



Alliance



# Guidelines for dealing with predatory publishers/ publishing: A working document

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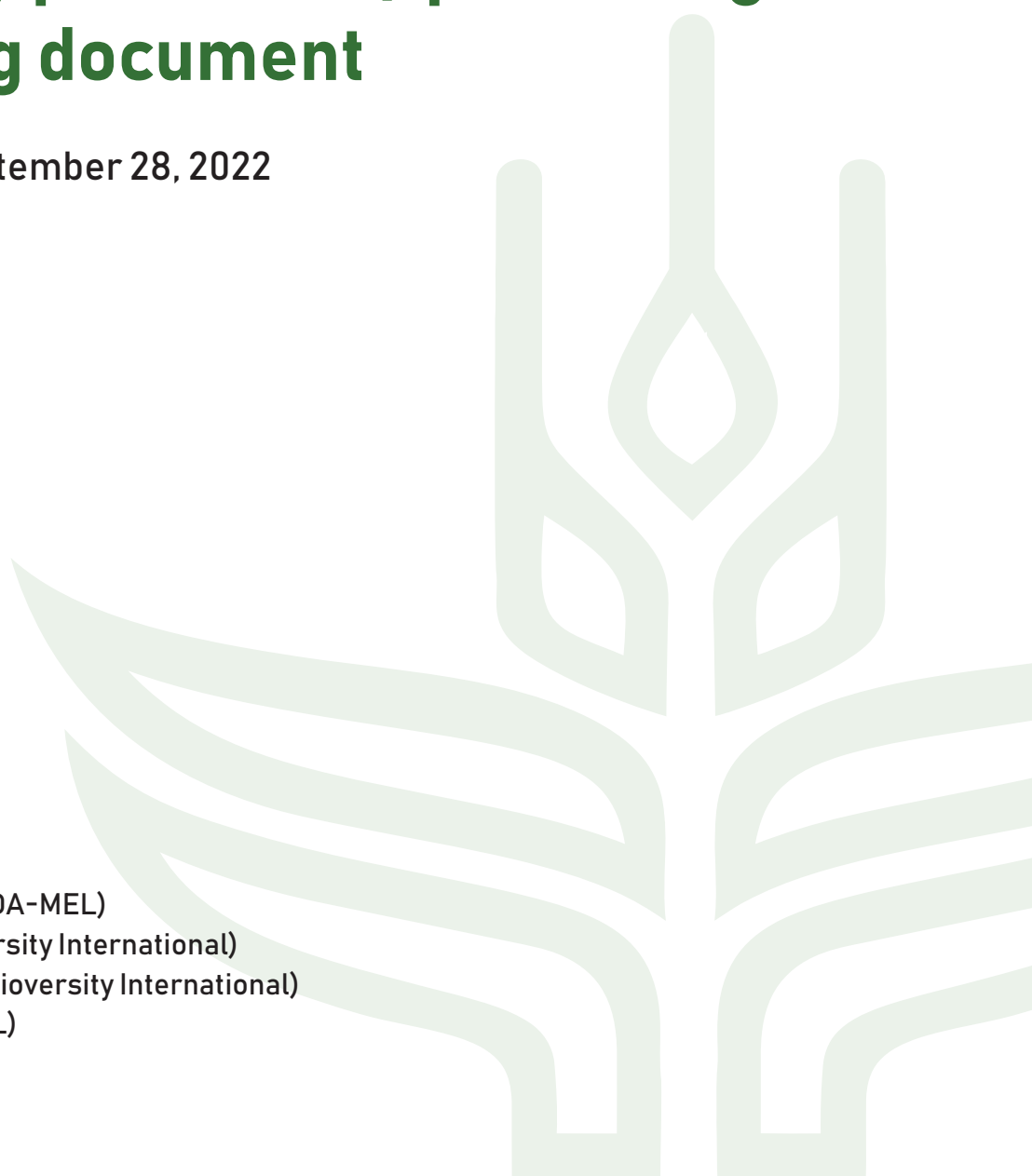
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## Document revision history

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# Aim of this document

This document complements instructions on CGIAR indicators for publications (CGIAR, 2021) and previous documentation produced within CGIAR Centers (Garruccio, 2021; Jani et al., 2020). Specifically, it aims to provide practical guidance on how to avoid predatory publishing to support CGIAR researchers, repository managers, librarians, and staff involved in the quality assurance of publications.

