

# Institutional protocol for scientific journals

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## Preface

I look up from my screen and my eyes are drawn to the list of scientific journals published or co-published by the UOC pinned on the noticeboard. I spend a while looking at it and that leads me to think about all the effort that has been made to get this far. About the work done by so many people, professors, researchers and administrative staff, who started many of these journals by robbing time from wherever they could. Who continued to find time to keep them going, and are still continuing today. I think about the members of the various publications committees. The meetings that have been held and the intellectually fruitful discussions that have been taken place in them.

And while looking at the list, my gaze also goes to the Action Plan 2014-2016 within our University's Strategic Plan 2014-2020. It was easy for this to happen. Beside the noticeboard, I have hung the poster with all six action plans. But it is also easy because this protocol is part of one of these plans, the one for UOC R&I, in total connection with the NET UOC plan's communication subplan.

Indeed, scientific journals play a key role in obtaining the international recognition in research and innovation that we have set as a goal in the 2020 Strategic Plan. These journals, which publish articles that have followed a demanding peer review process, no doubt contribute to achieving this recognition. Accordingly, following the work done by the people whose names now run through my head as I look at the noticeboard, this protocol was approved in October 2015 with the goal of defining the criteria and management model for the scientific journals. Please look through it and, especially, refer to it every time you think of a scientific journal published by the UOC.

That is what I do now. And as I read one heading after another on the list, I think of the people who defined and preserved the journals' quality criteria. I think of each and every person who has worked hard so that the list on my noticeboard has the thickness (and by this I'm not referring to a physical quality) it does. A thickness that must continue to grow and which most probably will never be enough. The search for excellence shows the path we must follow but we cannot stop walking. Reaching the summit is just a metaphor, because the summit is always a little higher up. Our achievements must take us to higher challenges. So, even though a few challenges are already given in this protocol, as soon as we achieve them, we will strive to set ourselves others.

Marta Aymerich  
Vice President for Strategic Planning and Research

## ■ Editorial criteria

The pages that follow propose the editorial criteria that should be taken into account when defining the UOC's scientific journals.

### 1. Subject focus

The UOC's scientific journals must have a *UOC focus*, that is, the subject matter and the goals must lie within the UOC's field of experience and their subject areas must be related with the information and communication technologies.

### 2. Scientific evaluation of the articles

The UOC's scientific journals must have a double-blind peer review system and they must also publish the annual list of reviewers.

### 3. Frequency

The UOC's scientific journals must undertake to plan contents at least one year ahead in order to guarantee punctual publication in the months specified.

The frequency and the months in which the journal will be published on the website must also be specified. It is recommended to publish the articles during the first two weeks (days 1 to 15) of the corresponding month.

### 4. Co-publications

The UOC's scientific journals must explore the possibility of working in collaboration with other institutions or other journals that can provide funding.

A period of 3 years is estimated for obtaining a co-publishing agreement, if the journal does not start with one. If the journal is unable to obtain a co-publishing partner, the Publications Subcommittee will re-assess its viability and continuity.

### 5. Language

The UOC's scientific journals must provide a description of what they are, their functioning and their policies, together with the metadata (*title*, *abstract* and *keywords*), in the University's three vehicular languages: Catalan, Spanish and English. This increases the findability and Internet positioning of the journals' content and the UOC.

