AIOU POLICY FOR RESEARCH JOURNALS (AIOU-PRJ)

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i

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIOU	Allama Iqbal Open University
PRJ	Policy for Research Journals
HEC	Higher Education Commission
ORIC	Office of Research, Innovation & Commercialization
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
TOR	Terms of Reference
WoS	Web of Science
ISSN	International Standard Serial Number
COPE	Committee on Publication Ethics

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 TITLE AND SCOPE

    i.   These regulations shall be called "AIOU Policy for Research Journals (AIOU-PRJ)".

    ii.   This policy has been framed in consonance with the quality standards set by HEC and International Indexing agencies like WoS.

    iii.   The Office of Research, Innovation and Commercialization (ORIC) is the focal office for monitoring, support for financial assistance and academic accreditation.

1.2 DEFINITIONS

    i.   For the purpose of this policy, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions and abbreviations shall apply:

    ii.   **Research Journal** at AIOU means a scholarly publication containing articles written by researchers, professors and other experts focusing on a specific discipline or field of study. Unlike newspapers and magazines, journals are intended for an academic or technical audience, not general readers.

    iii.   **Web of Science** means an online subscription based scientific citation indexing service originally produced by the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI).

    iv.   **Editor -in-Chief** means the most senior editor who has overall responsibility for the journal.

    v.   **Editor** means a person responsible for identifying important 'hot topics', sourcing high quality manuscripts, handling day-to-day paperwork, and organizing the flow of manuscripts (i.e. from author to referees and back and finally to the publisher). Depending on the size of the journal, the number of editors can range from one or two people to many more.

    vi.   **Editorial Board** means a group of prominent people in the journal's field. The presence of an editorial board is very important for journal as an ambassador for journals. To some

extent the quality of a journal is judged by the members and academic credentials of its editorial board.

vii. **Peer reviewer** means external expert chosen by the editor to provide written opinions, with the aim of improving the study.

1.3 OBJECTIVES

i. Guidance for management, support and quality enhancement of research journals at Allama Iqbal Open University to bring their academic and publication quality to international standards.

ii. Establishment of minimum and optimal standards, in line with the International best practices, for academic review, publication quality, and ethical practices.

iii. Establishment and strengthening of monitoring systems.

iv. Maintaining the reliability of the published material and safeguarding the research record by the journal.

v. Providing support in Capacity building of editorial teams, faculty and researchers for academic publishing.

vi. Provision of financial support and linking of such support to performance, i.e., success in meeting quality criteria.

1.4 BENEFICIARIES & STAKEHOLDERS

Beneficiaries/ Stakeholders of AIOU-PRJ are:

i. AIOU faculty, students, and researchers

ii. Editorial Staff and Members

iii. AIOU collaborators/partners ,researchers and developers

iv. Internal and external peer reviewers/ subject experts

v. Higher Education Commission and other relevant government entities

vi. Office of Research, Innovation and Commercialization (ORICs)

CHAPTER 2

POLICY FOR RESEARCH JOURNALS

2.1 Starting New Journals

i. The proposal for starting a new journal may be forwarded through Editor in Chief to ORIC.

ii. The proposal must clearly provide proper justification for the need, rationale and benefits of journal for general audience, and in particular for AIOU faculty and students.

iii. To keep high standards of publishing, multiple journals from the same faculty would not be encouraged until and unless appropriately justified.

iv. ORIC after initial evaluation of proposal by an external reviewer or peer reviewed by accredited/HEC recognized AIOU Journal will refer the case to ORIC Steering Committee.

v. The Vice Chancellor, on the recommendations of ORIC Steering Committee, may approve the start of new journal.

2.2 Publisher Characteristics

i. The journal must be published by an academic department of AIOU or Faculty on regular basis.

ii. The publisher should be registered and have a formal governing body, which must approve the publication decisions. "Registered" in case of AIOU means approved by VC on recommendations of ORIC Steering Committee and notified by the Registrar of the University.

iii. The publisher name, in case of AIOU Research Journals, the complete name of university along with Faculty/Department name with a verifiable, physical address (not P.O Box) must be provided on hard and soft copy of each journal issue.

iv.   The details of source of funding/grant support in subject areas, where grant support is common or required must be appropriately acknowledged and should be provided online as well.

