Karatina University
Department of Library Services

Journal Identification Guide

A Practical Guide for Students, Researchers and Staff

Introduction

The purpose of this **Journal Identification Guide** is to help Karatina University students, lecturers, and researchers evaluate, select, and verify academic journals for reading, referencing, and publishing. The guide ensures that the University community uses credible, peer-reviewed, and ethically indexed journals while avoiding predatory or low-quality outlets.

1. What is a Scholarly Journal?

A scholarly journal is a periodical peer-reviewed publication written by experts for academic and research communities, containing academic research governed by clear strict editorial and ethical guidelines.

Examples of Scholarly Journals includes: *Nature*, *African Journal of Library & Information Science*, *Journal of Agriculture and Food Security* among others.

2. Why Journal Identification Matters

Journal identification is essential and helps to guide university community to when publishing, maintain academic integrity, supports rigorous postgraduate research, protects researchers from publishing in predatory publishers and improve institutional visibility and ranking.

3. Journal Identification Criteria

It's advisable to evaluate a journal based on the following criteria:

3.1 Legitimacy Indicators

A credible journal has a valid ISSN (International Standard Serial Number), a functioning official website, access Article Processing Charges (APC), clear author guidelines & editorial policies, recognized publisher, and transparent peer-review process.

Please use: ISSN Portal (https://portal.issn.org) to verify legitimacy of a journal.

3.2 Peer Review Process

A credible journal should specify the type of peer review (single-blind, double-blind, open), demonstrate a clear review workflow, provide its turnaround times, as well as disclose rejection rates or acceptance criteria.

Please avoid journals that guarantee instant acceptance or publish without revisions.

3.3 Indexing Status

Check where the journal is indexed. Valid databases include: Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), PubMed / MEDLINE, ERIC, IEEE Xplore, AGORA, HINARI, OARE (Research4Life) among others. While reputable directories include; DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals) etc.

NB: Please, avoid journals indexed in unverified databases.

3.4 Publisher Reputation

Check if the journal is published by: established academic publishers, professional societies and accredited university presses.

However, be cautious with publishers appearing on: beall's list archives and known predatory platforms.

3.5 Journal Metrics

Metrics measure a journal's influence. The common indicators of a Journal metrics are: Impact Factor (IF) – Web of Science, CiteScore – Scopus, SCImago Journal Rank and h-index of the journal

However, the absence of a metric does not automatically mean a journal is predatory. *Especially newer African journals.*

Step 4: Identifying Predatory Journals

Predatory journals are fraudulent publishers that exploit researchers. Warning/red flags signs include unusual fast acceptance of the manuscripts (e.g., 24-72 hours), fake editorial boards, unverified indexing claims, unrealistic publication charges, poor or misleading website structure, generic emails (e.g., @gmail.com instead of institutional domains) and Titles mimicking well-known journals (e.g., *International Journal of…* with no subject-area specificity).

Step 5: Tools for Journal Verification

Among the recommended tools to verify a journal are:

Purpose	Tools
Verify ISSN	ISSN Portal
Check indexing	Scopus Sources, WoS Master List
Check journal quality	SCImago Journal Rank
Identify authentic open access	DOAJ
Check publisher legitimacy	CORE, Sherpa/Romeo
Detect predatory traits	Think.Check.Submit

5. Journal Categories at Karatina University Verification

The following categories guide how students and staff use journals:

a. **Core Academic Journals:** Peer-reviewed journals recommended for coursework, theses, and publications.
b. **Professional and Trade Journals:** Useful for industry trends but not for academic research.
c. **Open Access Journals:** Freely available, often credible if listed in DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals) or reputable indexes.
d. **Interdisciplinary Journals:** Cover broad subjects such as Education, Humanities, business, Science or technology etc.

6. The role of Karatina University Library in Journal Identification

The library services department assist researchers and students with:

a. Verifying journal indexing status
b. Providing training on evaluation of databases, journals etc.
c. Access to University subscribed journals through Kenya Library Information Services Consortium (KLISC) among other resources
d. Guidance on publishing and identification of predatory journals
e. Training workshops (Information Literacy Sessions)
f. Support in citation and referencing

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q1. How do I know if a journal is predatory?

Check indexing, review policies, editorial board authenticity, and turnaround times.

Q2. Can I publish in open access journals?

Yes, ensure the journal is listed in either AJOL, DOAJ or other reputable indexing platforms.

Q3. Who can help me verify a journal?

The Reference and Research Services section in the library, OR your supervisor.

Q4. Are all journals indexed in Google Scholar trustworthy?

No. Google Scholar is inclusive; always verify using additional tools.

Library Support / Assistance

The University Library assists in verifying journals' credibility, providing training and guiding researchers in ethical publishing. For assistance, please contact the library using the email library@karu.ac.ke