



AIOU POLICY FOR RESEARCH JOURNALS (AIOU-PRJ)



Office of Research, Innovation & Commercialization (ORIC)

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIOU	Allama Iqbal Open University
PRJ	Policy for Research Journals
HEC	Higher Education Commission
ORIC	Office of Research, Innovation & Commercialization
URSC	University Research Support Committee
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 referred to as the “AIOU Policy for Research Journals (AIOU-PRJ)”.
- ii. This policy has been formulated in accordance with the quality standards established by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and recognized international indexing agencies, such as the Web of Science (WoS).
- iii. The Office of Research, Innovation and Commercialization (ORIC) shall serve as the focal office for monitoring AIOU research journals, coordinating matters related to academic accreditation, and facilitating financial operations (subject to availability).

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 individuals in the journal’s field. The presence of an editorial board is very important for a journal, serving as ambassadors for the publication. To some extent, the quality of a journal is judged by the members and academic credentials of its editorial board.

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

1.3 Objectives

- i. Guidance for the management, support and quality enhancement of research journals at Allama Iqbal Open University to bring academic and publication quality of the journals at par with 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 linked to performance, i.e., success in meeting quality criteria.

1.4 Beneficiaries & Stakeholders

Beneficiaries/ Stakeholders of AIOU-PRJ include:

- i. AIOU faculty, students, and researchers
- ii. Editorial board members and journal staff
- iii. AIOU collaborators, partners, and content developers
- iv. Internal and external peer reviewers/ subject experts
- v. Higher Education Commission (HEC) and other relevant government entities
- vi. Office of Research, Innovation and Commercialization (ORIC) of AIOU

CHAPTER 2

POLICY FOR RESEARCH JOURNALS

2.1 Starting a New Journal

2.1.1 Proposal Requirements

- i. The proposal must clearly provide proper justification for the need, rationale, and benefits of the journal-both for the general audience and specifically for AIOU faculty and students.
- ii. The proposal must follow the composition for the Editorial and Advisory Board as per HEC guidelines.
- iii. The proposal must provide the CVs of Editorial and Advisory Board members, along with their consent letters or emails.
- iv. To keep high standards of publishing, multiple journals from the same faculty will not be encouraged unless appropriately justified.

2.1.2 Proposal Submission

- i. The proposal for starting a new journal may be forwarded by the Dean's office to ORIC.
- ii. ORIC shall conduct an initial evaluation of the proposal, which will be evaluated either by an external reviewer or through peer review by an accredited/HEC-recognized AIOU journal, using the prescribed evaluation proforma (Annexure-I).
- iii. After the initial evaluation, ORIC shall present the proposal along with the evaluation report to the ORIC Steering Committee/URSC for consideration.
- iv. The Vice Chancellor may approve the initiation of the new journal based on the recommendations of the ORIC Steering Committee/URSC.
- v. Upon approval, ORIC will notify the initiation of the journal.

2.2 Publisher Characteristics

- i. The journal must be published regularly by an academic department or faculty of AIOU.

- ii. The publisher (i.e., the Editorial board of the journal) must be registered and have a formal governing body, which must approve the publication decisions. "Registered" in case of AIOU Research Journals means approved by VC on recommendations of ORIC Steering Committee/URSC.
- iii. In the case of AIOU research journals, the publisher's name must include the full name of the university, along with the name of the relevant faculty or department, and a verifiable physical address (not a P.O. Box). This information must be clearly stated on both the print and electronic versions of each journal issue.
- iv. The details of funding sources or grant support, particularly in subject areas where such support is common or required, must be duly acknowledged and made publicly accessible online.

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 cases of non-performance or failure to meet the minimum standards, a journal may be discontinued or merged with another AIOU journal, based on the recommendations of the ORIC Steering Committee/URSC.
- iii. In genuine cases, the relaxation may be granted to journals for a period decided on the recommendations of ORIC Steering Committee/URSC.
- iv. The journal must have clearly defined aims, objectives and scope of publication.
- v. The journal must possess a title aligned with its stated scope, published content, and community demographic (editorial board and authors).
- vi. The title should be consistently displayed on the article, issue (if applicable), journal, and website.

