

Checklist on the Quality of Open Access Journals

What does quality mean in the context of open access?

Fulfilment of requirements

- Compliance with scientific standards
- Technical standards
- Organisational framework conditions

Subjective assessment

In general: transparency and trustworthiness of the place of publication are relevant!

However: The importance of concrete requirements and procedures may vary depending on the subject culture.

Quality assurance in open access journals

Depending on the discipline, different procedures for quality assurance of articles are common:

- Reviewers: peer review – assessment by colleagues (peers) outside the editorial team
- Editorial board (editorial review)
- Release of pre-release versions (preprints)

In general, the procedures do not differ from those in subscription journals.

Checklist on the quality of open access journals

Is the publisher member of one of the following initiatives?

- Open Access Scholarly Publishers' Association ([OASPA](#))
- Committee on Publication Ethics ([COPE](#)) → also applies to non-open access journals

Is the journal listed in quality-assured databases and directories?

- Directory of Open Access Journals ([DOAJ](#))
- Interdisciplinary: e.g. Web of Science, Scopus
- Disciplinary: e.g. [Pubmed](#) (medicine), [PhilPapers](#) (philosophy), [ERIH PLUS](#) (arts and humanities)

However: In particular new journals are often (not yet) listed in those initiatives or databases. Therefore it is useful to consider more criteria.

How to proceed when checking the quality?

- [Checklist](#) by **Think. Check. Submit.**
- Directories and so-called whitelists provide good orientation

What is predatory publishing?

These are business practices where publication fees (e.g. Article Processing Charges) are charged but there is no or insufficient editing of the articles and no quality assurance process.

- No peer-review and no long-term archiving of the articles
- Can refer to journals, publishers and conferences

However: This does not necessarily indicate low quality of those publications!

Further criteria to be checked

Evaluation of the place of publication

- Prominence of the journals
- Reputation of editors and authors
- Link to institutions or expert associations

Transparent information about services and costs

- Quality check of the publication (e.g. peer review)
- Persistent identifier (e.g. DOI) and long-term availability
- Specification of licence information for articles (e.g. CC BY)

What to do in case of uncertainty?

- Talk to colleagues
- You can always consult a librarian

Red flags

- Aggressive email advertising (mass emails/spam)
- No clear, transparent information on the peer review process
- No clear, transparent information on publication costs
- Publisher's name is not clearly stated on the journal's homepage and the contact information is difficult to identify
- Incorrect information, e.g. on editorial board members, impact factors, ISSN, etc.
- Numerous spelling mistakes on the website
- Imitation of the design or similarity of the name to renowned scientific journals