2.3 Journal Eligibility, Scope & Title

i.   To be eligible the journal must fulfill the minimum eligibility criteria for Registration/Application Submission for HEC Journal Recognition System (HJRS) within two years of its start of publication.

ii.   In case of non-performance and failing to meet the minimum standards, a journal may be discontinued/merged with some other AIOU journal on recommendations of ORIC Steering Committee.

iii.   In genuine cases, relaxation may be granted to journals for a period decided on the recommendations of ORIC Steering Committee.

iv.   The journal must have clearly defined aims, objectives and scope of publication.

v.   Journal must possess a title aligned with the stated scope of the journal, published content, and community demographic (editorial board and authors).

vi.   The title should be consistently displayed at the article, issue (if present), journal, and website level.

2.4 Editorial Board and Advisory Board

i. Composition of Editorial and Advisory Board

A. Editorial Board

a. The journals will operate under the guidance of an Editorial Board which will be a team of experts in the journal's field. The Editorial Board will provide expert advice on content, guide on strategies for attracting new authors and encouraging submissions.

b. The Editorial Board should comprise of Patron, Editor-in-Chief, Editor and Associate Editors/Managing Editors/Assistant Editors.

c. The Vice Chancellor (VC) may serve as Ex Officio Patron of AIOU journals.

d. Nominations for Editorial Board are to be forwarded by Editor in Chief to ORIC Steering Committee, on the recommendation of which approval will be granted by the VC for a prescribed duration. On recommendations of Editor in Chief, forwarded through ORIC Steering Committee, VC may add or revise constitution of the Board, if required.

e. The Editor-in-Chief may preferably of the level of a full Professor, and the Editor may preferably be a Professor/ Associate/ Assistant Professor.

f. Both Editor-in-Chief and Editor must have a good publication record, Impact Factor and preferably hold any position or membership of Professional Bodies, Societies or on the Editorial board of other prestigious journals.

B. Advisory Board

a. The journal must have a diversified Advisory board having a minimum of 08 members with PhD or terminal degrees in relevant fields (i.e., area of publication) and should have strong research and publication background.

b. Members of the Advisory Committee shall have more than 50 % members from outside the AIOU, both national and international from Academically Advanced Countries.

c. Consent letters from Advisory Board members should be kept in record.

ii. Credentials of the Editorial and Advisory Board Members should be clearly mentioned in the journal as well as on the website.

iii. To ensure the smooth functioning of the journal, the Editors in Chief are responsible for conducting the Editorial Board meetings on regular basis (at least twice a year).

2.5 Website Functionality/Journal Format

i. AIOU Journal portal hosting all the research journals published from the Institute will be developed and maintained by Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

ii. Every journal on the portal will have a comprehensive website, as per HEC prescribed guidelines, with the facility of online submission & review preferably using Open Journal System, Scholar One or similar software should be adopted.

iii.   It should facilitate online availability and include an archive of previous issues.

iv.   The available information must be accurate, the information architecture and navigation system must ensure easy access to the published content and all other features defining the journal such as submission process, publication fee, and sponsorships / source of funding, Peer review policy, ethical consideration, contact details, Editorial and ethical affiliations Editorial Board, instructions to authors and so on.

v.   The journal portal/webpage must clearly link to the publisher/AIOU homepage and vice versa.

vi.   Schedule for "Call for Papers" & Publishing Calendar, Complete Process of Publication showing time duration of individual activity and whole process, Publication Fee & Sponsorships / Source(s) of funding, Governing Body, Editorial Ethics, Contact Details, Scope of the Journal, Credentials of Editorial & Advisory Boards and last but not least Hyperlinks for relevant Indexing/Abstracting Agencies & Publication Tools (if any) must invariably be given and continuously updated on website of the journals.

vii.   Besides the website must be esthetically pleasing and each online article must bear the name of the journal, Year of the publication, Volume No., Issue No., and page No. along with the Logo of the Institution on top right corner.

viii.   Each article must clearly mention the corresponding author of the published article.

2.6   Transparency

i.   The submission process, publication fee, and sponsorships / source of funding must be available publicly on the website.

ii.   The journal must have a registered ISSN that is verifiable on the ISSN database (https://portal.issn.org/) clearly and consistently displayed on all journal platforms (electronic and/or print). If both print and electronic ISSNs are present, both should be provided.

iii.   If a journal does not have an ISSN, it must make efforts to acquire ISSN (Print/Electronic) within two years of its start of publication, failure to acquire ISSN may result in discontinuation of the journal. .For a print publication, an ISSN shall be requested up to three (3) months before the release of the first issue. For an online publication, an ISSN is assigned only after the release of the first 2 issues, provided that these issues contain 5 articles at least.

iv. If the journal provides both online and print editions, it is mandatory to provide the journal URL and full-text access details of current content.

v. The Journals' published content must be consistent with the title and stated scope of the journal.