The phenomenon of predatory publishing was noted in the 2021 guidance on peer-review publications (CGIAR Indicator #C4 'Number of CGIAR research papers published in peer-reviewed journals') (CGIAR, 2021). This short guide builds on that document.

This is a working document that will be modified and updated as new information and developments regarding predatory publishing come about.

## Introduction

There is no consensus or a common definition of what a predatory or illegitimate journal is, but it generally refers to entities that deceive authors into paying publication fees without receiving promised editorial and publishing services, such as peer review, in return (University Libraries, 2022). Whatever the definition, one common feature of predatory publishing is that the rise of these journals represents an increasing global threat contaminating all domains of science (Lalu et al., 2017; Grudniewicz et al., 2019). Lalu et al. (2017) reported that some common traits of predatory journals include:

- lack of scientific rigor, with a poor or non-existent peer-review process and little or no editorial oversight, leading to rapid publication with the aim of receiving article processing charges (APC) from authors;
- absence of indexing in established bibliometric databases despite often claiming legitimate indexing;
- mimicking well-known authentic journal names to confuse prospective authors;
- cheaper APC than legitimate open access journals; and
- excessive use of spam email to solicit manuscripts.

# Resources

Building on CGIAR's mandate for peer-reviewed publications, this expanded reference guides interested scientists in finding reputable outlets to publish their research in. This section focuses more on safelists instead of blocklists due to the belief that avoiding predatory publishing is better done through familiarizing the scientific community, especially early career scientists, with safelists.

## Safelists

Several resources exist that help to identify and ascertain whether a journal is authentic and authoritative in its field. Safelists, for example, are currently used by librarians and repository managers. Some examples of safelists are shown below.

**Table 1. Examples of the most common safelists**

Resource	Description
<a href="#">Web of Science (WoS)</a> <a href="#">Master Journal List</a> and <a href="#">WoS Core Collection</a>	The Web of Science (WoS) database from Clarivate® includes only journals that demonstrate high levels of editorial rigor and best practice. One of its collections, the <a href="#">WoS Core Collection</a> (formerly known as ISI, the Institute for Scientific Information), only contains journals that meet a minimum of 24 quality criteria if they are to be covered in the Emerging Sources Citation Index, one of the four Core Collection indexes. If journals meet an additional four impact criteria, they will be covered by one or more flagship indexes, namely Science Citation Index Expanded, Social Sciences Citation, or Arts & Humanities Citation Index. These stringent criteria mean the WoS Core Collection covers highly reliable and impactful publications <sup>1</sup> .
<a href="#">Scopus</a>	Scopus is an academic database from Elsevier that indexes content that is rigorously vetted and selected by an independent review board of experts in their fields.
<a href="#">SCImago</a>	The SCImago Journal & Country Rank is a publicly available portal that includes the journals and country scientific indicators developed from the information contained in the Scopus® database (Elsevier B.V.).

<sup>1</sup>[clarivate.com/webofsciencegroup/journal-evaluation-process-and-selection-criteria](https://clarivate.com/webofsciencegroup/journal-evaluation-process-and-selection-criteria)

<a href="#">Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)</a>	DOAJ is a community-curated online directory that indexes and provides access to high-quality, open access, peer-reviewed journals.
<a href="#">Open Access Scholarly Publishing Association (OASPA)</a>	The publishers and individual publications listed as OASPA members have been through a rigorous application review process and adhere to OASPA's Code of Conduct.
<a href="#">Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)</a>	Publishers that are members of COPE intend to follow the highest standards of publication ethics and apply COPE principles of publication ethics.
<a href="#">International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) Checker</a>	An ISSN is an 8-digit code used to identify newspapers, journals, magazines and periodicals. This website checks that the ISSN is recognized by the <a href="#">ISSN organisation</a> (itself), DOAJ ( <a href="#">Directory of Open Access Journals</a> ) and COPE ( <a href="#">Committee on Publications Ethics</a> ). To carry out this check, the user will need to provide the ISSN as part of the URL.

## Checklists

Checklists are another easy way to ensure that a journal is legitimate. Some of the checklists currently available online are shown below.

