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# No-fee Open Access Publishing in Africa

## Policy Brief

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### Executive summary

This Policy Brief is aimed at the leadership of African institutions. It provides an overview of no-fee open access (OA) publishing, often referred to as Diamond OA publishing, and shows how Diamond OA journals can help to achieve the goals of more equitable, inclusive, impactful and trusted publishing. The Policy Brief emphasises collective responsibility and collaborations among institutions, research funders and policymakers and recommends actions that leaders of African institutions can take to foster and sustain Diamond OA publishing.

Key recommendations for African institutional leaders include:

1. Recognise Diamond OA journals as strategic research assets.
2. Create and safeguard a dedicated budget line for Diamond OA journal publishing.
3. Formally value editing, reviewing and journal governance in promotion and performance systems.
4. Align institutional and national policies with Diamond OA and open science principles.
5. Collaborate across institutions and countries to share journal publishing platforms, training and support services.

Recommendations made in this Policy Brief arise out of the '[Collaboration for sustainable open access publishing in Africa](#)' project, implemented by EIFL, African Journals Online (AJOL) and the West and Central African Research and Education Network (WACREN) with funding from Wellcome. Further information about funding sources can be found in '[Funding sources of African no-fee open access journals](#)'.



## What a Diamond (no-fee) OA publishing model is

“Diamond OA, characterized by the absence of author-facing publication fees and reader-facing subscription charges, embodies a radical shift in scholarly communication; democratizing knowledge dissemination by ensuring research is accessible to all, regardless of financial constraints or institutional affiliation.”<sup>1</sup>

The predominantly commercial approach to OA has raised urgent questions about equity, inclusivity and economic sustainability as institutions have limited funding to support authors with the payment of Article Processing Charges (APCs). It has also led to problems of research integrity such as paper mills, research fraud, and retractions. The pay-to-publish model, in particular, has contributed to the rise of predatory publishing practices, where journals exploit APCs by forgoing rigorous peer review and editorial standards in favour of profit.<sup>2</sup>

The drawbacks of commercial approaches to OA suggest that greater institutional support for Diamond OA publishing is needed.

## Why institutions should support Diamond OA publishing: Reasons, motivations and benefits

-  Diamond OA journals are branded strategic assets for institutions and, in the case of national journals, for countries offering an opportunity for researchers to publish for free. At the institutional level, Diamond OA is often adopted as a model for institutional publishing.<sup>3</sup>
-  Diamond OA journals help to fulfil the institution’s role as a research-intensive entity.
-  Diamond OA journals share research-based evidence and knowledge that informs policy decisions and improves practice in the country and beyond.
-  Diamond OA journals remain steadfast in their commitment to fostering collaborative research initiatives that address pressing societal challenges.
-  Diamond OA journals provide a publication venue where locally relevant topics are valued, not marginalized, and treated without bias.
-  Because Diamond OA journals do not charge fees, they are unlikely to engage in unethical or exploitative publishing practices.

<sup>1</sup> Worku, M. Y. (2025). A journey through diamond open access publishing: Honoring the silver jubilee of Bahir Dar Journal of Education. *Bahir Dar Journal of Education*, 25(1), 1–4.

<https://doi.org/10.4314/10.4314/bdje.v25i1.1>

<sup>2</sup> Sona Lisa, A.-R., de Pablo Llorente, V., Frantsvåg, J. E., Gaillard, V., Garbuglia, F., Pölönen, J., Rooryck, J., Saenen, B., Stone, G., & Manista, F. (2025). D6.1 "Synergy report" (1.0). <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14719777>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

-  Diamond OA journals are a beacon of OA publishing, providing a credible, authoritative, trustworthy and socially responsible research dissemination platform for researchers, professionals and practitioners in Africa and beyond.
-  Diamond OA journals offer the widest possible dissemination of Africa-focused publications, bringing greater reach and impact of research.
-  Diamond OA journals preserve cultural heritage and linguistic and cultural diversity and are important for institutional, national and cultural identity.
-  Aligned with the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science, Diamond OA publishing embodies openness and inclusivity which strengthens equitable access to knowledge contributing to global efforts to reduce knowledge gaps and epistemic injustice.



### Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia

“Diamond OA publishing model has been instrumental in facilitating broader dissemination of research findings and enhancing their impact within the education community. This model has positioned the Bahir Dar Journal of Education at the forefront of research, actively fostering scholarly exchange and contributing to the global knowledge base. This commitment to Diamond OA, a core value of the journal, ensures accessibility to a broad audience, including those in resource-constrained settings. This approach aligns with the increasing importance of localized agency, multilingualism, and diverse knowledge production, providing a vital alternative to the commercially driven academic publishing landscape.”<sup>4</sup>



### Academy of Science of South Africa

“With a multidisciplinary scope and non-specialist style, South African Journal of Science (SAJS) articles are accessible to scholars from different disciplines and provide an understandable and trustworthy source of South African research to the media and wider public. What’s more: SAJS is a Diamond OA journal – free to access and free to publish. SAJS is read in almost every country in the world. SAJS is indexed by Web of Science, Scopus, SciELO SA, EBSCO, Google Scholar, DOAJ and AJOL and is automatically accredited by the Department of Higher Education. SAJS subscribes to Crossref tools to optimize interoperability, visibility, accessibility, indexability and searchability. SAJS was awarded three stars by African Journals Online (AJOL) in the Journal Publishing Practices and Standards (JPPS) assessment, for being consistently excellent in all the technical and editorial publishing best practices set out in the JPPS assessment criteria. SAJS scores highly on the [‘How Equitable Is It’](#) framework for evaluating scholarly communication models on the basis of equity.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Worku, M. Y. (2025). A journey through diamond open access publishing: Honoring the silver jubilee of Bahir Dar Journal of Education. *Bahir Dar Journal of Education*, 25(1), 1–4.

<sup>5</sup> <https://doi.org/10.4314/10.4314/bdje.v25i1.1>

<sup>5</sup> <https://sajs.co.za/why-publish-with-us>



# Collective responsibility and collaboration in Diamond OA publishing

Supporting Diamond OA publishing is a shared responsibility among institutions, research funders and policymakers. While each plays a distinct role, their coordinated efforts are essential for the long-term sustainability of this publishing model.



**Institutions** are the journal owners and publishers providing staff, infrastructure (e.g. Open Journal Systems – journal platform), and academic resources to maintain Diamond OA publishing.



**Research funders and policymakers** contribute to financial sustainability through policies and funding frameworks that enable the continued development of Diamond OA publishing and integration of Diamond OA into research evaluation.<sup>6,7</sup>

## What institutions could do to support Diamond OA journals

- Organize initiatives for researchers and students to raise awareness and promote the benefits of publishing in Diamond OA journals**, including targeted training, workshops and information sessions.
- Ensure that the institution's Diamond OA journals adhere to rigorous quality standards.** See the [Quality in Diamond OA publishing](#) guide for more details.
- Enhance recognition and rewards systems, introduce incentives for Diamond OA publishing**
  - Allocate dedicated time for researchers and academic staff to engage in Diamond OA editorial activities.** Revise institutional policies to reduce the workload of academic staff who are also journal editors and assistants (e.g. non-monetary compensations, such as fewer teaching hours and administrative work, acknowledging the voluntary editorial work put into institutional publishing; paid institutional positions for journal editing and management, including a (shared) journal editor assistant position to reduce the workload of journal editors. etc.).

<sup>6</sup> [Toluca-Cape Town Declaration on Diamond Open Access](#)

<sup>7</sup> This direction is consistent with emerging research assessment reforms such as [The Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#), [The Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment \(CoARA\)](#) and the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science, which call for valuing a broader range of contributions, including editing, reviewing and publishing in community-led Diamond OA journals.