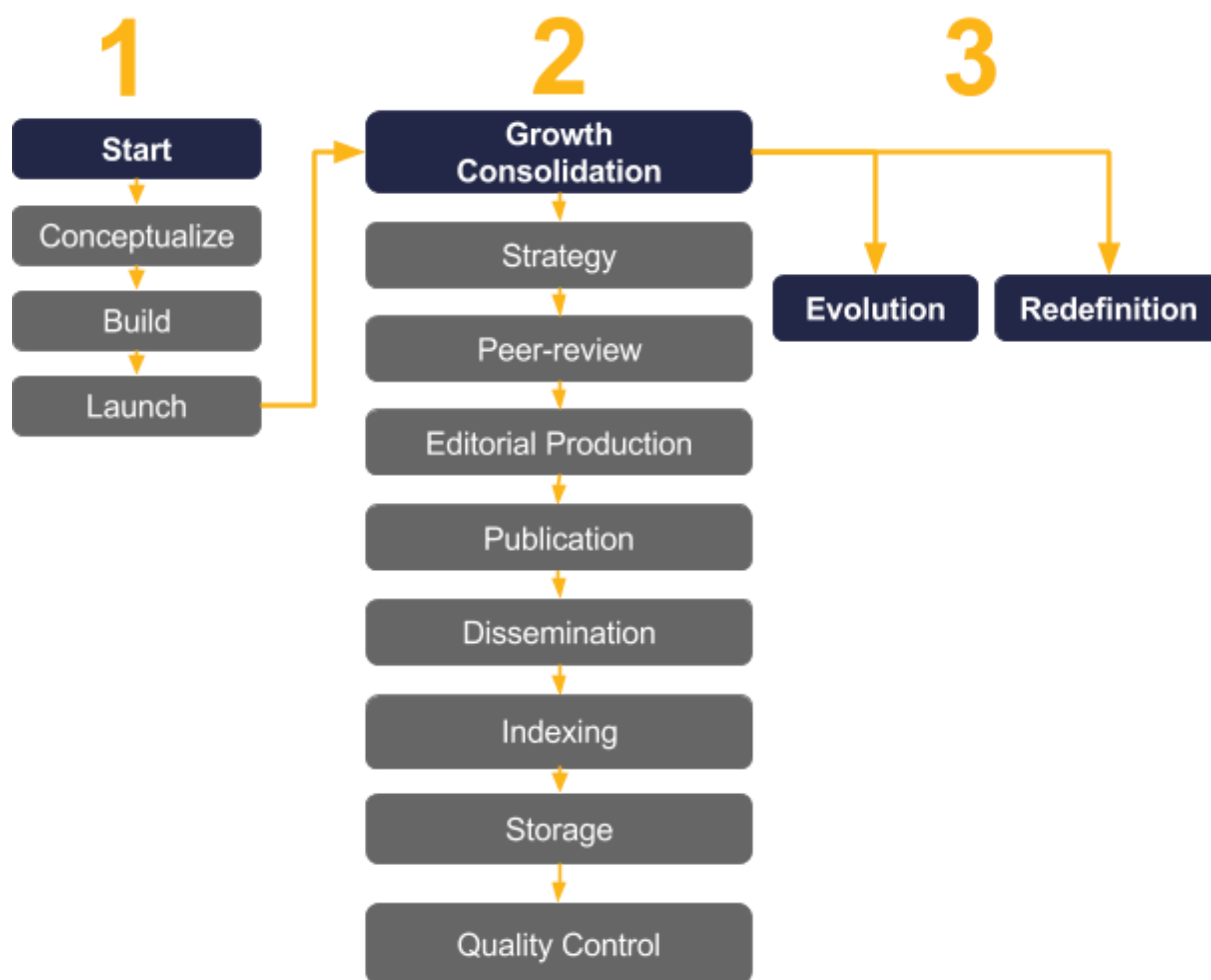
As regards the language policy for the articles' full text, in line with international language conventions in the field of scholarly communication, the journals' language policies should give preference to

publishing primarily in English. In exceptional cases, the use of Catalan and Spanish will be considered if it is warranted by the field of knowledge or the research community targeted by the journal.

Lastly, it is advisable to publish the full article in a single language and, consequently, it is recommended not to translate the articles.

## ■ Management model

It is proposed to establish a management model that enables the conventional stages of development of a scientific journal to be completed and which are considered to be the following:



In order to create a management model that guarantees successful completion of all of the stages, a description is given below of the management plans, the legal framework and the management bodies for the UOC's scientific journals.

## A. Management plans

With a view to ensuring consolidation of each journal, the following plans should be considered to promote the journal's development.

### 1. Strategic plan

The UOC's scientific journals must have a strategic plan to define the goals that must be achieved. This plan will include the journal's mission, its goals, organization of the editorial teams and their tasks, the type of content, the evaluation system, editorial production, the budget and the sources of funding. It is also necessary to define goals and undertakings as regards quality, communication, visibility, indexing and social responsibility. The strategic plan is drafted with the support of the Library Services for Research, and must be approved by the Publications Subcommittee and the academic departments of the journals' editors.

### 2. Quality Plan

The goal of the Quality Plan, presented in November 2012 at the Publications Subcommittee, is to enable the UOC's scientific journals to become competitive instruments for research transfer, embodying the principle of research excellence defined in the Strategic Plan 2014-2020.