**Table 2. Examples of checklists commonly used to determine a journal's legitimacy**

Resource	Description
<a href="#">Think, Check, Submit</a>	'Think, Check, Submit' is an international cross-sector initiative aiming to educate researchers, promote integrity, and build trust in credible research and publications. The journal checklist is interactive and available in more than 40 languages.
<a href="#">Predatory publishing: A to Z elements</a>	Published by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (Teqsa), Australia's independent national quality assurance and regulatory agency for higher education, this infographic contains a handy list outlining some of the ways to ascertain whether a journal is legitimate.
<a href="#">12 Questions to assess a journal/publisher</a>	Developed by Judit Ward in 2017, '12 questions' addresses the most frequent and prominent features of predatory publishers, based on both the creator's experience and the well-established criteria for determining predatory open-access publishers created by Jeffrey Beall.

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[Ten simple rules for avoiding predatory publishing scams](#)

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Published in PLOS Computational Biology, Leonard et al. (2021) outline ten simple rules on how to avoid predatory publishing scams.

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## Predatory publishing blocklists

### Beall's list

Beall's List of Predatory Journals and Publishers, named after the creator Jeffrey Beall, can be used as a tool to promote an independent and more comprehensive check on journals, however arguable and controversial this list may be. The list was established in 2010 and comprised two main sections: Predatory Journals, and Predatory Publishers. It quickly became a tool referred to by many people working in scholarly publishing. The original list was discontinued in 2017 due to pressure from publishers and Beall's peers and institution, but Beall's Criteria for Determining Predatory Open-Access Publishers is still available for consultation<sup>2</sup> (Beall, 2017).

→ Link: [bealllist.net](http://bealllist.net)

### 'Red flags'

'Red flags' are cues that signal that a publisher/journal is illegitimate. Some of these have been highlighted by Shamseer et al. (2017) in their analysis and include:

- bogus impact metrics such as the Index Copernicus Value or the Universal Impact Factor (Mehrdad, 2015);
- unverified affiliation of the editorial board members; and
- very low publications charges.

Alongside bogus metrics and bogus editorial boards, the phenomenon of hijacked journals or cloned journals is also an issue. According to Clarivate (Menon, 2019) these are duplicate or fake websites of legitimate ones, utilizing the same title, ISSN, or other information from the reputable journal. These journals do not peer review submitted manuscripts and only sometimes publish them (Else, 2022). Unfortunately, this phenomenon is not new; in 2013, an article by Butler (2013) discussed hijacked journals which had been previously recognized by Beall's list of hijacked journals and by the University Grants Commission-Consortium for Academics and Research Ethics (UGC-CARE).

→ Links:

[bealllist.net/hijacked-journals](http://bealllist.net/hijacked-journals)

[ugccare.unipune.ac.in/Apps1/User/Web/CloneJournals](http://ugccare.unipune.ac.in/Apps1/User/Web/CloneJournals)

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<sup>2</sup> [web.archive.org/web/20191113122636/http://bealllist.weebly.com/uploads/3/0/9/5/30958339/criteria-2015.pdf](http://web.archive.org/web/20191113122636/http://bealllist.weebly.com/uploads/3/0/9/5/30958339/criteria-2015.pdf)

# Recommendations

This working paper highlights tools and guides on how best to avoid predatory publishers, and how to better understand their modus operandi. Main recommendations include:

- Check if the journal is a member of DOAJ, COPE, OASPA.
- Check the journal metrics.
- Check the journal's contact information and affiliation.
- Research the editorial board.
- Check the peer review process of the journal.
- Review the APC of the journal.
- Consider the number of solicitation emails received from the journal.

Reviewing a journal's credentials takes time and effort but it is important to note that the CGIAR Annual Reporting Guidelines (2021) state that *“Articles published in predatory journals will not be archived in Center repositories as they undermine the quality of CGIAR research”*. Consequently, researchers must take time to check and validate the quality of the journal/publisher before considering submitting a manuscript to them.

If there is still uncertainty about a specific journal or publisher, do contact your organization's information manager/librarian for support. They have the expertise to help you make an informed decision on whether to submit a manuscript to a specific journal. In addition to contacting the information manager/librarian for support, it is also useful to check with the subject area experts in their fields because they will also have expertise and knowledge on journals and, in some cases, which publisher to choose for the eventual submission of a manuscript.



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