Guidelines for Preventing Questionable Academic Activities

< National Research Foundation, '18.10.01. >

> Recently, the increasing number of predatory or questionable journals and conferences is threatening credible research enterprises all over the world. In response to this phenomenon, the NRF is distributing this document to encourage its grantees (or contractors) and principal investigators including co-PIs and other personnel of the grant (hereafter, PIs and Others) to accept the following guidelines:

1. The Goal of the Guidelines

○ The goal of this guide is to inform PIs about how to publish their NRF funded research findings in more academically respected journals and present at more academically respected conferences.

※ For brevity, the remaining guidelines will only refer to 'journals' although all descriptions and characteristics herein apply equally to 'conference'. The Appendices will treat journals and conferences separately.

2. Definition of Credible Journals (or Conferences)

○ Credible journals (conferences) are defined as those that follow review procedures and selection processes that are recognized and widely accepted within the academic communities they serve.

※ Predatory journals (or conferences) are defined as those that accept papers according to irregular procedures (as determined by scholars within that academic community). For further information, please see Appendix A.

3. Best Practices for Grantees

○ Grantees funded by the NRF have an obligation to encourage and guide their researchers to publish their research results in reliable journals (or conferences).

○ Related to this issue, grantees should draft regulations for preventing illegitimate academic activities, and distribute these in consultation with their researchers.

  ※ Grantees interested in drafting regulations to prevent illegitimate academic activities, please refer to Appendix B.

4. Best Practices for PIs & Others

○ PIs & Others should publish/present their NRF-funded research results in reliable journals (or conferences) which are well regarded by the academic community in which they work.

○ PIs should consult with co-researchers (including students) to check if they are publishing their research findings in credible journals.

  ※ Use the checklist in Appendix C before publishing papers in journals (conferences) of unknown academic organizations.

5. Checking for Adherence to Regulations

○ The NRF regularly monitors whether grantees and PIs are following the rules and regulations indicated in this document.

Appendix A	**Characteristics of Predatory or Questionable Journals and Conferences**

☐ **Predatory or Questionable Journals**

○ **(Publication)** They omit steps in the general journal publication process such as peer-review, revision, etc.

- They publish the same paper repeatedly or publish papers which have already been published in other journals.

- The period between paper submissions and publication is very short (less than a month).

○ **(Format)** They are formatted irregularly (depending on paper submissions).

○ **(The scope of academic fields)** They deal with a variety of academic fields instead of focusing on one specific field.

○ **(Costs)** They do not post publication fees on the websites but charge via email.

○ **(Unscrupulous marketing)** They send spam emails to urge researchers to submit their papers.

○ **(Title)** They include the words 'World', 'International', 'Global' in the journal titles.

　※ Some highly credible journals contain the words, 'World', 'International', 'Global' in the title, thus extra care must be taken.

○ **(Location)** They claim their main office is located in developed countries such as USA, Europe, or Australia.

○ **(Impact factor)** They brag of the journals' high impact factor on the website.

○ **(Mailing address)** They post only email addresses, no physical mailing address.

※ See more: Mohammad Hemmat Esfe et al (2015), Fake Journals: Their Features and Some Viable Ways to Distinguishing Them, Sci Eng Ethics (2015) 21:821−824

□ Predatory or Questionable Conferences

○ **(Email address)** They use free email service providers such as Gmail or Hotmail.

○ **(Attendance)** They promise a certificate of attendance without attending.

○ **(Scope of field)** They deal with various academic fields, not one specific field

○ **(Committee)** They do not provide enough information about conference committee members.

   ※ Or they include distinguished scholars' name as conference committee members without their permission in order to deceive researchers.

○ **(Conference Date)** They change important dates such as abstract submission due date, paper due date, conference schedule and so on.

○ **(Deception)** They draw in researchers with free accommodations, board, or flight tickets.

○ **(Conference location)** They hold conferences at tourist destinations.

○ **(Method of payment)** They prefer wire transfer for conference fees as opposed to credible conferences which favor credit card payment.

