publishing malpractice (improper publishing conduct) on its own website and on its JOL homepage, including plagiarism, copyright violations, errata, retractions, data sets, gender, racial and language policies.

11. The journal loads its own content onto the JOL platform.

12. The journal has an archival, digital preservation arrangement with an external party, for example CLOCKSS (a joint venture or project between certain publishers and research libraries to create a reliable global archive or place where documents are stored).

13. The journal has a full back file of archival content available online (via the JOL and/or on its own website).

14. At least one issue and/or **10 articles** are published per year (**preferably more**).

Recommendations

15. It is recommended that journals include contact email addresses and/or a link to each Board member's primary affiliation (connection to a larger organization, for example a society or university) website, under the JOL's "About the Journal" section and on the journal's own website, if it has one.

16. Membership of COPE (the Committee on Publication Ethics) and/or OASPA (the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association) (for Open Access journals) is strongly encouraged.

17. For Open Access journals to get a JPPS three-star status, they are strongly encouraged to provide evidence that they meet the DOAJ technical requirements and DOAJ Seal Qualifiers (see doaj.org/application/new).

NEW TITLE

A new journal (Volume 1, Issue 1 or similar) may be accepted for inclusion on a JOL platform if it is assessed and found to meet the basic criteria; the journal will however only be assigned a star rating after it has been continuously published in line with these criteria for at least two years.

Criteria

NOTE: *It is the journal's responsibility to alert or notify the JOL of the need for it to be given a star status once it has been publishing for at least two years, and provide adequate proof of compliance.*

The basic criteria for inclusion on a JOL are:

1. The journal is published within the JOL country or region (the publishing, peer review management, business development and production is all handled in-country).

2. The journal publishes original research (in addition to other content).

3. The journal has a clearly-stated aim, focus and scope.

4. The masthead ("about the journal" information) includes:

    4.1. The journal title.

    4.2. The ISSN, registered with the ISSN International Centre.

    4.3. The name of the publisher, institution and/or society by which the journal is published (with all relevant contact details, including physical address, phone numbers, email addresses and website address). Journals are encouraged to use official or institutional email addresses rather than Yahoo or gmail email addresses.

    4.4. The copyright statement.

    4.5. The licensing statement (if the journal is Open Access, it needs to have selected an official licensing statement, for example the Creative Commons licence).

    4.6. Details of the Editor and an Editorial Board with identifiable members. All details about the Editor and Editorial Board must be up to date and **accurate**. Names and titles should be written out in full, and all persons listed should be actively and verifiably involved with the journal.

    4.7. Accurate publishing frequency, which is clearly stated (number of issues published per year, or an explanation of the process if the journal is publishing article-by-article).

5. The journal provides clear and comprehensive instructions to authors, including:

    5.1. An explanation of the types of manuscript that a journal will consider.

    5.2. A detailed style guide (that includes referencing style).

    5.3. A description of how to submit an article.

    5.4. A functional and frequently-checked contact email address for the journal.

6. Basic information displayed on the front page of each article, whether print or online, includes:

    6.1. The article title.

    6.2. The name(s) of the author(s).

    6.3. The abstract (or summary, in the case of some humanities journals).

7. All articles relate to the focus and scope of the journal.

8. Each article includes complete bibliographic information for all cited references.

9. The journal sends the JOL (or another appropriate platform in the future) digital, English-language (and any other language, in addition) titles, abstracts, article keywords and PDFs of the full text of each issue in a timely manner, immediately after publication (or loads its own content, if trained to do so).

INACTIVE
TITLE

This journal is not up to date on the JOL. Only archival content is hosted. This could be due to one or more of the following:

- The journal has been taken over by a publisher outside of area served by the JOL, so no longer qualifies for inclusion.

- The journal has stopped publishing.

- The journal is still publishing, but has stopped sending its content to the JOL, and the JOL has been unable to re-establish contact with the journal.

- The journal is experiencing a long delay in publishing its next issue (one year or more).

NOTE 1: *It is the responsibility of the journal to make sure that its JOL entry is accurate and up to date (including all journal contact information, and Editorial Board names and information), and that the most-recently published content is available on the JOL.*

NOTE 2: *Even if a journal has stopped publishing altogether or has been taken over by an overseas publisher, archival content could still be of use to the international research community, so past content is usually kept on the JOL.*

NOTE 3: *If the journal enters into a co-publishing agreement with an international publisher such that editorial control and the majority of the management of the journal remains in the country, including control of peer reviewing, the journal may stay on the JOL.*

NO STARS

WORKING TOWARDS JPPS STARS

A journal which does not meet the basic requirements of a one-star journal. This might be a legacy journal that was accepted onto the JOL before the implementation of the more rigorous selection criteria or it may be a journal that has not maintained the required basic publishing practices and standards.

No star journals are generally kept online because they are part of the academic record.

The JPPS assessment process rates each JOL partner journal into one of the following six rating categories:

One star – has met the basic requirements for at least two years

New title - has been publishing for less than two years, but meets basic requirements

Two stars – compliant with additional publishing practice quality criteria

Inactive - has not added new content to the JOL platform in over one year

Three stars – consistently excellent in all the technical and editorial publishing best practices set out in the assessment criteria of the Journal Publishing Practices & Standards (JPPS) framework

No stars – not currently meeting the basic criteria for inclusion on a JOL platform

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