2.7 Timeliness and/or Publication Volume

i. The research journal should be published on time as per specified frequency/schedule in the stipulated time period but not later than one month from due date.

ii. Failure to follow specified frequency/schedule may lead to discontinuation of journal by AIOU competent authority on the recommendations of ORIC Steering Committee.

iii. The volume of scholarly articles published Quarterly/Bi-annually/Annually is expected to be within ranges appropriate to the subject area.

a. Annual Publication	2 issues in the last two years
b. Six Monthly Publication	4 issues in the last two years
c. Quarterly	8 issues in the last two years
d. Monthly	12 issues in the last one year

2.8 Indexing/Abstracting

i. The Journal must be registered with well reputed indexing agencies preferably Web of Science and/or Scopus or subject specific agencies within 03 years of its start of publication as per HEC guidelines for each category.

ii. The Abstracting/Indexing Agency selected by the journal must have relevancy with the discipline, area, and scope of the journal.

iii. For International indexing agencies, the Editor in Chief/ Editor may be responsible to provide full access of the published content with all necessary permissions to view that content.

2.9 Scholarly Content

i.   The journal must contain primarily original scholarly material.

ii.   The academic level of the research reported should be appropriate to a graduate, post-doctoral, and/or professional research audience.

iii. The Editor may hold the responsibility to ensure the authenticity of published content.

iv.   Published content must be in line with AIOU policies and the international publication ethics.

v.   In case where majority of the content is conference proceedings, it shall be published as Special Issue of the journal.

2.10   Article Titles and Article Abstracts in English

i.   The journal must provide the Article titles and Article abstracts in English language despite of the language of the main body of the published content.

ii.   The language of titles, abstracts, and all other published text presented in English must be clear and comprehensible to audiences.

2.11   Bibliographic Information in Roman Script

i.   Cited references, names, and affiliations must be published in Roman script to allow rapid, accurate indexing, and easy comprehension by our global users.

2.12   Authorship

i.   Names and Institutional affiliations, including country and addresses of all contributing authors must be reflected on each published article.

ii.   Each article must clearly mention the corresponding author of the published article.

iii. Authorship may reflect geographical distribution, including both International and National authors.

iv.   Publications by editor or members of editorial board may not be allowed as per HEC criteria.

v.   No more than 1/5 of published articles per issue by "local" authors (i.e., from the publishing institute) are allowed for 'Y' category journals.

vi.   At least one-fourth of the published articles must be by international authors in 'X' category journals.

2.13 Peer Review Process

i. Established procedures for external peer review should be adopted and the record must be maintained.

ii. All published articles should be blind reviewed by at least two external reviewers (from outside the organization of journal).

iii. The articles must not be reviewed by members of the editorial board or the publishing institute.

iv. Reviewer Proforma must be developed and endorsed by the Editorial Board and must cover all qualitative and quantitative aspects of the research article as per research parameters.

v. Comprehensive comments of the reviewer must display the important features/flaws of the reviewed article.

vi. If desired by reviewer, improved draft from author must be shared with reviewer to ensure the incorporation of suggestions/comments.

vii. To avoid peer review scams, reviewers must have institutional emails rather than non-institutional emails.

viii. The appreciation certificate may be issued to reviewers for their contribution, duly signed by Patron at the end of year.

