PROPOSAL FOR A NATIONAL SYSTEM OF JOURNAL EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION IN ETHIOPIA

EAS

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Some features of current journal evaluation context:

• No national system for evaluating quality of Eth. journals;

• Not all HEIs have a scheme for evaluating their journals;

• Variance in journal reputability requirements of Eth. HEIs;

• Critical journal quality indicators not given higher weight;

• Little or no link b/n journal evaluation & res. environment;

• No incentive/accountability system for evaluation results.
Rationales for a national system of journal accreditation:

- To promote excellence in scholarship within Ethiopia;
- To promote international standards in journal publication;
- To establish a core list of accredited journals in Ethiopia;
- To identify challenges & solutions in journal publishing;
- To foster linkage b/n scholarly publishing & grad. research;
- To provide uniform journal rating standards.
**Major institutions with potential roles in accreditation:**

1. The Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST),
2. The Ministry of Education (MoE), and
3. The Ethiopian Academy of Sciences (EAS).

**Justifications for MoST’s role in journal accreditation:**

- Has mandate to foster dev’t of Science & Technology;
- Is key implementer of Ethiopia’s STI Policy;
- Supports research and innovation through major grants;
- Can mandate NRC or EAS to engage in accreditation.
Justifications for MoE’s role in journal accreditation:

• Has legal mandate to accredit HEIs and their programs;
• Can extend its quality assurance mandate to research;
• Can institute a national system of journal accreditation;
• Can assign others a role in journal accreditation processes;
• Can address challenges within scholarly publishing;
Justifications for EAS’ role in journal accreditation:

• Has legal mandate to advise the government on research quality;

• Has strategic objective of promoting excellence in research;

• Has constituency familiar with the research environment;

• Has autonomy to act independently of any HEI or society;

• Can mobilize Peer Review Panels through its WGs;
Major functions of accreditation agency

- set journal evaluation criteria & peer review guidelines;
- mobilize, organize and deploy Peer Review Panels;
- draw the core list of accredited journals by rank;
- disseminate widely results of evaluation & accreditation;
- address challenges identified in the evaluation processes;
- monitor post-evaluation journal performance & update list;
Accrediting agency’s operational strategies

- establish databases of Eth. scholars, journals, articles, etc.;
- set benchmarks from international evaluation practices;
- ensure uniform application of journal evaluation criteria;
- integrate self-assessment into its evaluation processes;
- ensure the transparency, rigor & integrity of evaluation;
- Provide/ mobilize support to address journal challenges;
- Raise awareness & valorize research productivity/ quality.
Elements of evaluation/ accreditation procedures:

• Accrediting Agency’s call for applications;

• institutional self-assessment of applicant journals;

• submission of applications with required info & docs;

• selection & orientation of Peer Review Panels;

• external evaluation of eligible applicant journals;

• publication of core list of accredited journals, by rank;

• updating of core list based on monitoring feedback.
**Evaluation cycles and duration**

- journal evaluation to be conducted every *three years*;

- two phases of journal evaluation processes:
  
  a) Internal Self-Assessment, lasting up to 5 months;
  
  b) External Evaluation, lasting up to 5 months.

- 1 month for checking applications & self-assessment report;

- 1 month for checking external evaluation report & core list;

- entire accreditation process to be completed in one year.
To be eligible to apply for accreditation, a journal must:

• have the aim of publishing original research articles;

• have its head office, and be published, in Ethiopia;

• have published at least three consecutive volumes;

• have Ethiopians among its editors;

• Be accessible to Ethiopian scholarly contributors;
Submission requirements

• Editor-in-Chief’s signed letter of application;
• Two copies of each volume published in the last 3 years;
• Complete descriptive information about journal;
• Copies of policies and guidelines of journal;
• Names & scholarly profiles of EIC & Board members;
• Review reports of each article & profiles of each reviewer;
• Report of internal assessment of each of the 3 volumes;
• Signed letter from Head of publishing unit of the journal.
Proposed generic criteria & total scores assigned:

I. Scholarly quality of research articles (25 pts)

II. Number and distribution of articles per issue (5 pts)

III. Competency of reviewers and critical rigor of the review process (15 pts)

IV. Enrichment and integrity features (5 pts)

V. Editor’s scholarly profile (10 pts)

VI. Editorial Board members’ scholarly profile (10 pts)

VII. Timeliness and continuity (5 pts)

VIII. Editorial policies (5 pts)

IX. Distribution of journal and access to full text (5 pts)
Generic criteria and total scores, *Cont’d*

X. registration in international indexing/abstracting databases (5 pts)

XI. basic Publishing Standards (5 pts)

XII. journal layout and compliance with scholarly norms of scientific writing (5 pts).

Application of criteria and computation of scores:

