

Is this journal real?

A checking guide · More Than An Editor · morethananeditor.com · 2026

Deceptive journals are built to be indistinguishable from real ones at a glance. They appear in ordinary search results alongside legitimate scholarship, they carry believable titles and real-sounding names, and nothing in a citation marks them. **Doubt is not naivety.**

A fabricated or predatory source found late costs months. If your committee or reviewer catches one, the scrutiny that follows can reach the rest of your bibliography.

Checking takes minutes. Do it before you write, not after.

Part one — the manual check

This is the whole method. It needs no software and no account.

1 · Look up the editorial board on their own pages

Academics are proud of genuine editorial appointments. They appear on university profiles, on personal CVs, and on ORCID records, because a real board seat is a line somebody put there deliberately.

- Pick two or three names from the board. Search each one with their university. Read their own page.
- **If the journal is real and they serve on it, it will usually be listed.**
- **Watch the title character by character.** The commonest trick is a near-identical name — a word added, a word dropped, *Journal of* against *International Journal of*. A professor listing one is not evidence for the other.
- **Absence is not proof.** Not every academic maintains a profile. But a whole board and not one of them mentioning the journal is a finding.

2 · Notice what the board listing does not say

A board given as names and countries only has claimed nothing. No institution, no title, no statement that anyone agreed to serve. Look a name up, find a real academic in that country, and you have supplied the affiliation yourself. The journal never said it. That is the point.

3 · Check the identifiers where they live

ISSN	portal.issn.org
Impact factor	mjl.clarivate.com and jcr.clarivate.com
OCLC number	worldcat.org
Library of Congress number	catalog.loc.gov
Indexing in Scopus	the Scopus source list
The publisher itself	the state or national business registry

An ISSN is a catalogue number, not a quality signal. So is an OCLC number. A journal that stacks them beside an impact factor is inviting you to read them as achievements.

4 · Read what is missing

Legitimate journals state these things. Ask whether yours does.

- Who the editors are, with institutions.
- How peer review works, and how long it takes.
- What it costs to publish, with an amount.
- What subjects it covers.

- A postal address and a telephone number.
- An archive you can browse, with more than one issue in it.

5 · Treat an unsolicited invitation as a warning

If a journal emails you out of the blue praising your work and inviting a submission with a tight deadline, that is a signal — not an honor. Legitimate journals do not recruit that way.

What to do with what you find

No single sign proves anything. A cluster of them should make you stop and verify before you cite.

And watch for what is arranged rather than stated. The better operations rarely publish falsehoods. They place true fragments so a reader draws a conclusion the page never makes — which means looking for false statements will not find them.

When in doubt, exclude the source and keep searching. Better to lose a citation than to defend one.

Part two — the faster route, if you use an AI tool

This does not replace part one. It collects what the journal says about itself so you can see the gaps quickly. **It verifies nothing.** Everything it reports still has to be checked where the records live.

Copy everything between the lines below into any capable AI tool. Fill in the two lines at the top, then paste the journal's own pages — About, Editorial Board, Author Guidelines, Contact, and the archive — where the last line says to.

JOURNAL URL: [paste the journal's web address here]
JOURNAL NAME AS PRINTED: [paste the exact journal title here]

You are auditing a journal's own website copy for signals associated with predatory or deceptive publishing. Work **ONLY** from the text I paste below. The URL and title above are for the record; do not look either of them up and do not use anything you may know about them.

STRICT CONSTRAINTS

- Answer every question using only the pasted text.
- Where the text does not answer a question, write exactly:
NOT STATED IN SOURCE.
- Do not use outside knowledge about this journal, this publisher, or any person named in the text.
- Do not guess, infer, or fill gaps.
- For every finding, quote the exact words from the text that support it.
- Do not give an overall verdict on legitimacy.

A NOTE ON WHAT COUNTS AS A CLAIM

Deceptive journals rarely state falsehoods. They arrange true fragments so a reader supplies the rest. Report what is **ARRANGED** as well as what is **STATED**. Where the text invites an inference it has not made, say so explicitly.

REPORT ON EACH OF THE FOLLOWING

1. EDITORIAL BOARD

Are individual editors named? Quote every name exactly as printed.

Then answer these separately:

- Is each name given with an institution or department? Quote one example of the fullest listing.
- Is each name given with an academic title or position?
- If names appear with a country only, and no institution, department, or title, state that plainly and quote three examples. Report it as a pattern, not as missing data.
- Does the text state anywhere that these people agreed to serve? Quote it, or write NOT STATED IN SOURCE.

2. PEER REVIEW

Quote exactly what the text says about the review process. Report the stated turnaround time from submission to decision, in the journal's own words.

3. FEES

Quote any stated article processing charge, submission fee, or other author-paid cost, with the amount and currency. If fees are mentioned without an amount, say so. If no fee is mentioned anywhere, say so.

4. INDEXING AND METRICS

List every indexing service, database, identifier, or metric the text claims. Quote each claim exactly.

Then separate them into:

- Performance metrics (impact factors and similar)
- Cataloguing identifiers (ISSN, OCLC, LCCN and similar)

Report any metric whose name you do not recognize as a standard bibliometric measure, without asserting whether it is real.

Report any identifier presented in a way that suggests it is a quality measure when it is not.

5. SCOPE

Quote the stated subject scope. Report whether the scope covers more than one broad discipline, quoting the text. If no scope is stated anywhere, say so.

6. ARCHIVE AND HISTORY

Report the number of issues, volumes, or articles visible in the pasted text. Quote the earliest and latest publication dates shown. If no archive is visible, say so.

7. CONTACT AND OWNERSHIP

Quote the stated publisher name, postal address, and contact details. Report anything absent. Report whether the address is presented as an office, a suite, or a unit number.

8. LANGUAGE AND CONSTRUCTION

Quote up to three passages containing grammatical errors, unusual formality, or promotional language about the journal itself. Report any sign of an unconfigured website template - default category names, placeholder text, or unlinked social media labels.

9. IMPLIED CLAIMS

List every place where the text arranges information so a reader is likely to conclude something the text does not say. For each one, quote the text and state the inference a reader would draw.

THEN, IN A SEPARATE SECTION HEADED "TO VERIFY BY HAND"

List every claim above that a human must confirm independently, and say where to confirm it. Do not confirm anything yourself.

For the editorial board, give the instruction ONCE and then list the names beneath it. Do not repeat the same three steps for every person.

Include as a separate item: the journal name printed above should be checked character by character against the name each listed academic publishes under. Note that a near-identical title is a distinct signal from an absent one.

TEXT TO AUDIT:

[paste the journal's About, Editorial Board, Author Guidelines, Contact, and archive or issue-list pages here]

What to do with what it gives you

Read the NOT STATED IN SOURCE lines first. What a journal declines to say about itself is the finding. A legitimate journal names its editors, states its fees, and gives an address.

Then go back to part one. The tool has collected claims. It has checked none of them.

A word about the tool you are using

The prompt above is written to stop an AI model doing what it does badly. Asked whether a journal is predatory, a model will give you a confident answer with nothing behind it. Asked to extract and quote from text you supply, it does something it can actually do.

Check its quotes against your pasted text. Two or three will tell you whether it is being accurate. If it gives a verdict despite being told not to, it is not following the instructions and you should not trust the rest.