



Publish where it counts

Peer-reviewed journals indexed in credible international databases — what they are, how to identify them, and why they matter.

UNIVERSITY COUNCIL DECISION — 22 MARCH 2024

Council resolved that all staff should prioritise publishing in high-quality, peer-reviewed journals indexed in recognised international databases, in order to uphold rigorous academic standards and enhance the visibility and impact of the University's research output. Council further expressed strong support for local journals working towards indexed status in credible international databases, recognising the value of fostering regional scholarship while aligning with global benchmarks.

WHAT EXACTLY IS REQUIRED?

A peer-reviewed journal

A journal that submits every manuscript to independent evaluation by qualified experts in the field before a publication decision is taken. Reviewers assess originality, methodological soundness, ethical compliance, argument and contribution. The editor decides on the basis of those reports.

It certifies process, not prestige. Peer review tells you the work was scrutinised. It does not by itself tell you the journal is selective or reputable.

An indexed journal

A journal accepted into a curated database that applies published quality criteria before admitting a title, and re-evaluates it periodically. Admission is selective; titles that fall below standard are removed.

It certifies standing. Indexing is an independent, ongoing judgement on the journal itself — its editorial rigour, transparency and durability.

WHICH DATABASES COUNT?

SELECTIVE CITATION INDEXES

Scopus · Web of Science Core Collection (SCIE, SSCI, AHCI, ESCI)

The primary references for promotion, ranking and accreditation evidence.

VETTED SUBJECT & REGIONAL DATABASES

PubMed / MEDLINE, CABI, AGRIS, EconLit, PsycINFO, ERIC, SciELO, DOAJ, African Journals OnLine (AJOL)

Fully legitimate and often the right home for your work. DOAJ and AJOL matter especially for African scholarship.

DISCOVERY TOOLS — NOT INDEXING

Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Academia.edu, Crossref, "Index Copernicus", most self-declared "impact factors"

These crawl or list almost anything with a web address. Appearing in them is not evidence of quality and will not be accepted as such.

WHY THIS MATTERS

What you gain

- **Promotion evidence that holds up.** Indexed output survives scrutiny at appointments and promotions; unverifiable outlets invite questions you should not have to answer.
- **Citation and reach.** Indexed work is found by the researchers who will build on it, cite it and invite you to collaborate.
- **Grant competitiveness.** Funders screen track records through these same databases.
- **A permanent record.** Archived, DOI-registered, retrievable decades from now — unlike a journal that disappears when its website lapses.
- **Protection.** Rigorous review strengthens your work before the field sees it.

What Makerere gains

- **Rankings and reputation.** Global and continental rankings draw almost entirely on indexed output and its citations.
- **Accreditation evidence.** NCHE and IUCEA quality assessments require verifiable research performance.
- **Research income.** Institutional publication profiles shape major funding and partnership decisions.
- **Credible partnerships.** Consortium membership and joint programmes rest on demonstrable output.
- **Strategic Plan delivery.** The research ambition of the Strategic Plan 2025/26–2029/30 is measured in exactly these terms.

BEFORE YOU SUBMIT: FIVE CHECKS

Five minutes of verification protects years of work. Check the journal itself — never rely on the journal's own claims about where it is indexed.

- 1 Search the Scopus source list.** Elsevier publishes the full title list free of charge. If the journal claims Scopus coverage and is not on it, the claim is false.
- 2 Search the Web of Science Master Journal List.** Free to search. Note which collection the title sits in.
- 3 Check DOAJ for open-access titles.** DOAJ applies published criteria on editorial process, licensing and transparency.
- 4 Check AJOL for African titles.** African Journals OnLine hosts credible, peer-reviewed African scholarship across all disciplines.
- 5 Check the publisher against COPE and OASPA.** Membership signals adherence to recognised publication ethics standards.

WARNING SIGNS — STOP AND VERIFY

- Unsolicited flattering invitations to submit, or to join an editorial board you never applied to.
- An “impact factor” from a body you cannot identify, or long lists of vague “indexing” claims.
- A scope so broad it spans unrelated disciplines; no named editors with verifiable affiliations.
- Promised review or publication in days or a few weeks.
- Fees disclosed only after acceptance, or payment requested to a personal account.
- Spelling and grammatical errors on the journal website; no physical address; no archiving policy.

Unsure? Send the journal title and URL to the Directorate of Quality Assurance before you submit. We will check it for you.

COST NEED NOT BE A BARRIER

Uganda is a Research4Life Group A country — and Makerere University is the Research4Life Country Connector partner institution for Uganda. Most major publishers, including Elsevier, Wiley, Springer Nature, Taylor & Francis and many learned societies, automatically apply a **100% article processing charge waiver** to corresponding authors affiliated to Group A institutions publishing in their fully open-access journals. The waiver is normally applied at submission from your stated affiliation, with no separate application.

- Always give your Makerere University affiliation at submission — that is what triggers the waiver.
- Check the journal's waiver policy page before submitting; policies vary and hybrid journals are often excluded.
- Remember that subscription journals charge no APC at all, and that diamond open-access journals charge neither authors nor readers.

A high fee is not a mark of quality. Some of the most selective journals in the world charge nothing to publish.

SUPPORTING OUR LOCAL JOURNALS

Council's support for indexed publication sits alongside its express commitment to helping local journals attain indexed status. These aims are complementary, not competing: a stronger regional publishing base is how African scholarship sets its own agenda rather than inheriting one.

You can help.

- Review promptly and rigorously when a Ugandan or regional journal invites you.
- Send some of your strongest work — not your weakest — to journals you want to see indexed. Indexing follows citation and quality.
- Serve on editorial boards, and hold those boards to DOAJ, AJOL and COPE standards on transparency, ethics and turnaround.
- Support Makerere University Press and University-hosted journals in professionalising editorial process, DOI registration and digital archiving.

A NOTE ON DISCIPLINARY DIFFERENCES

Coverage in Scopus and Web of Science is uneven. In the humanities, education, law, the creative arts and African-language scholarship, the most rigorous venues may sit in specialist or regional databases rather than the large citation indexes, and scholarly books, monographs, edited volumes and chapters remain the principal form of contribution. These are recognised. What Council requires is **demonstrable peer review and verifiable standing**, not one particular database. Where index coverage in your field is thin, consult the Directorate of Quality Assurance and your College Quality Assurance Committee on the appropriate evidence.

DIRECTORATE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

Makerere University, P.O. Box 7062, Kampala, Uganda

Email: director.qad@mak.ac.ug | Tel: 0414 533 009 | Mobile: 0788 961 314 | qa.mak.ac.ug

Issued under University Council decision of 22 March 2024 | Version 1.0 | Review date: [month/year]

QR code

Full checklist, verification links and journal-vetting request form