- self-assessment & external evaluation use uniform criteria;
- differentiated weights for results of the two evaluations;
- self-assessment valued at 40% of its total score; external evaluation at 60% of its total score, to compensate for biases in self-assessment.
Minimum aggregate scores for accreditation

- aggregate score will be the sum of 40% of journal’s total score in internal assessment and 60% of its total score in the external assessment;

Two types of minimum scores required to qualify for accreditation:

- 50% of the points allotted to each one of criterion (i), (iii), (v) and (vi); plus

- 50 points (out of a total of 100) in the aggregate score after combining the weighted total scores of the internal and external evaluations;

- Rationale for giving higher weight to criterion (i), (iii), (v) and (vi): they are more critical in attesting to and assuring the scholarly value of the journal.
Rationale for introducing journal ranking

• To determine the status of journals in comparison with each other;

• To enable authors to make informed choices;

• To generate a healthy competition among journals;

• To induce journals & editors not to be complacent;

• To enable research managers to make informed investment distributions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade No.</th>
<th>Journal rank</th>
<th>Total aggregate score earned</th>
<th>Distribution of minimum scores required</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>85-100 pts</td>
<td>Journal should score a minimum of 85% of the points allotted to each one of criterion (i), (iii), (v), and (vi), plus a minimum total of 34 points out of the total sum allotted to all the remaining criteria.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>70-84 pts</td>
<td>Journal should score a minimum of 70% of the points allotted to each one of criterion (i), (iii), (v), and (vi), plus a minimum total of 28 points out of the total sum allotted to all the remaining criteria.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>60-69 pts</td>
<td>Journal should score a minimum of 60% of the points allotted to each one of criterion (i), (iii), (v), and (vi), plus a minimum total of 24 points out of the total sum allotted to all the remaining criteria.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>50-59 pts</td>
<td>Journal should score a minimum of 50% of the points allotted to each one of criterion (i), (iii), (v), and (vi), plus a minimum total of 20 points out of the total sum allotted to all the remaining criteria.</td>
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Peer reviewing in external evaluation processes

- Determine disciplinary clusters for selection and assignment of peer reviewers;

Ethical principles to be observed by members of evaluation panels:

- Declare from outset any conflict of interest arising from recent association with assigned journal/s;
- Maintain anonymity of their identity with respect to their peer review assignment;
- Maintain impartiality, objectivity, and fairness throughout the journal assessment exercise;
- Maintain the confidentiality of the results of their review.
Minimum criteria for selection of peer reviewers

- A minimum qualification of PhD or rank of Assistant Professor;
- Expertise on the subject area of journal/ article/s to be reviewed;
- A scholarly track record of publications in the field;
- Previous experience as reviewer or editor of scholarly works;
- No formal association with journal or submissions during census period;
- Evaluating institution will select and assign two peer reviewers for each article in accordance with area of expertise;
- Peer reviewers will also assess other aspects of the journal in accordance with the other criteria;
- Total no. of articles to be assessed by a reviewer depends on total no of articles and reviewers available within the given field;
Role of panel of experts

• Address any major disparity in assessments by paired reviewers;

• Address any outstanding issues arising from a comparison of Internal and External scores of a given journal/article;

• Convert internal assessment score into 40% and external one into 60% and sum up the two for aggregate score;

• Draw a provisional list of journals within their subject area that qualify for accreditation;

• Rank the qualifying journals as per the ranking criteria;

• Compile journal weaknesses and strengths and the recommendations made therefrom;

• Submit full report of evaluation results to Evaluating Institution.
Establishing the core list of accredited journals

- Evaluating Institution will review, amend and/or compile a consolidated report based on report of each Panel of Experts;
- Submit to Accrediting Agency a consolidated report, detailing the Core List by rank, together with its own observations;
- Systematically archive all evaluation documents for reference during subsequent cycle of evaluation;
- Accrediting Agency will review the consolidated report and then approve the Core List of journals to be accredited;
- Will communicate the Core List to each applicant, along with comments on the identified weaknesses and strengths;
- Inform the non-accredited journals why their application was not successful.
Flow chart of the accreditation process
Agency’s post-accreditation tasks

Addressing appeals against the results of the evaluation:

- Consider journal appeals against the result of the evaluation or the ranking provided it is based on hard facts or valid ground;

Mechanisms for monitoring journals’ performance in the Interim Period:

a) Regular reporting requirements of changes in the status and performance of the journals;

b) Establishing a stakeholder feedback channel for reporting on any journal’s failure in its integrity and performance.

Follow-up measures to promote excellence in scholarship:

- Use identified weaknesses to support improvement of journal performance and create an enabling publishing/research environment;
- Advocate policy reforms and greater investment to strengthen research productivity & linkage between journals & graduate research;
- Provide incentives for best-performing journals, editors & researchers;
- Promote the internationalization of Ethiopian journals.