



About the Journal

Focus and Scope

The *OUSL Journal* provides a forum for previously unpublished research articles on theory and practice relating to teaching and learning at the University level, in particular but not exclusively in the field of Open and Distance Learning (ODL).

It welcomes contributions from researchers, scholars, practitioners, and students all over the world, which demonstrate innovative research in the areas of ODL, Education, Engineering and Technology, Natural Sciences, Environmental Sciences, Humanities and Social Sciences, Health Sciences, Management and Law. It aims at encouraging sharing of quality research among a broader spectrum of an international audience.

Publication Frequency

The *OUSL Journal* publishes two issues per year; in June and December.

Copyright and Open Access Policy

The *OUSL Journal* articles are published with open access under a CC-BY-SA 4.0 license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>). This means that the Open University of Sri Lanka retains the copyright as the publisher, but the content is free to download, distribute, and adapt for commercial or non-commercial purposes, given appropriate attribution to the original authors.

Archiving Policy

The *OUSL Journal* is available for LOCKSS harvesting, to create a distributed archiving system among libraries and permits those libraries to create permanent archives of the journal for purposes of preservation and restoration. Refer [LOCKSS harvesting](#) home page.

Ownership and Management

The *OUSL Journal* is owned and managed by The Open University of Sri Lanka.



Responsibilities of Editors, Reviewers, Publisher, and Authors

Duties of Editors

Fair play and editorial independence

Editors evaluate submitted manuscripts exclusively based on their academic merit (importance, originality, study's validity, clarity) and their relevance to the journal's scope, without regard to the authors' race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, citizenship, religious beliefs, political philosophy or institutional affiliation. Decisions to edit and publish are not determined by the policies of governments or any other agencies outside of the journal itself. The Editor-in-Chief has full authority over the entire editorial content of the journal and the timing of publication of that content.

Confidentiality

Editors and editorial board will not disclose any information about a submitted manuscript to anyone other than the corresponding author, reviewers, potential reviewers, other editorial advisers, and the publisher, as appropriate.

Disclosure and conflicts of interest

Editors and editorial board will not use unpublished information disclosed in a submitted manuscript for their own research purposes without the authors' explicit written consent. Privileged information or ideas obtained by editors because of handling the manuscript will be kept confidential and not used for their personal advantage. Editors will recuse themselves from considering manuscripts in which they have conflicts of interest resulting from competitive, collaborative, or other relationships/connections with any of the authors, companies or institutions connected to the papers; instead, they will ask another member of the editorial board to handle the manuscript.

Publication decisions

The editors ensure that all submitted manuscripts being considered for publication undergo peer review by at least two reviewers who are expert in the field. The Editor-in-Chief is responsible for deciding which of the manuscripts submitted to the journal will be published, based on the validation of the work.

Involvement and cooperation in investigations

The Editorial Board will take responsive measures when ethical concerns are raised about a submitted manuscript or published paper. Every reported act of unethical publishing behaviour will be investigated, even if it is discovered years after publication. The *OUSL Journal* editors follow COPE Flowcharts when dealing with cases of suspected misconduct. If, on investigation, the ethical concern is well-founded, a correction, retraction, expression of concern may be relevant, will be published in the journal.

Duties of Reviewers

Contribution to editorial decisions

Peer review process assists editors in making editorial decisions through editorial communications with authors, which may assist authors in improving their manuscripts. Peer review is an essential component of formal scholarly communication and lies at the heart of scientific endeavor.

Promptness

Any invited referee who feels unqualified to review the research reported in a manuscript or knows that its prompt review will be impossible should immediately notify the editors and decline the invitation to review so that alternative reviewers can be contacted.

Confidentiality

Any manuscripts received for review are confidential documents and must be treated as such; they must not be shown or discussed with others except if authorized by the Editor-in-Chief (who would only do so under exceptional and specific circumstances). This condition applies also to invited reviewers who decline the review invitation.

Standards of objectivity

Reviews should be conducted objectively, and observations formulated clearly with supporting arguments so that authors can use them for improving the manuscript. Personal criticism of the authors is inappropriate.

Acknowledgement of sources

Reviewers should identify relevant published work that has not been cited by the authors. Any statement that is an observation, derivation or argument that has been reported in previous publications should be

accompanied by the relevant citation. A reviewer should also notify the editors of any substantial similarity or overlaps between the manuscript under consideration and any other manuscript (published or unpublished).

Disclosure and conflicts of interest

Any invited referee who has conflicts of interest resulting from competitive, collaborative, or other relationships or connections with any of the authors, companies or institutions connected to the manuscript and the work described therein should immediately notify the editors to declare their conflicts of interest and decline the invitation to review so that alternative reviewers can be contacted.