○ **(Using fame)** They claim the conference is being conducted by well-known publishers.

○ **(Conference program)** They make it hard to find conference programs, speakers, and discussants.

○ **(Method of Invitation)** They send spam emails directly to researchers using, 'You are invited. as opposed to credible conferences which call for paper, by mentioning their themes.

 ※ They advertise that all presented papers will be published in SCOPUS journals.

○ **(Certificate of Attendance)** They allow you to download the certificate of conference attendance before the conference date (after paying registration fees).

○ **(Option for the Invitation of Speaker)** They claim that they incite speakers if attendees pay a certain fee as opposed to credible conferences which invite distinguished scholars at no additional charge.

○ **(Test)** They can be tested by sending a strange abstract written by AI to see whether it will be accepted. If it is accepted, the conference is most likely predatory.

※ See more : Amin Asadi et al (2018), Fake/Bogus Conferences: Their Features and Some Subtle Ways to Differentiate Them from Real Ones, Sci Eng Ethics (2018) 24:779−784.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Appendix B   Websites for Prevention of Questionable Academic Activities</td></tr>
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Website address	Main features
https://beallslist.weebly.com/	Blacklist of questionable publishers' list by Beall
https://predatoryjournals.com	The nonprofit website that provides a blacklist of unqualified journals based on Beall's list to avoid predatory publisher journals with no peer-reviews process, sloppy peer-review or profit-seeking by charging researchers publication fees.
http://thinkchecksubmit.org	Checklist for researchers to determine a journal or publisher's renown. (**Think/Check/Submit campaign**)
https://thinkcheckattend.org	Guideline for researchers to determine whether the conference is worthy of attending or avoiding. (**Think/Check/Attend campaign**)
https://libguides.caltech.edu/c.php?g=512665&p=3503029	Information related to questionable conferences and predatory journals provided by Caltech library
https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED579189.pdf	**Guidelines created by the University of Calgary (Canada) (in 2018)**
https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/blog/2016/08/academics-and-scientists-beware-predatory-journal-publishers	Academics and scientists: Beware of predatory journal publishers
https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/not-od-18-011.html	Statement on Article Publication Resulting from NIH Funded Research
http://www.icmje.org/icmje-recommendations.pdf	Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals (International Committee of Medical Journal Editors)
https://doaj.org/bestpractice	Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing: a joint statement by Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA) and the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME).

< Precautions when using Beall's List >

◦ **In Beall's Publisher list, if a publisher has more than one journal, although one or two journals may be predatory, it can be misconstrued that all the journals published by that publisher are predatory.**

◦ **It is difficult to know when a particular journal should be classified as predatory because there is no time frame indicated for journals on Beall's list. For instance, some journals used to be peer-reviewed in the past, but now they are classified as predatory. It is highly difficult to keep track of all the journals on the list.**

※See more : VÍT MACHÁČEK & MARTIN SRHOLEC (2017)

Appendix C	**Checklist for Avoiding Predatory Journals and Conferences (Examples)**

☐ **Checklist to determine a journal's legitimacy**

○ Since the purpose of predatory journals is profit-seeking, they ignore the peer-review process and brag about their quality and credibility. Please review the following checklist to prevent submitting your manuscripts to predatory journals.

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① Do my colleagues or I know this journal?

② Can I easily access the publisher's contact information?

③ Am I familiar with the board of editors?

④ Does it have a peer-review process?

⑤ Is it possible to find their journal articles in an index database?

※ For further information, use **Think/Check/Submit** campaign (http://thinkchecksubmit.org)

☐ **Checklist to determine of conference's legitimacy**

○ To avoid questionable conferences that ignore the peer-review process and presentation session and brag about their quality and credibility, please review the following checklist to prevent attending conference.

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① Is it easier to check the conference location?

② Have any of my colleagues presented their papers at this conference?

③ Do I know who is organizing this conference?

④ Are the scope of the conference and goal highly related to my research area?

⑤ Do I know key speakers and editors?

※ For further information, please check to **Think/check/attend** the Campaign's website.