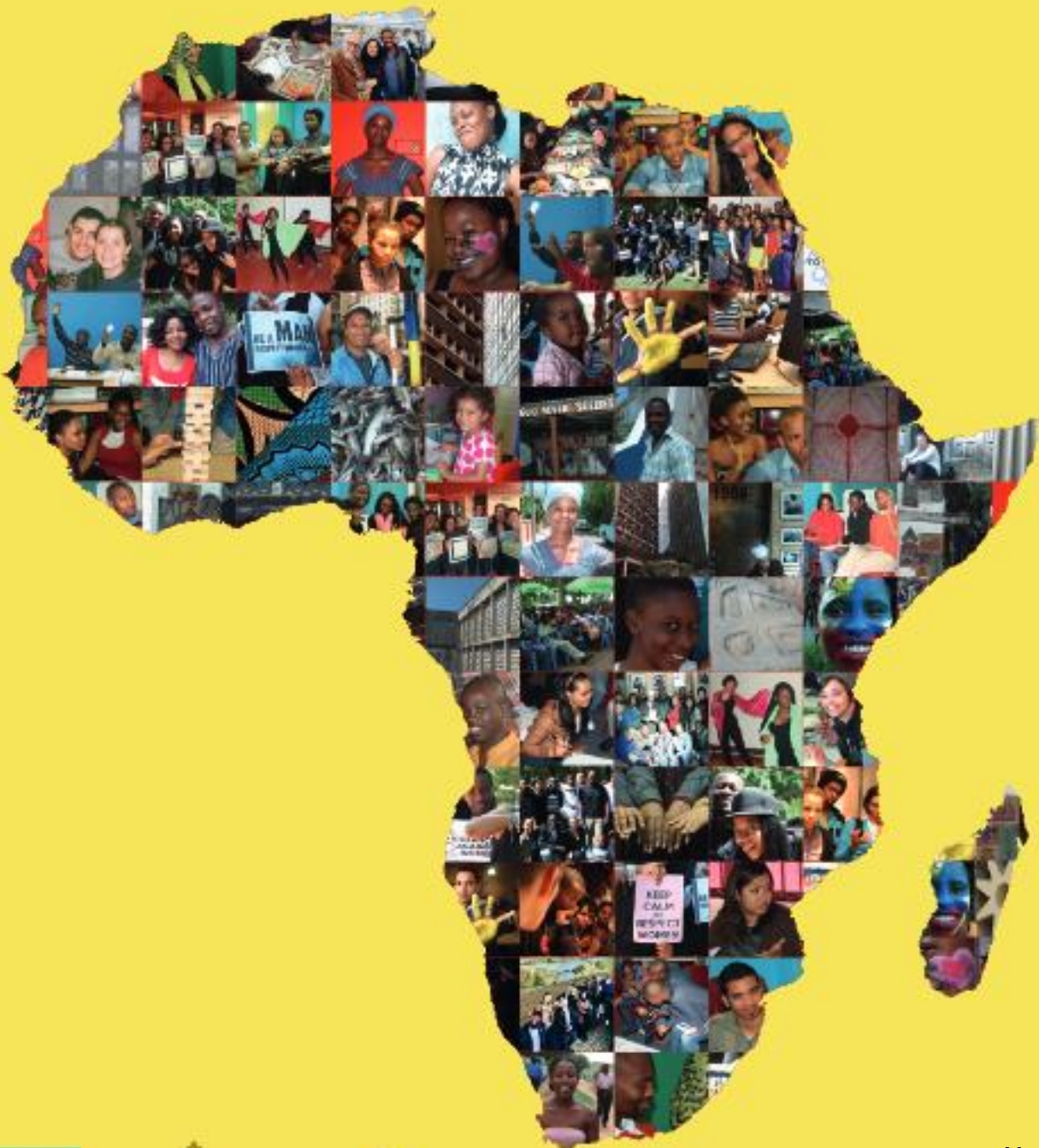# Journal of Student Affairs in Africa

JSAA Operational Manual
Editorial Roles and Responsibilities, Operations and Processes, Sustainability, Communication and Professionalisation

AFRICAN MINDS

OPEN ACCESS

JSAA Manual

An outcome of the JSAA summit "Creating a Sustainable Diamond Open Access Future", 6-12 March 2025, funded by DOA grant of EIFL.net

Prepared by the JSAA Editorial Executive and Editorial Sub-Editors

Introduction and Background

Foundation and inspiration

This Manual was developed with the support and inspiration of the Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL) through its Open Access grant, awarded to the Journal of Student Affairs in Africa (JSAA). It is a key outcome of the JSAA summit, "Creating a Sustainable Diamond Open Access Future" (6-12. March 2025), and of subsequent consultations with the Editorial Executive and role-players involved in the Journal's development. The funding and collaborative process have enabled JSAA to document and strengthen its operational practices while aligning with the global movement towards sustainable diamond open access publishing.

Purpose and operational guidance

The Manual provides a comprehensive framework for the induction, capacity development, and day-to-day operation of all who contribute to JSAA. It outlines functions, roles, and responsibilities across the editorial executive, editorial board, sub-editors, journal manager, international advisory board, reviewers, technical team, and authors. It also documents the processes underpinning peer review, editorial decision-making, communication, and quality control. By setting out these guidelines, the Manual serves as a reference point for consistent practice, institutional memory, and transparency in how the Journal is governed and managed.

