

Recommendation by the
140th Senate of
the German Rectors'
Conference (HRK)
on 2 October 2018
in Berlin

Statement on Predatory Publishing

HRK German Rectors' Conference

The Voice of the Universities

Leipziger Platz 11 Tel.: +49 (0) 30 206292-0 post@hrk.de
10117 Berlin Fax: +49 (0) 30 206292-15 www.hrk.de

Ahrstraße 39 Tel.: +49 (0) 228 887-0 post@hrk.de
53175 Bonn Fax: +49 (0) 228 887-110 www.hrk.de

Statement on Predatory Publishing

Resolution of the 140th Senate of the German Rectors' Conference

The Senate of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) believes that the deceptive practices of so-called "predatory journals" primarily damage the researchers concerned. However, reports about researchers, including German researchers, publishing in these journals are also apt to weaken public confidence in research and scholarship, as are reports about pseudo-scientific conferences. The universities take this issue seriously, even though occurrences of such publishing in Germany are very rare overall. They are very conscious of their responsibility for scientific quality assurance, while acknowledging the fact that fundamentally every researcher has the right to make an autonomous decision about which journal to publish in, and hence has primary responsibility for this choice. Adopting a series of measures can help universities to defend standards in scientific publishing and improve quality assurance processes:

1. Support for early career researchers: Supporting young researchers in the process of publishing their work for the first time is an important component of training early career researchers. Supervisors and experienced co-authors are the most important source of advice here, in particular in relation to subject-specific publishing practices. In addition, central institutions such as Graduate Schools or libraries should provide information and training to all researchers in order to impart knowledge about how to identify non-trustworthy publication forms.
2. Employment offers, appointments and evaluations: The apparent attractiveness of quick publication through "predatory publishers" can also be understood in the context of the high pressure to publish to which young researchers, in particular, find themselves exposed. A discipline- and career-stage-specific limit on the number of publications to be detailed when applying for positions or professorships works to counter publishing strategies that emphasise quantity above all else. As a general principle, it is necessary to ensure that the quality of the scientific work is the deciding factor¹ in procedures relating to employment offers, professorial appointments and all personal evaluations. Naturally, this principle must also apply to reviews and evaluations of research institutions.
3. Cross-institutional initiatives: Initiatives already exist at various levels in the research and higher education system to create listings of non-trustworthy "scientific journals". Such black lists can provide indications of whether publication in a "predatory

1 Cf. DFG (2013): Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice. Memorandum, Bonn; HRK (2013): Good scientific practice at German higher education institutions. Recommendation by the 14th HRK General Assembly, Nuremberg (available only in German).

journal” has occurred or is planned. The “Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)” is a white list curated by the scientific community that helps to identify quality-controlled open access journals. However, the universities point out that such black and white lists can only ever represent a portion of the relevant cases, in part due to specialisation in the publication market and its dynamic nature. Hence, they can never replace a thorough examination of the publication medium by authors and reviewers themselves.