- Recognize and reward the work of journal editors and peer reviewers as academic work** (e.g. provide a framework for rewarding editors and reviewers in the form of points and acknowledgment annually: reviewers can be awarded “points” that can be used during promotion applications).
- Integrate contributions to Diamond OA publishing into academic and research evaluation processes at institutional, and national level.**

 **Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf)**

To address the critical, yet under-recognised, contributions of editors and peer reviewers in academic publishing, essential for upholding research quality and ensuring the integrity of scholarly discourse, and to ensure appropriate academic reward structures, ASSAf released a [Statement on the Recognition of the Work of Editors and Peer Reviewers of Academic Journals and Books in South Africa](#). ASSAf highlighted the need for university and science council administrators to formally acknowledge and support editorial work, proposing specific recommendations to enhance recognition within performance appraisals. By strengthening the recognition of these roles, ASSAf aims to sustain a credible and effective scholarly publishing ecosystem that supports knowledge dissemination and contributes to national and global research development.

 **The University of Namibia**

This university integrated local journals in the promotion policy and approved journal development and hosting policy with formal appointment of journal editors.

- Consider introducing other institutional, national, and regional rewards and incentives** for publishing in African Diamond OA journals, e.g. awarding prizes, supporting relevant conference travel, etc.
- Ensure institutional and national commitments to support Diamond OA publishing**
- Integrate Diamond OA publishing in institutional, national, and African policies with budgets.** “Encourage the development of OA or publication policies to highlight the importance of a wide range of publishing venues, including Diamond OA. Such policies should include provisions related to publishing practices, financial support, quality assurance and peer review, legal and copyright issues, and training and awareness. This will be instrumental in supporting a more strategic approach to strengthening the institutional publishing, as well as promoting Diamond OA initiatives among researchers and academics working in the institution. Collaborate with national policymakers to build a consensus around the importance of Diamond

OA and help develop policies that reflect this priority. Policies should be coupled with clear guidelines, incentives, and recognition to ensure their implementation.”<sup>8</sup>

Below are some examples of how institutions in African countries support their Diamond OA journals:

- i** In **Angola**, **Universidade Óscar Ribas** includes its [SAPIENTIAE](#) journal running costs in an annual institutional budget with a budget line dedicated to the maintenance and operation of the journal, covering basic editorial, publishing platform, proofreading, layout and dissemination costs. **Universidade Rainha Njinga a Mbande** Publishing and Scientific Dissemination Department funds [Revista Angolana de Ciências](#) on a continuous basis and covers the expenses when the need arises throughout the year (e.g. for plagiarism detection, hosting and domain name, DOIs and external editorial consultancy services).
- i** In **Ethiopia**, **Addis Ababa University** provides a fixed annual budget for its journals that covers essential resources such as office facilities, internet access, and monthly salaries for some journal editors. Other editors, editorial board members, and peer reviewers are all affiliated researchers who contribute their expertise as part of their professional engagement. **Mekelle University** [hosting platform](#) platform is institutionally supported by the university's Library and Research Office, which have committed resources to technical maintenance, editorial support, and policy alignment. **University of Gondar** provides the annual budget for its Diamond OA journals, which covers the monthly stipends of editors-in-chief and associate editors, technical infrastructure maintenance and web hosting, internet access and office facilities. In some cases funding is provided on an as-needed basis, drawn from the university's research and community service budget.
- i** In **Ghana**, [The Journal of Science and Technology](#) receives institutional support from the **Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST)** to sustain its operations. The university provides dedicated office space, reliable IT infrastructure, and administrative staff, creating a stable work environment for the journal's editorial activities. Additionally, KNUST offers a consistent monthly financial contribution and allocates an annual budget to support the journal's activities.
- i** In **Kenya**, **Technical University of Mombasa** funds its [Multidisciplinary Journal of Technical University of Mombasa](#) through an annual budget allocated to the Department of Partnership, Research and Innovation and the University Library.
- i** In **Namibia**, the **University of Namibia** journal development policy supports publishing in indigenous African languages for social sciences, indigenous language and languages and literature. The university has a dedicated budget for Diamond OA journals covering subscription to typesetting software, DOI, plagiarism software, while also providing publication points for each journal issue published during promotion of academic staff who fulfil the functions of journal editors.

