

General Information

When you submit your paper to the Unified Scholars Platform (USP), you are submitting it for critical evaluation by other experts in the chosen field. You are not submitting it to a publisher; you are submitting it to a web platform where other experts can assess it, review it and return their feedback, independently of publishers. The publishers only get the accepted papers. They have no involvement and no control over anything. The platform controls the peer review process, or it guides the editors/peer reviewers; and it was built for quality, fairness and efficiency.

So, by submitting to the USP, you are submitting your paper to be peer reviewed and edited by other experts, regionally and globally. And after a successful evaluation, you get either an accepted and well improved paper that would be published; or a rejected paper that would not be published but still saved in our repository. Accepted papers would be downloaded by publishers, who are responsible for copy-editing, formatting, editing and proof reading the accepted paper, before getting it published electronically. And possibly in print, based on demand.

Thus, the USP is a platform where scholars get independent peer review and editing service; and have their papers published in our world class Journals.

The e-journals are open-access whilst the print journals are based on a 'print on demand' model. Scholars, libraries and institutions have free and unrestricted access to the HTML and PDF formats of our e-journals. Those can also be freely downloaded by everyone. Additional services can also be provided to institutions and libraries as needed.

[ Contact: [admin@unifiedscholars.org](mailto:admin@unifiedscholars.org) ] & [ live chat on Whatsapp: +447914534911 ]

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'Competing interests' should be declared in simple sentences in your manuscript, just after the "results and discussion" section of your paper. If there are no competing interests, then do not bother mentioning it in your paper.

#### Before you submit

Go on our website ([www.unifiedscholars.org](http://www.unifiedscholars.org)) and navigate to the relevant journal that you wish to publish your paper in. Check all the relevant information regarding that journal. Importantly, you should download and use the template as a guide to arrange your paper.

Do your plagiarism check just before submission and be sure that "your paper has  $\leq 15\%$  match, and the matching text is not one continuous block". We only accept either "iThenticate" or "Plagscan" plagiarism checkers. No alternative plagiarism checking services would be acceptable to us, except the two mentioned here. Please keep some evidence of your paper's originality report. We may request for it if issues are raised with your work. Please, you should only submit your paper to our platform after you have done the recommended plagiarism check and you have kept your originality report. Only "iThenticate" or "Plagscan" reports would be acceptable to us.

Check that you have the money to pay the service fees. You would be required to make payment during resubmission. Our current fee is \$800 per paper, paid in two installments and collected securely by Paypal and/or Stripe. **There is no payment during submission.** But

during the first Resubmission, you would pay the first installment of \$300. There is no payment during the second resubmission, if any. If your script is accepted for publication, you would be required to pay the balance of \$500. Please note that if payment is not made, your script MAY not be available for peer review. It may be submitted but held in pending until payment is received. Hence, it is important that you make the payment when requested to ensure that there are no lags or delays in the peer review process.

### Registration on the USP

There are two kinds of registration on the USP:

- i) registration to become an editor/peer reviewer (permanent user)
- ii) registration to submit a paper (guest user)
- iii) registration via an invitation to peer review (permanent user)

The first kind of registration (to become an editor/peer reviewer) is done on the platform's main domain (<https://unifiedscholars.com/register>), and if approved, this gives you a permanent account in a specific journal on the platform. You use this account to evaluate papers submitted to that specific journal.

The second kind of registration is for authors who want to submit papers for peer review. You visit the company's website (<https://unifiedscholars.org>), navigate to the journal of your choice and select "submit paper". This brings up a "register as a guest" page for you to start the submission process. Fill in your details and submit the form. You would get an email which contains your user id and password, to login to your dashboard within that field. When you login to your dashboard, click on submit paper and proceed to submit your paper. Note that the user id and password that was emailed to you, is for logging into to the specific field you are submitting to. You should keep it safe and use it to complete the scholarly publishing process for that paper.

If, next time, you wish to submit another paper to a different field; do NOT use that same login details. It would take you to the previous field's dashboard. You need to navigate to the new field/journal, click "submit paper" and re-register to get new login details to access the new field within the platform. The USP is one platform but it accommodates thousands of fields, with each field having its own complement of editors and peer reviewers permanently there, and

independently of other fields. The guest login details takes you to the dashboard of the field/journal which you registered on. So, different fields/journals, different guest login details.

