

# CBAS Publication Guidance - DRAFT

## Open-Access Publishing

Researchers seeking to disseminate their results through peer-reviewed journals can generally select either journals that require a subscription to view their articles or open-access journals, where the authors pay an article processing charge (APC). Some journals or publishers offer both services. There are increased federal requirements and increased opportunities for open-access publishing along with increased solicitations from non-legitimate predatory publishers. This all raises a number of important questions for researchers and administrators.

- How do I select an appropriate journal for my research results?
- How do I avoid falling prey to predatory publishers?
- Am I required to publish in open-access journals?
- How do I pay for APCs if selecting an open-access journal?
- Is preprint (arXiv) publishing viewed the same as peer-reviewed publishing?

This guidance document will seek to answer these questions and provide a resource for researchers and administrators to ensure that the high-quality research at MTSU is published in excellent journals and that federal regulations are followed.

### How do I select an appropriate journal for my research results?

The best way to answer this question is by observing where others in your field of research or your department publish. Or consider the journals that you, your advisor, or your students read and reference. Selecting “tried-and-true” journals will ensure that your results are disseminated in a reputable journal visible to your peers and students. Have a discussion with your faculty mentor, department chair, or faculty in your department with experience in publishing. They will be able to help point you towards reputable, peer-reviewed publishers and journals. Many fields of research have association or society organizations that publish high-quality and high-visibility journals, so consider if one of these journals would be best for your work. You can also use the indexing services mentioned in the next section to evaluate journal quality. Importantly though, make sure to avoid predatory publishers and journals.

### How do I avoid falling prey to predatory publishers?

What are predatory publishers and journals? The [MTSU library](#) provides this definition:

“While there is no universally agreed-upon definition, predatory journals are known to be publishers and journals that exploit charging fees and certain business practices to authors that wish to publish their articles. They tend to solicit authors, researchers, and viewers and provide false lists of sources they have used. They also do not employ standard editorial and publishing services provided by legitimate scholarly journals such as peer review, proofreading, editing, and providing extensive detailed information of the review process.”

Common signs of predatory publishers are aggressive solicitation emails, promise of rapid publication, spelling and grammatical errors on their website or in emails, a broad, unclear journal

scope, and no listing with MEDLINE, Scopus, Web of Science or other legitimate indexing services. Predatory publishers offer a rapid, often inexpensive publishing option that is attractive to researchers looking to publish their work quickly and easily. But publishing in predatory journals has negative consequences, such as:

- Damage to the reputation of the researcher and university that may negatively affect tenure and promotion decisions or review of grant proposals that reference the work published.
- Reduced readership and impact of your work when using journals that are not indexed in academic databases.
- Your research will appear alongside results that may have been obtained unethically or are entirely falsified.
- A poor or non-existent peer-review process that fails to strengthen your manuscript.
- Loss of the publication should the predatory publisher close down.

Databases of reputable publishers and journals are available, and researchers should use these to confirm that the journal they intend to publish in is not predatory. The MTSU library recommends the use of [Ulrichsweb](#) or the [Directory of Open Access Journals \(DOAJ\)](#). Learn more about predatory publishing and how to avoid it from the [MTSU Library](#) or several other university libraries ([The University of Arizona](#), [California State University, Northridge](#), [Indiana University](#)). It is important to understand the difference between predatory publishing and open-access publishing. While most predatory publishers use an open-access model, they lack the editorial and peer-review process of reputable open-access journals.

#### *Am I required to publish in open-access journals?*

In August of 2022, the [White House Office of Science and Technology Policy \(OSTP\)](#) [issued a memo](#) requiring that all peer-reviewed publications of research funded by federal agencies be freely available to the public without embargo. Both the [NIH](#) and the [NSF](#) have policy and guidance to ensure that the research they fund is compliant with this policy. All MTSU faculty conducting research funded by federal agencies must adhere to this policy. There are a couple options available to faculty to ensure compliance with this policy:

- Publish in a journal that is not open-access (subscription based), but then submit the publication to a public repository. Many federal agencies with large research funding budgets provide open-access (sometimes called public access) repositories where researchers can submit their peer-reviewed publications. These include the NIH ([PubMed Central; PMC](#)), NSF ([NSF Public Access Repository; NSF-PAR](#)), USDA ([PubAg](#)), and others.
- Publish in an open-access journal. By choosing to publish in an open-access journal, the research publication is made freely available to the public and therefore complies with the federal government's public access policy. However, nearly all open-access journals will require payment of an article processing charge (APC) for publication.

Important to note here is that the White House has made it clear that posting a preprint online does not fulfill the public access requirement. The public access document must be a peer-reviewed publication.

*How do I pay for APCs if selecting an open-access journal?*

The article processing charge (APC) varies from journal to journal, typically ranging from a few hundred dollars to a few thousand dollars, though some journal APCs are over \$10,000. No faculty member should submit a manuscript for open-access publication requiring an APC without an approved plan for paying the APC. Here are some suggested ways to fund the APC:

- **Waivers:** Many publishers provide waivers or reduced APCs to certain individuals or institutions. Faculty should investigate whether they or the university are eligible for these concessions in the journal they wish to publish ([https://library.mtsu.edu/supporting\\_oa](https://library.mtsu.edu/supporting_oa)).
- **Grant Funds:** Grant-funded faculty who publish in an open-access journal to meet federal requirements should use grant funds to help cover APCs. Faculty are encouraged to consider where they may publish their work and include APCs into their budget during proposal development.
- **Recovered Indirect Funds:** Funded researchers at MTSU collect a percentage of the recovered indirect funds from their grant. These funds can be used at the discretion of the PI and could be used to cover part or all of an APC. Consult with the CBAS Grants Technical Clerk (currently Jamie Morgan) if you need to determine your indirect account balance. Researchers should also check with their department chair about using departmental recovered indirect funds to help cover APCs.
- **University Funds:** ORSP and CBAS have funds devoted to help cover APCs for faculty publishing their research. For ORSP, researchers should submit the [Peer-Reviewed Journal/Creative Activity Authorization Form](#). Currently, requests for APC support from CBAS should be submitted directly to the Associate Dean for Research. The University will only provide financial support for publications in reputable journals that are considered non-predatory and listed in the databases mentioned above.

*Is preprint (arXiv) publishing viewed the same as peer-reviewed publishing?*

A preprint is a preliminary version of a manuscript shared through any number of servers (e.g., arXiv, bioRxiv, medRxiv, ChemRxiv, agriRxiv) prior to submission to a peer-reviewed journal for publication. Posting a preprint is a way to share results and receive feedback from those in your field quickly and freely. However, because preprints are not subject to editorial and peer review, they are generally not considered as rigorous as peer-reviewed publications. Nor do they meet the federal government's public access requirement. Faculty should consult with their department chair and promotion and tenure committee prior to including preprints in their Outline of Faculty Data or other university activity reports. Additionally, some journals will not accept manuscripts that have been posted to preprint servers. Faculty should consider where they will submit a manuscript for peer-review publication and determine that publisher's preprint policy.