<sup>8</sup> Arasteh-Roodsary, S. L., Gaillard, V., Garbuglia, F., Mounier, P., Pölönen, J., Proudman, V., Rooryck, J., Saenen, B., & Stone, G. (2025). Diamond open access recommendations and guidelines for institutions, funders, sponsors, donors, and policymakers. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15518745>

**i** In **Nigeria**, [The Journal of Sustainable Development Law and Policy](#) is fully sustained by the OGEES (Institute for Oil, Gas, Energy, Environment and Sustainable Development) at **Afe Babalola University**.

**i** In **Senegal**, **Cheikh Anta Diop University** in Dakar Directorates and Deans award annual research and publication grants to institutes, schools, and faculties to publish their Diamond OA journals. Presses Universitaires de Dakar hosts and supports Diamond OA journals. **Ecole Inter-Etats des Sciences et Médecine Vétérinaires de Dakar** funds its [Revue africaine de santé et de productions animales \(RASPA\)](#) from its operational budget and covers the journal's editorial work and office management costs, communication, including Internet connectivity, hardware and software.

**i** In **South Africa**, [ASSAf's Open Science Policy](#) mainstreamed Diamond OA implementation by supporting scholarly journals indexed by the [Scientific Electronic Library Online South Africa \(SciELO SA\)](#) and hosted on the [Khulisa Journals platform](#), using the Public Knowledge Project Open Journals Systems (OJS). [Image & Text](#) journal is supported by the School of the Arts, **University of Pretoria**. **University of the Western Cape** (UWC) has provided an academic home for [New Agenda: South African Journal of Social and Economic Policy](#), published by the Institute for African Alternatives. UWC provides some funding, which enables the journal to continue as a Diamond OA journal, and the journal is published at no cost on the university's [UWCscholar platform](#), which is managed by the Scholarly Communication unit of the Main Library.

**i** In **Tanzania**, Diamond OA publishing aligns with the mission of the **Institute of Accountancy Arusha** to democratize knowledge dissemination and foster inclusive academic growth and through its Faculty of Informatics, the institute supports the [Journal of Informatics](#). Mzumbe University is the host institution for the [East African Journal of Applied Health Monitoring and Evaluation](#) and provides financial support to assist with the journal's operations. The **University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM)** publishes several Diamond OA journals. The custodian of all UDSM journals is the office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor - Research through the Directorate of Research and Publications. The Directorate oversees the establishment and operations of the university's journals and delegates funding to the unit level. Diamond OA journals at UDSM are hosted on a centralized system based on the open-source software OJS maintained by personnel from the University's ICT department.

**i** In **Togo**, **Laboratoire de botanique et Ecologie Végétale, Université de Lomé**, supports its [Revue Ecosystèmes et Paysages](#) by covering the costs of hosting and maintaining the journal website, connectivity and journal promotion activities (e.g. participation in scientific events). PhD students, associate professors and lecturers contribute their expertise and help run the journal. The Lomé University Press and the Research and Innovation Department provide advisory and administrative support.

**i** In **Uganda**, **Kampala International University** publications unit is a part of the Directorate of Research Innovation, Consultancy and Extension, which oversees and covers all the costs of its eight Diamond OA journals. **Uganda Pentecostal University** supports its two Diamond OA journals with funds collected from tuition fees.