The Quality Plan gives concrete, documented recommendations for improving both formal and editorial process quality for each of the UOC's scientific journals. This plan contains the quality criteria defined for scientific journals by the various official agencies and institutions: National Commission for the Evaluation of Research Activity (CNEAI), National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA), Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency (AQU Catalunya), Spanish Foundation for Science and Technology (FECYT/ANEP), and Regional Information System for Scholarly Journals (Latindex).

The quality of the UOC's scientific journals will be assessed on the basis of the degree of compliance with the criteria given in this plan. It is therefore specified that the UOC's scientific journals must be created and consolidated with the goal of achieving full compliance with the criteria.

Having attained the Quality Plan's quality criteria, it is recommended to also check the degree of compliance with the criteria of the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ).

### 3. Communication plan

The UOC's scientific journals must have an individual communication plan derived from the UOC's Communication Plan, and the RDI Communication Plan. The goal of this specific plan is to disseminate the journals' content and put them at the forefront of their field of knowledge. This plan must include:

- > The communication channels (social, institutional, internal, external...)
- > The target audience (researchers, professors, students, research bodies, societies...)
- > The event timeline
- > The impact analysis system

## 4. Visibility and indexing plan

The UOC's scientific journals need to increase their visibility to improve their positioning. Increased visibility may help get more downloads and more citations of published articles.

The goal of the Indexing Plan, drafted in 2011, is to establish a roadmap for indexing the scientific journals in databases and impact indexes. Accordingly, each of the UOC's journals must undertake to implement its visibility and indexing plan and, within a reasonable period (a minimum of 5 years), become indexed in the two leading databases that measure journals' impact: Journal Citation Report (Web of Science) and SCImago Journal Rank (Scopus). The option of using altmetrics to measure the journals' impact should be considered, fostering use of this system in this field.

The most significant guidelines are identified with respect to the editorial standards considered by the leading databases:

- > Publish a minimum of 12 articles a year, with 2 issues a year (every 6 months).
- > Shorten the period between article acceptance and publication (issues in press).
- > Each issue of the journal should have a similar number of articles. The number of words in each article should keep within a range.
- > Create different sections for scientific content which has gone through a peer review process and that which has not gone through this process.
- > Make calls for new articles focused on specific subjects and with coordinating or guest editors or researchers at least one year before the scheduled publication date.
- > Sporadically publish special issues (this is considered a positive thing).

## 5. Transparency and social responsibility plan

According to the social responsibility subplan defined in the Strategic Plan 2014-2020, it is considered important to apply the social responsibility methodology in scientific journals. This application consists of:

- > Identifying and prioritizing the stakeholders who interact with the scientific journals.
- > Establishing mechanisms for detecting stakeholder needs and participation in decision making.
- > Defining goals and actions to satisfy the needs that have been detected.
- > Establishing indicators for measuring the level of attainment of the goals and the stakeholders' degree of satisfaction.
- > Defining a commitment to transparency that must include an advertising policy that regulates the insertion of advertisements for the course offerings of the UOC or other institutions or both, and also a policy for inserting advertisements for the journal in other products.

### Supporting documents:

- > Social responsibility principles for scientific journals.
- > Advertising policy.
- > *Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing*, Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association.

## B. Budget management

To facilitate monitoring of the scientific journals' economic impact at the UOC, it is necessary to centralize budget allocation and income and expense control in a single management area, except for Information Systems expenses.

It is considered that the minimum requirement for starting and continuing editorial production of a scientific journal that meets the editorial standards is €6,000 per annum. The standards are: 24 articles per year (maximum), 5,000 words per article, single-language edition, triple format (PDF, EPUB, HTML), digital object identifier (DOI), and software as a service (SAS).

Co-publishing agreements will be signed to distribute 50% of the annual cost of each journal. The general budget must include all services.

Lastly, it is proposed to allocate expenses in accordance with each journal's strategic plan.

## C. Legal framework

The legal framework in which the UOC's scientific journals are categorized is as follows:

### 1. Privacy and data protection

The UOC's privacy and data protection policy is applied in a version adapted for scientific journals drafted by the Legal Office.

### 2. Assignment of copyright

With the goal of providing a legal framework that facilitates transfer of the content held in the databases, as requested by the visibility and indexing plan, the UOC provides by default:

- > That the authors who publish in the UOC's scientific journals assign their copyright and rights of use exclusively to the FUOC.
- > That all the journals will publish their content under Creative Commons licenses, preferably Attribution licenses (CC BY 3.0 Spain).

