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Journal Evaluation Tool

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Journal Evaluation Tool

Introduction: The changing mechanisms of scholarly publishing may make it difficult for you to determine where to publish the results of your research or creative works. In order to assist you in making the best decisions for your work, and to avoid journals that may not be credible, the William H. Hannon Library has developed a rubric for the evaluation of journals. Our focus during the development of this tool was specifically to address the concerns of our Loyola Marymount University faculty about Open Access journals, but this rubric may be applied more broadly to any kind of journal.

The rubric and related scoring sheet have been developed for your use to review a journal you are considering for your work, to determine if it is a credible publication source. The rubric guides you to consider specific criteria in your review, giving each a score, so that at the end of your review you will know if the journal may be a good, fair, or poor choice for your work. Feel free to give weight to any criteria that may be important for your academic area. Ultimately the decision about where to publish your work is up to you and this tool is designed to assist by providing an objective measure of credibility.

How to use the journal evaluation tool

The journal evaluation tool includes two components, the rubric and the scoring sheet:

Step 1: Follow the criteria listed on the rubric. The criteria prompts you to look to the journal and publisher web sites to determine if there are markers of credibility or any red flags.

Step 2: Look at the Rationale column on the scoring sheet to gauge the importance of each criterion.

Step 3: Categorize each criteria on the rubric into one of three categories: good (receiving a score of 3), fair (a score of 2), or poor (a score of 1).

Step 4: Mark the score for each criterion on the scoring sheet.

Step 5: Determine the final score after you have completed the rubric.

Step 6: Use the Guide to Interpretation at the bottom of the scoring sheet to determine if the total score suggests that the journal is likely a good, fair, or poor choice for publication.



This rubric and scoring sheet is released under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>). Please mix it up, improve it, and share what you learn as you go so that we may all benefit.

The evaluation tool was developed and locally tested at LMU by Marie Kennedy (marie.kennedy@lmu.edu), Shilpa Rele (shilpa.rele@lmu.edu), and Nataly Blas (nataly.blas@lmu.edu).

Journal Evaluation Rubric

Criterion	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)
Step 1. Journal evaluation			
Web search for the journal	The journal is within the top 5 entries on the first page of search results and there are no scam alert postings.	The journal is on the first page of search results but not within the top 5 entries and there are no scam alert postings.	The journal is not on the first page of search results or there is at least one scam alert post about the journal.
Journal name	The journal name cannot be confused with another journal.	The journal being evaluated has a name similar to another journal but is able to be distinguished between the two.	The journal being evaluated is unable to be distinguished from another with a similar name.
Editorial board	The editorial board is listed with their full names and institutional affiliation.	The editorial board is listed with their full names only (no affiliation).	There is no editorial board listed.
Review process	The journal states whether it is peer reviewed/edited and has a review policy listed.	The journal states whether it is peer reviewed/edited and has no review policy listed.	The journal does not state whether it is peer reviewed/edited and has no review policy listed.
Conflicts of interest	The journal thoroughly and clearly states a conflicts of interest policy, including how it will handle potential conflicts of interest of editors, authors, and reviewers.	The journal states a conflicts of interest policy, but the description of how conflicts will be handled is unclear.	The journal does not state a conflicts of interest policy.
Journal website	The journal website is competently designed and functional. (examples: no broken links, easy navigation, no missing information)	The journal website is adequately designed with passable functionality. (examples: adequate navigation, few broken links, some missing information)	The journal is poorly designed and is not functional. (examples: broken links, poor navigation, missing information)
Revenue sources	The journal clearly states its business model. This includes any revenue sources, like author fees, subscriptions, advertising, reprints, institutional support, and organizational support.	The journal's business model lacks clarity when stating its revenue sources, like author fees, subscriptions, advertising, reprints, institutional support, and organizational support.	The journal does not state its business model.
Journal archive	The journal website contains an archive of its past issues with links to full text articles.	The journal website contains an archive but it may be incomplete or does not contain links to full text articles.	The journal does not have an archive of its past issues.
Publishing schedule	The journal clearly states how often its issues will be published each year and this agrees with the archive.	The journal does not state how often its issues will be published but it can be determined from the archive.	The journal does not state how often its issues will be published each year and it cannot be determined from the archive.
Author fees	The journal clearly states the amount of money an author will pay to have each article published.	The journal states that an author fee is required but does not note how much it is.	The journal does not state whether or not there are any author fees.
Copyright information	The journal clearly describes its copyright and licensing information on the journal's Web site, and licensing terms are indicated on the published articles (HTML/PDF).		Copyright and licensing information is not found on the journal's Web site and on any published articles.
Journal index	The journal is indexed in more than one subject database. (examples: ERIC, Google Scholar, Web of Science, PsycINFO)	The journal is indexed in one subject database. (example: ERIC)	The journal is not indexed in a subject database.
Access to journal articles	The journal provides full text access to all published articles.	The journal provides full text access to some published articles.	The journal does not provide full text access to any published articles.
Number of articles published	The journal has published more than 10 articles.	The journal has published between 6 and 10 articles.	The journal has published 5 or fewer articles.
Step 2. Publisher evaluation			
Web search for the publisher	The publisher is within the top 5 entries on the first page of search results and there are no scam alert postings.	The publisher is on the first page of search results but not within the top 5 entries and there are no scam alert postings.	The publisher is not on the first page of search results or there is at least one scam alert posting.
Publisher information	Information about the ownership/management of the journal and contact information about the publisher is clearly identified.	Information about the ownership/management of the journal or contact information about the publisher is clearly identified.	Information about the ownership/management of the journal and contact information about the publisher is not available.

The Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) has guided some of this content, from their Best Practices site: <http://doaj.org/bestpractice>

**Journal Evaluation
Scoring Sheet**

Criterion	Rationale	Rating (3, 2, 1)	Notes/Comments, URL where the information is found
Web search for the journal	We want the popular reputation of the journal to be credible.		
Journal name	We want the journal name to be easily distinguishable from any other journal.		
Editorial board	We want to be able to know the names and affiliations of the members of the editorial board.		
Review process	We want to know if the journal is peer reviewed/edited and what the review policy is.		
Conflicts of interest	We want a clear conflicts of interest policy, including how a journal will handle potential conflicts of interest of editors, authors, and reviewers.		
Journal website	We want the journal website to be competently designed and functional.		
Revenue sources	We want to know if a journal is sustainable by its stated business model and sources of revenue.		
Journal archive	We want to be able to access the full text of published articles.		
Publishing schedule	We want to be able to determine the consistency of the journal.		
Author fees	We want to know if an author must pay a fee, and how much the fee is, to publish in the journal.		
Copyright information	We want to be able to read about any copyright or licensing information.		
Journal index	We want to know where the journal may be indexed.		
Access to journal articles	We want to know if we have full text access to all published articles.		
Number of articles published	We want to determine how long the journal has been in existence.		
Web search for the publisher	We want the popular reputation of the Publisher to be credible.		
Publisher information	We want to be able to contact the Publisher and verify ownership/management.		
			Rating total
Guide to interpretation	48-38 Good: Within this range the journal meets many of the evaluation criteria defined for credibility. At the higher end of the range the journal would have the fewest credibility concerns.		
	37-27 Fair: Within this range the journal meets some of the evaluation criteria defined for credibility. The author would need to decide whether or not to publish in the journal.		
	26-16 Poor: Within this range the journal meets the fewest of the evaluation criteria defined for credibility.		