**i** In **Zambia**, the current strategic plan of the **University of Zambia** includes a budget to “Enhance the efficiency of local editorial boards” for the period 2023-2027, which applies to all University journals, including Diamond OA journals.

### **i** **Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST)**

Development of open source journal management systems and preprint platforms has been included as a policy statement in the Open Science Policy of the UNCST. UNCST also encourages researchers to publish in OA journals and confirms its commitment to collaborate for adequate investment in non-commercial open science infrastructures and services, including OA journals. UNCST is committed to implementing capacity building programmes aimed at training researchers on OA publishing and working with universities and research institutions to integrate open science practices into higher education curricula, ensuring that future researchers are well-versed in OA publishing, data sharing, and ethical research practices. UNCST will ensure grant applicants incorporate Open Science into their projects, with specific plans for OA publishing.

- Provide multi-year funding mechanisms** to ensure the long-term financial stability and sustainability of Diamond OA initiatives, reducing reliance on short-term funding. Such mechanisms may offer direct funding to Diamond OA journals or shared Diamond OA publishing infrastructure.
- Develop collaborative funding initiatives.** Discuss collaboration between institutions, funders, sponsors, donors, and other actors to pool resources and support Diamond OA initiatives, especially pan-African initiatives.

### **i** **Global Africa**

This pan-African interdisciplinary and multilingual journal received primary financial support (56%) from the French Development Agency. The host institution - Université Gaston Berger in Senegal contributes 12% of funding and provides human resources as well as the headquarters. Institute for Research for Development contributes 11% and covers the editorial secretary position. Other 11 members of the journal publishing consortium directly contribute 4% funding and provide their infrastructures and teams.

### [Journal of Student Affairs in Africa \(JSAA\)](#)

JSAA welcomes proposals for guest-edited issues from institutions on themes that are relevant to Student Affairs in Africa. Guest-edited issues must include at least a guest-editorial and several guest-edited, peer-reviewed articles (research articles and reflective practice articles). They can also contain non-reviewed content including short reports (e.g. conference reports), interviews, and other professional notices (e.g. conference invitations). The JSAA Editorial Executive adds additional content of all kinds to a guest-edited issue (including an editorial, peer-reviewed articles received in open submissions, and book reviews). The JSAA Editorial Executive reserves the right to refuse to include/publish any content. Guest-editors are coached and supported by an editor assigned by the Editorial Executive to ensure a successful guest-edited issue. This includes support in developing the proposal and Memorandum of Understanding; support in designing and distributing a call for papers; and coaching and support in all editorial and review processes. The partnership with guest-editors involves that all costs associated with the editing and production of a guest-edited JSAA issue are paid for in full by the guest-editors institution.

- Hire professional publishing staff for the management of Diamond OA publishing.** “Provide your Diamond OA publishing initiatives with professional staff needed to ensure the smooth operation, while safeguarding their editorial and scientific independence. Providing such support is not only crucial to curate Diamond OA outputs, but also to improve their recognition across the scientific community and, therefore, their value for the institution itself. While support should come from the institutional level, leaders can also encourage institutional publishers to engage with national-level infrastructures and services for Diamond OA publishing, which can provide additional support and resources to perform publishing activities.”<sup>9</sup>
- Develop a marketing strategy to improve the external visibility of institutional Diamond OA publishing.** “Collaborate with journal editors to develop a clear strategy on how to ensure the visibility and findability of the Diamond OA outputs published by the institution. This will be instrumental in attracting contributions from different institutional, disciplinary, national and international contexts.”<sup>10</sup>
- Track progress of your commitment to Diamond OA journal publishing:** Institutions can track progress with simple indicators, such as: the number of active Diamond OA journals at their institutions; the existence of a dedicated budget line to support Diamond OA journal publishing; the share of institutional outputs published in Diamond OA journals (at their own and other institutions); the number of staff with recognised editorial and reviewing roles; and the diversity of authors, disciplines and languages represented in institutional Diamond OA journals.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

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