2.14   Presence of Ethics Statements

i. The journal must prepare and provide a transparent policy regarding their ethical requirements for authors and published works.

ii. If the journal supports and uses one or more third-party organization's principles (WAME, COPE, Declaration of Helsinki, etc.), either the full text of the guidelines should be presented and appropriately credited to the source, or a functioning link to the full text of the guidelines should be provided.

iii. The journal must provide a readily accessible, clear statement of the commitment to peer-review and/or editorial oversight of all published content.

iv. The plagiarism detection software like Turnitin, iThenticate etc. can be used. Considering the fact that the use of above-mentioned software can only check similarity of words, it is the responsibility of Editorial Team/Board to ensure the existence of all the necessary processes and procedures to ensure that plagiarized work (including self-plagiarism) is not published. In

case of publishing of any plagiarized work, strict action will be taken against the journal which may lead to discontinuation of such journal(s).

v.   The Editor in Chief/ Editor will be responsible to follow a specific internationally well reputed protocol to curb predatory practices. Preferably, Guidelines of "Committee on Publishing Ethics" (COPE) should be followed in letter and spirit. In this regard, it is encouraged to take membership of COPE by AIOU journals.

vi.   The website must display clear policies on Conflict of Interest, Citation Manipulation, Redundant Publications, Retraction and Author withdrawal of submission.

2.15   Journal Monitoring

i.   ORIC will monitor the financial support and academic accreditation of AIOU Journals.

ii.   The journal will maintain the complete record of contact details with CV's, publication lists, consent letter/emails from members of Editorial board, complete record of every published issue including all the details of submitted, accepted and rejected articles, record of peer review etc., complete record of number of copies printed and their mode of distribution (i.e. gratis, exchange, subscription) along with mailing list and it will be provided as and when required by HEC or AIOU authority.

CHAPTER 3

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR AIOU RESEARCH JOURNALS

The objective of financial support to research journals is to nurture and enhance academic and publication standards of AIOU research journals at par with International standards.

3.1 Conditions for Financial Support

i. The financial support will be provided for new journals for maximum 2 years, unless they will get accreditation or secure HEC Journal category.

ii. The journals must apply for HEC Research Journal Funding and will be eligible for Institutional financial support only, in case if they fail to secure funding from HEC or HEC funding is inadequate as per requirement.

iii. If the journal gets higher category and they need more financial support, the funding may be increased.

iv. Journals must submit documentary evidence and decision on their application to HEC, if applying for Institutional financial support.

v. The financial support may be used for the following purposes:

    a. Application for ISSN

    b. Registration with one or more well reputed Abstracting/ Indexing agencies

    c. External peer review fee (National/ International)

vi. Funding may be continued based on satisfactory performance as decided by ORIC Steering Committee.

3.2 Eligibility Criteria

i. The journal must fulfill the initial and editorial requirements set by AIOU-PRJ, mentioned in Chapter 2 of this policy to be eligible for financial support.

3.3 Remuneration/Honorarium/Incentive

i.   The ORIC Steering Committee will recommend the remuneration for external experts for Journals review, National and International reviewers of manuscripts or for any other journal related activity on the recommendations of editorial board of AIOU research journals.

ii. Approval of recommended amount of remuneration will be solicited from VC AIOU that in turn will be approved from Rate and Remuneration Committee/Finance Committee.

iii. Not more than two manuscripts will be evaluated by a single reviewer for the same issue.

iv. Amount of remuneration may be revised from time to time by ORIC Steering Committee on the request from journals.

v.   The honorarium/incentive for the editorial team will be recommended by the ORIC Steering Committee on achievement of getting a higher ranking in HEC Journal recognition system.

3.4 Financial Management

i.   Approved funds under Financial Support to AIOU Research Journals shall be allocated by the treasurer office to ORIC.

ii. The administrative and financial powers of the released fund will be granted to Head ORIC.

iii. The fund will be released to journal from Treasurer on sanction of Head ORIC. The request will be processed on the provision of the invoices for required amount sent to ORIC with all supporting documents.

iv. Treasurer section shall send a copy of Funds Release Letter along with copy of cheque to ORIC, AIOU for file record.

3.5 SOPs for Publication Fee Charging Journals

i.   A new bank account will be opened for the Publication Fee and it will be collectively operated by Editor-In-Chief/Editor of the Journal and Treasurer.

ii. The Publication Fee will be deposited by the authors into Journals bank account.

iii. The amount collected will be used for licensing/agreements with indexing/abstracting agencies, remuneration to editorial team and external peer reviewers' fee.

iv. The payment to foreign reviewers shall be made in US dollars and for this purpose AIOU foreign currency account shall be used.

v. The request for amount to be transferred in foreign currency shall be sent to ORIC for onward submission to the Treasurer by Editor in Chief/Editor of the Journal and quarterly re-imbursement shall be made back to Treasurer Office from Journal's main account.

vi. Adjustments in this regard shall be made on quarterly basis.

vii. Journal's account shall be audited on annual basis.