The third kind of registration is similar to the first, but it is done via an invitation page not the main registration page. External peer reviewers who accepted an invitation to review, would first register via this invitation and acceptance page. But operationally, this is also a permanent account equivalent to registering on the main registration page.

Thus, for scholars who want to submit papers, go on our website, find the specific journal you want to publish in, click submit paper, register as guest and submit your paper. If you want to be a reviewer or editor, register directly on the USP, click create account, and register, so that we can assess you.

#### How to submit

Login to your dashboard and click submit paper. Enter the author's name(s) and affiliations in respective order. I should repeat the foregoing. Enter the authors names in the names field and enter their affiliation(s) respectively, which means in the same order as you have entered the names. The first affiliation should belong to the first name, second affiliation the second name, and so on.

Copy and paste your abstract into the summary box, attach your draft manuscript (ms-word format) without your names. I should also repeat that. Remove your names and affiliations from your draft manuscript before you attach it for submission. Do not forget that please.

Select your geo-target and submit. Your paper would be assigned a script id, and saved in 'my submissions' on your dashboard. Then your paper would appear on the peer review page for experts to evaluate. If payment is not made immediately after submission, an email that contains a payment link would be sent to you to make payment. Your paper would remain pending, and would only be available for peer review when payment is received.

**What is geo-target?** During submission of manuscripts, authors can choose how they want their papers to be peer reviewed. They can choose between a 'global peer review' and a 'regional peer review'. If they choose global peer review, scholars/experts from anywhere in the world can peer review the paper. But if they choose regional peer review, only experts from their region would be allowed to peer review the paper. If you live and work in Spain, and you choose regional peer review; only European scholars/experts in that field would evaluate your paper.

And if you live in South Africa and select regional peer review, only African expert scholars in that field would peer review your paper. But if they choose global peer review, scholars and experts from anywhere in the world would evaluate the paper. This formal delineation in peer review is called the "geo-targeted peer review". It was conceived and implemented because research, to some extent, is a function of development; and since different regions have different levels of development, their research problems would vary according to their development levels. With geo-targeting, localized research can be evaluated regionally and still get published in the corresponding regional journal.

Now the question is: how do authors decide which one to choose? Should you choose the global peer review or the regional peer review and what informs your choice? Well, the answer is in the foregoing. Focus on your research - the research problem and your findings. Do they have global significance or national/regional significance? If they have global significance, then select the global peer review. If they have more regional/national significance, then select the regional peer review. Contact us for any more queries about this.

#### After you submit.

If payment is made immediately after submission, your paper is sent to the peer review page and experts are notified. Tens of experts are notified and only three (3) highly competent experts (two peer reviewers and one editor) would commit to evaluate your paper. They each have twenty five days from commitment to submit their feedback. And within the first five days after commitment, the editor would do his editorial checks. You would only get a notification if your paper fails editorial checks. If it passes editorial checks, then peer review would follow immediately.

It is our hope that papers would be fully committed by the third day of submission. If this target is met, and your paper passes editorial checks, you should expect your feedback reports on the twenty-eight day latest.

Use the "my submissions" function on your dashboard to keep tabs on the progress of the peer review. When review 1 is complete, you would receive an email notification. Login to the platform, click "my feedback", and download your feedback. You would get two documents- a feedback report and an edited version of your paper. Look out for two downloaded documents. Using both, you can prepare a revised manuscript for resubmission within fifteen (15) days.

Please we advise that you stick with our deadlines, so that editors and peer reviewers can round up the process for your paper. Delays would be counter-productive and unfair to the editor and peer reviewers who would be waiting to round off the process for your paper.

To resubmit a paper, click on "resubmit " on the dashboard and select your paper for resubmission. The same editor and peer reviewers would check (review 2) that you have effected the changes and that your paper is good, before accepting it. If you haven't sufficiently improved the paper, they would request another revision. Hence, we advise you to give your best, and effect all the changes that are necessary for them to accept your paper. Every paper has only three (3) review chances. At the review (3) stage, your paper would either be accepted or rejected. No more revision.

### Manage submissions

You can manage your submissions from your dashboard. Use the "my submissions" function and the "my feedback" function to manage the peer review process for your paper. And look out for our emails, which guide the peer review process. Check your spam folder if you suspect you are missing an email and contact admin if you have any issues with your paper or with a submitted paper. Also, please make sure to watch all the demo videos that show how to use the platform.