### 3. Open access

In 2010, the UOC approved the Open Access Policy, which specifies who can deposit and what should be deposited in the institutional repository. This helped increase the UOC's visibility, showcase its excellence in teaching and research quality, and improve its positioning in the international rankings. In this context, the UOC's scientific journals are published in open access (gold route).

The UOC's Open Access Policy also undertakes to preserve and maintain perpetual access to the documents deposited in the repository (green route). Accordingly, the articles published in the journals must be placed in the institutional repository (O2). In addition, the UOC undertakes to abide by both the standard metadata exchange protocols currently used (OAI-PMH, OAI-ORE and SWORD) and those that may appear in the future, in order to increase the visibility and interoperability of the repository's contents.



## 4. Code of Ethics

The UOC's scientific journals abide by the code of ethics written and published in 2014, which is aligned with the UOC's code of research ethics and the ethical principles of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

## 5. Brand and domain protection

It is recommended to apply for brand protection for the scientific journals' name but not for their graphic image. It is also recommended to buy the domains *.cat*, *.es*, *.com*, etc., so that they remain free and to protect the UOC's Internet presence.

The journals must be published under the *uoc.edu* domain, in the form of subdomains, except in the case of co-publishing, where the domain must be approved by the Publications Committee.

# D. Management bodies

The section defines the tasks performed by the management bodies of the UOC's scientific journals.

## 1. Publications Subcommittee

In order to guarantee a framework of excellence and quality for the UOC's scientific journals, it has been decided that the Publications Subcommittee will be the body responsible for supervising annually the scientific journals' activity and development.

The Publications Subcommittee performs the following roles and tasks:

- > Approve, evaluate, give continuity or close the scientific journals that form part of the UOC's publications catalogue.
- > Evaluate and approve significant changes in the journals, such as changes of name.
- > Evaluate and approve, every 3 years, the journal's management.
- > Approve each journal's 3-year strategic plan, which defines the objectives, compliance with editorial criteria, the Quality Plan, the communication plan, the visibility and indexing plan, and the transparency and social responsibility plan, and compliance with the institutional legal framework (Appendix 1).
- > Each journal manager reports once a year to the Publications Committee on the goals that have been achieved, those that are still pending, and the new projects and challenges.
- > Guarantee technological support for approved scientific journals (using a cloud service system), which must align with the institutional strategy as regards security, mobility (responsive), accessibility, metrics and altmetrics, data interoperability and storage of the content in the UOC's institutional repository.
- > Ensure that an annual budget allocation is provided that is matched to the goals of each journal's strategic plans and the standard costs for editorial production.
- > Provide support to carry out the various management plans.
- > Promote recognition of the academic dedication to the UOC's scientific journals by the corresponding office of the vice president.

## 2. Journal management

It is stipulated that a scientific journal must be managed by the faculty members of the institutions that co-publish it. The tasks undertaken by the journal's management are:

- > Set the editorial line.
- > Establish and execute the strategic plans.
- > Find entities with which co-publishing agreements can be concluded.
- > Create the editorial teams: scientific committee, editorial secretariat, etc.
- > Create and maintain the reviewer network.
- > Plan, coordinate and carry out the tasks related with scientific development and sourcing of resources and originals: calls for papers, contributors, partners, co-publishers, etc.
- > Coordinate receipt and management of originals in the reviewing system.
- > Guarantee the use of plagiarism detection systems.
- > Approve or reject the articles proposed for publication.
- > Coordinate specific communication activities: social media, newsletters and mailing lists.

## 3. Library Services for Research

With the aim of giving service, supporting the professionals who are involved in managing the scientific journals and monitoring the journals' activity, it is provided that the Library Services for Research unit will perform the necessary support functions and tasks to comply with this protocol.

## 4. Editorial production

The scientific journals must include an editorial process that guarantees professional language processing (proofreading, translation), with professional layout services, in compliance with the standard digital publication formats (multidevice), provided by an outside company.

## 5. Technology

The technological model and platform used by the UOC for the management of scientific journals is defined by Technology. This model is outsourced to a company that provides a software as a service (SAS) and has the necessary technical solvency to cover the service and its needs.

The services and basic features of the SAS are as follows:

- > Proven technical solvency
- > Open source system
- > Responsive
- > Security systems
- > User service
- > Maintenance service
- > Development service
- > Hosting
- > Accessibility



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