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 shall consist of Patron, Editor-in-Chief, Editor, and Associate Editors/Managing Editors/Assistant Editors. The Editor is responsible for structuring the Editorial Board in accordance with HEC guidelines, ensuring that the members possess relevant academic qualifications and a strong research background.
- c. Nominations for the Editorial Board shall be forwarded by the Editor-in-Chief to ORIC for presentation to the ORIC Steering Committee/URSC, on the recommendation of which approval shall be granted by the Vice Chancellor. On recommendations of Editor-in-Chief, forwarded through ORIC Steering Committee/URSC, the Vice Chancellor may add or revise the constitution of the Board, if required.
- d. The Editorial Board shall comprise members with PhD degrees in relevant fields (i.e., the area of publication) with a strong research and publications background (Impact Factor/HJRS recognized publications) and preferably holding positions or memberships in professional bodies, societies, or on the advisory 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 and emails from Advisory Board members should be kept in record.
- ii. The Editor-in-Chief shall forward the nominations, along with the CVs, for the revision or updating of the Editorial and Advisory Boards to ORIC for presentation to the ORIC Steering Committee/URSC for recommendations. Based on the recommendations, the approval shall be granted by the Vice Chancellor.

- iii. The credentials of the Editorial and Advisory Board Members should be clearly mentioned both within the journal and on the official website.
- iv. To ensure the smooth functioning of the journal, the Editor-in-Chief shall be responsible for conducting the Editorial Board meetings on regular basis (at least twice a year).

2.5 Website Functionality/Journal Format

- i. The AIOU Journal Portal, hosting all the research journals published by the Institute, will be developed and maintained by the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) department.
- ii. Each journal hosted on the portal shall have a comprehensive website developed in accordance with HEC-prescribed guidelines. The website should include the facilities for online submission and peer review, preferably using the Open Journal Systems (OJS), Scholar One, or other similar software.
- iii. The website must facilitate online access and include an archive of previous issues.
- iv. All information available on the journal website must be accurate and up to date. The information architecture and navigation system must ensure easy access to the published content as well as all key journal features, including the submission process, publication fees, sponsorships or sources of funding, peer review policy, ethical considerations, contact details, editorial and ethical affiliations, editorial board information, instructions for authors, and so on.
- v. The journal portal/webpage must be clearly linked to the homepage of the university 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. Additionally, the website must be aesthetically pleasing. Each online article must display the name of the journal, year of publication, volume number, issue number, page numbers, and the logo of the Institution in the top right corner.
- viii. Each article must clearly mention the corresponding author of the published article.

2.6 Transparency

- i. The journal's website should facilitate online availability and include an archive of previous issues. The submission process, publication fee, and sponsorships / source of funding, must be available publicly, including on the website.
- ii. The journal must have a registered ISSN that is verifiable on the ISSN database, title and URL (verified from International ISSN register/(<https://portal.issn.org/>)). It must be clearly and consistently displayed across all journal platforms (electronic or print). If both print and electronic ISSNs are assigned, both must 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 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 at least 5 articles per issue.
- iv. The journal must have published at least 5 articles per issue in the preceding calendar year.
- v. If the journal is available in both online and print editions, it is mandatory to provide the journal URL and full-text access details for the current content.
- vi. The Journals' published content must be aligned 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 Competent Authority on the recommendations of ORIC Steering Committee/URSC.

- 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 HEC recognized international indexing agencies such as Web of Science/Scopus or subject specific agencies within 05 years of its start of publication as per HEC guidelines.
- 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 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 a 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 the global users.

2.12 Authorship

- i. The names and institutional affiliations, including country and addresses, of all contributing authors must be clearly stated in 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. Editors/Editorial Board members' publication is not allowed.
- v. A maximum of 20% self-institutional publications (i.e., from the publishing institute) per issue is allowed.
- vi. A maximum of one article of an author in an issue, either as principal author (1st or corresponding) or as co-author, is allowed.

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), with at least two review reports required for each manuscript.
- iii. Peer review via OJS/Scholar One or any other online system will be encouraged.
- iv. The articles must not be reviewed by members of the editorial board or the publishing institute.
- v. A 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.
- vi. Comprehensive comments of the reviewer must display the important features/flaws of the reviewed article.