Unpublished material disclosed in a submitted manuscript must not be used in a reviewer's own research without the written consent of the authors. Privileged information or ideas obtained through peer review must be kept confidential and not used for the reviewer's personal advantage. This applies also to invited reviewers who decline the review invitation.

Duties of the Editorial Board

Handling of unethical publishing behaviour

In cases of alleged or proven scientific misconduct, fraudulent publication or plagiarism, the Editorial Board will take all appropriate measures to clarify the situation to amend the article in question. This includes the prompt publication of an erratum, clarification or, in the most severe case, the retraction of the affected manuscript. The publisher, together with the editors, shall take reasonable steps to identify and prevent the publication of manuscripts where research misconduct has occurred, and under no circumstances encourage such misconduct or knowingly allow such misconduct to take place.

Duties of Authors

Reporting standards

Authors of original research should present an accurate account of the work performed and the results, followed by an objective discussion of the significance of the work. The manuscript should contain sufficient detail and references to permit others to replicate the work. Review articles should be accurate, objective, and comprehensive, while editorial 'opinion' or perspective pieces should be clearly identified as such. Fraudulent or knowingly inaccurate statements constitute unethical behaviour and are unacceptable.

Data access and retention

Authors may be asked to provide the raw data of their study together with the manuscript for editorial review and should be prepared to make the data publicly available if practicable. In any event, authors should ensure accessibility of such data to other competent professionals for at least 10 years after publication (preferably via an institutional or subject-based data repository or other data centre), provided that the confidentiality of the participants can be protected and legal rights concerning proprietary data do not preclude their release.

Originality and plagiarism

Authors should ensure that the submitted manuscripts are original and are appropriately cited if they have used the work and/words of others. Publications that have been influential in determining the nature of the work reported in the manuscript should also be cited. Plagiarism takes many forms, from "passing off" another's paper as the author's own, copying or paraphrasing substantial parts of another's paper (without attribution), and claiming results from research conducted by others. Plagiarism in all its forms constitutes unethical publishing behaviour and is unacceptable.

Multiple, duplicate, redundant or concurrent submission/publication

Papers describing the same research conducted by the same author/authors should not be published in more than one journal. Hence, authors should not submit for consideration a manuscript that has already been published in another journal. Submission of a manuscript concurrently to more than one journal is unethical and unacceptable.

Authorship of the manuscript

Only persons who meet the following authorship criteria should be listed as authors in the manuscript as they must be able to take social responsibility for the content:

- (i) made significant contributions to the conception, design, execution, data acquisition, or analysis/interpretation of the study
- (ii) drafted the manuscript or revised it critically for important intellectual content
- (iii) have seen and approved the final version of the paper and agreed to its submission for publication.



All persons who made substantial contributions to the work reported in the manuscript (such as technical help, writing and editing assistance, general support) but who do not meet the criteria for authorship must not be listed as an author, but should be acknowledged in the "Acknowledgements" section.

The corresponding author should ensure that all appropriate co-authors (according to the above definition) and no inappropriate co-authors are included in the authors' list and verify that all co-authors have seen and approved the final version of the manuscript and agreed to its submission for publication.

Disclosure and conflicts of interest

Authors should disclose any conflicts of interest that might be construed to influence the results or their interpretation in the manuscript. Examples of potential conflicts of interest that should be disclosed include financial matters such as honoraria, educational grants or other funding, participation in speakers' bureaus, membership, employment, consultancies, stock ownership, or other equity interest, and paid expert testimony or patent-licensing arrangements, as well as non-financial matters such as personal or professional relationships, affiliations, knowledge or beliefs in the subject matter or materials discussed in the manuscript. All sources of financial support for the work should be disclosed (including the grant number or other reference number if any) in the acknowledgement section.

Acknowledgement of sources

Authors should ensure that they have properly acknowledged the work of others and should also cite publications that have been influential in determining the nature of the reported work. Authors should not use information obtained while providing confidential services, such as refereeing manuscripts or grant applications, unless they have obtained the explicit written permission of the author(s) of the work involved in these services.

Hazards and human or animal subjects

If the work involves chemicals, procedures or equipment that have any unusual hazards inherent in their use, the authors must clearly identify these in the manuscript. If the work involves the use of animals or human participants, the authors should ensure that all procedures were performed in compliance with relevant laws and institutional guidelines and that the appropriate institutional



committee(s) have approved them; the manuscript should contain a statement to this effect. Authors should also include a statement in the manuscript that informed consent was obtained for experimentation with human participants. The privacy rights of human participants must always be ensured.