### Charges and Rewards on the USP

There is a strong possibility that editors and peer reviewers would be rewarded for each manuscript they evaluate. This is still in the trial stage, and the exact details of how this would work is still being developed. But we can guarantee some kind of rewards with our platform. This section would be updated when trials and testing is concluded and a workable reward system developed.

### Publishing

Accepted papers would be proofread, copyedited, edited and formatted by our contracting publishers before getting published in our e-journals, and the corresponding print journals as well, if any. Our journals are indexed in our own Indexing database, which is currently in development. They would also be indexed by Google Scholar and several other databases/aggregators.

## **Declarations**

Author related declarations.

The author, who has submitted a paper to the USP, hereby warrant the following:

- a) that each 'author' of the submitted paper meets the criteria to be called an author - based on the ICJME guidelines.
- b) that the article is original, does not infringe on any copyright or other proprietary right(s) of a third party.
- c) that the authors have reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.
- d) that the authors have given consent for submission and the subsequent publication of the manuscript.

Manuscript related declarations.

- e) that the article is not under consideration for publication by any other journal, and has not been published previously.
- f) that the manuscript was checked for plagiarism before submission, as requested, and the match was  $\leq 15\%$  and matching text was not one continuous block.
- g) that the manuscript is a product of the authors' research and efforts; and is completely devoid of artificial intelligence (AI) or other related technologies.
- h) that the manuscript is not inappropriate or malicious, and that its contents are strictly academic or scholarly.

Institutional/ethical Approval - for studies involving human and/or animal subjects.

- i) that ethical approval was obtained and the highest ethical standard was applied during the study. Note: a waiver is also an approval, provided it can be evidenced.
- j) that the study was conducted in conformity with the Helsinki Declaration of 2013 as revised.
- k) that the necessary consent for the study was obtained from all participants, freely-given and legally valid in your jurisdiction; and these can be evidenced if necessary.
- l) that the research was conducted in compliance with the various laws on the rights and prevention of cruelty to animals and/or humans, and these can be evidenced if necessary.
- m) that the CONSORT guidelines were followed and can be evidenced - for clinical trials only.
- n) that for Randomized Controlled Trials, the necessary Trial Number was obtained from the ISRCTN or from a Trial registry that is recognized by the ICMJE or WHO ICTRP; and these can be evidenced, if necessary.

o) that every participant (subjects inclusive) has approved the final version of the manuscript and given their consent for submission and subsequent publication; and those can be evidenced, if necessary.

p) that the research work conforms to the relevant guidelines as specified in EQUATOR Network - for health related research.

#### Miscellaneous declarations

q) that research work that describes new taxa (species) would be very detailed and must contain relevant identification and registration numbers for the new species.

r) that the relevant guidelines and the applicable laws have been followed during your entire research and that you bear sole responsibility for obeying them.

s) that there is no financial/non-financial competing interest has not been declared in your paper.

t) that every author has read and understands the 'guide for authors' and the 'author declarations' document.

u) that every author has read and fully understands the 'Terms & Conditions', the 'Payment and Refunds Policy' and the 'Publishing Policy' and other related policy documents of Unified Scholars and Publishers; and commits to respecting them.

v) that by submitting a paper to the Unified Scholars Platform, you confirm you have read this "guide for authors and declarations" document.

w) that by submitting your paper to the Unified Scholars Platform, you confirm that you accept these declarations as legally binding; and you grant the company a 'licence to "publish", "retain", "use" and "distribute" your work as it pleases.

#### Customer Service

For any issues relating to your account, email us on: [admin@unifiedscholars.org](mailto:admin@unifiedscholars.org)

For general enquiries, live chat us on WhatsApp: +447914534911. No calls please.

#### About Unified Scholars and Publishers (aka Unified Scholars)

Unified Scholars is a tech startup that seeks to solve the complex and persistent problems in scholarly publishing. We are not a publishing company. We are a tech company. The USP, our flagship software platform, is made available to scholars and to publishers as a peer review and scholarly publishing service. Both scholars and publishers use the platform, whilst we own and



manage the platform, and coordinate our publishing/business model, which we call publish-on-air.

To allow for a more effective solution of the problems we set out to solve, we introduced Unification to the publish-on-air model, which together now becomes the Unified Concept. Hence, in keeping with our concept, the publishers who get papers from the USP would be publishing under the Unified brand.

As a company, everything we do is guided by the concept. Hence, you should expect us to be different. We are championing our own process, with the aim of reforming scholarly publishing. And we welcome you on this noble journey.