- vii. If desired by reviewer, improved draft from the author must be shared with reviewer to ensure the incorporation of suggestions/comments.
- viii. To avoid peer review scams, reviewers must have institutional emails rather than non-institutional emails.
- ix. The appreciation certificate may be issued to reviewers for their contribution, duly signed by Patron at the end of the year.

2.14 Presence of Ethics Statements

- i. The journal must prepare and provide a transparent policy regarding its ethical requirements for authors and published works.
- ii. If the journal supports and adheres to the principles of one or more third-party organizations (e.g. WAME, COPE, Declaration of Helsinki), either the full text of the guidelines should be presented with proper credit 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, and clear statement of commitment to peer-review and editorial oversight of all published content.
- iv. Plagiarism detection software such as Turnitin, iThenticate etc. may be used. Considering the fact that the use of above-mentioned software can only check similarity of words, it is the responsibility of the Editorial Board to establish and enforce all the necessary processes and procedures to ensure that the plagiarized work, including self-plagiarism, is not published. In case of publishing 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, the Guidelines of “Committee on Publishing Ethics” (COPE) should be followed in both letter and spirit. In this regard, it is encouraged to take membership of COPE by AIOU journals.
- vi. The journal’s website must display clear and accessible policies on Conflict of Interest, Citation Manipulation, Redundant Publications, Retraction, and Author withdrawal of submission.

2.15 Journal Monitoring

- i. ORIC will monitor the academic accreditation and financial operations (subject to availability) of AIOU Journals.
- ii. The journal shall maintain a complete record of contact details of Editorial & Advisory Board members, reviewers, authors, and any other relevant stakeholders; CV's of Editorial & Advisory Board members and reviewers, publication lists, consent letter/emails from members of the Editorial & Advisory 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 the number of copies printed along with their mode of distribution (i.e. gratis, exchange, subscription) and the mailing list. These records must be readily available and provided upon request by HEC or any relevant AIOU authority.

CHAPTER 3

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR AIOU RESEARCH JOURNALS

3.1 Conditions for Institutional Financial Support

- i. To be eligible for institutional financial support, the journal must apply for HEC Research Journal Funding and submit documentary evidence of the application along with HEC's decision to ORIC before applying for Institutional financial support.
- ii. Institutional financial support will be provided for the indexation of journals only on the recommendation of ORIC Steering Committee/URSC and approval of the Competent Authority, in cases where the journal fails to secure funding from HEC or when HEC funding is inadequate to meet the requirement.

3.2 Remuneration/Honorarium/Incentive

- i. The honorarium/incentive for the editorial team will be recommended by the ORIC Steering Committee/URSC on achieving a higher ranking in the HEC's Journal Recognition System (HJRS).

3.3 Financial Management

- i. Approved funds under Institutional Financial Support to AIOU Research Journals shall be utilized from the R&D fund allocated to ORIC.
- ii. The administrative and financial powers over the released funds shall be granted to the Head of ORIC.
- iii. Funds will be released to the journal by the Treasurer upon the sanction of the Head of ORIC. The request will be processed on submission of invoices for the required amount, along with all supporting documents, to ORIC.
- iv. The Treasurer's Office shall send a copy of the Funds Release Letter, along with a copy of the cheque, to ORIC for file record.

3.4 SOPs for Publication Fee Charging Journals

- i. The journal must submit the case of charging any publication fees to ORIC, along with a detailed fee structure and supporting documents, to seek approval from the ORIC Steering Committee/URSC.
- ii. A new bank account will be opened for the publication fee, and it will be jointly operated by the Editor-in-Chief/Editor of the journal and the Treasurer.
- iii. The publication fee will be deposited by the authors into the journal's bank account.
- iv. The amount collected will be used for licensing/agreements with indexing/abstracting agencies, remuneration for the editorial team, and fees for external peer reviewers.
- v. Payments to foreign reviewers shall be made in US dollars, and the foreign currency account of AIOU shall be used for this purpose.
- vi. The request for the amount to be transferred in foreign currency shall be sent to ORIC for onward submission to the Treasurer by the Editor-in-Chief/Editor of the journal, and quarterly reimbursement shall be made back to the Treasurer's Office from the journal's main account.
- vii. Adjustments in this regard shall be made on a quarterly basis.
- viii. The journal's account shall be audited on an annual basis by the Treasurer's Office.