Values, principles, and future focus

Beyond its operational function, the Manual embodies the values and principles that underpin JSAA: integrity, inclusivity, openness, and a commitment to professionalising student affairs in Africa. It also contains aspirational elements that reflect the Journal's forward-looking vision, such as strategies for financial sustainability, initiatives like the Community of Practice and the JSAA Awards, and pathways to deepen impact over the next decade (2025-2035) through aspirational ideas such as the SAS Institute. In this way, the Manual is not only a record of current practice but also a roadmap for JSAA's continued growth, innovation, and contribution to higher education in Africa.

Commitment to Diamond Open Access

Since its inception in 2012 with the first publication in 2013, the Journal of Student Affairs in Africa (JSAA) has been firmly committed to the principles of Diamond Open Access, ensuring that neither authors nor readers face financial barriers to publishing or accessing scholarly work. This commitment reflects our belief that knowledge should serve the public good and remain freely available to all who seek it. From the outset, JSAA has provided an inclusive and equitable publishing platform for scholarship on Student Affairs, higher education, and

student development across Africa. By removing article processing charges (APCs) and subscription fees, we promote fair participation, visibility, and collaboration among scholars, practitioners, and policymakers, regardless of institutional, national or economic status.

Our Diamond Open Access model embodies the emancipatory and de-colonised philosophy that knowledge grows through sharing and collective contribution. It also demonstrates our long-term commitment to ethical, sustainable, and community-oriented scholarly communication. Looking ahead, JSAA remains dedicated to maintaining this open model as a core operational value and a catalyst for social transformation. To deepen accessibility and inclusivity, we are introducing indigenous language abstracts, enabling a wider audience, including community leaders, practitioners, and students, to engage with research in languages we know and use daily. Through these efforts, JSAA seeks to bridge the gap between academia and society, making African scholarship more visible, relevant, and impactful. Our ongoing commitment to Diamond Open Access reaffirms our mission to democratize knowledge and strengthen higher education across the continent.

Target audience, owners, updates, and version control

This Operational Manual aims to give guidance to the editorial team and also, if required, shared with various others, such as funders, reviewers, publisher, etc. This Manual is reviewed and updated latest every 3 years, but regular updates are done as required and appropriate. The version control is not attended to as it is not a legally binding document. Ownership and responsibility for correctness lies with the Editorial Executive.

JSAA Vision Statement

The *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa (JSAA)* envisions being the leading scholarly platform for student affairs in African higher education, one that amplifies diverse African voices, bridges theory and practice, and contributes meaningfully to the enhancement of student growth, wellbeing, and success across the continent. JSAA aims to be a beacon of academic excellence, inclusivity, and societal impact: fostering a pan-African community of scholars and practitioners who collaborate, reflect, innovate, and influence policy and practice toward equitable and transformative student experiences.

Scope and Thematic Areas

The scope of the *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa (JSAA)* is broadly defined as the staff and student experience of higher education in Africa with a specific focus on the ambit of

professional practice of student affairs and the publication of research relevant to the African higher education context that may also have global impact and resonance.

JSAA focuses on research, practice, and professional reflection in the field of student affairs and services in African higher education. Its thematic coverage includes, but is not limited to, areas such as knowledge creation and paradigm development for student and institutional success in Africa, critical examination of higher education paradigms, internationalisation and discussions around the ecosystem of student experience, conceptual debates and discussions around models and frameworks, and including functional areas including student development and learning, counselling, health and wellbeing, student governance and representation, student engagement, finances and funding, student housing and residence life, student leadership and activism, transitions into and through higher education, graduate employability, and disability support. The Journal also welcomes reflective practice articles, book reviews, and special thematic issues that advance knowledge in student affairs and related professional fields. By articulating this broad scope, JSAA ensures inclusivity of diverse perspectives while remaining anchored in its core mission of advancing student affairs scholarship and practice on the African continent.

Journal Ownership and Accountability

The Journal of Student Affairs in Africa (JSAA) is owned by its founding editors operating under a model of editorial independence. Accountability for academic integrity lies with the Editor-in-Chief and the Executive Editors, while strategic oversight is shared with the Sub-editors and Advisory Board. Governance arrangements safeguard both transparency and continuity, with clear delegation of responsibilities and succession planning to ensure the Journal's long-term stability.

The journal is typically hosted by a university (library and/or faculty, centre or department) which contributes to the journal in ways defined by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) negotiated between the university representative and the editorial executive. The MOU also defines the ways in which the Executive is accountable to the host for the duration of the relationship. The MOU is typically negotiated and signed on behalf of JSAA by the Editor-in-Chief (and/or the Executive Editors).

PART 1: ROLES AND RESPONSBILITIES

Editor-in-Chief and Executive Editors

The role of the Editor-in-Chief of the Journal is both strategic and scholarly, serving as the intellectual leader and primary decision-maker for the publication. This position involves overseeing the Journal's editorial vision and ensuring that the content aligns with its mission and academic standards. For the Journal of Student Affairs in Africa, the Editor-in-Chief plus two Executive Editors constitute the executive team that evaluates submissions and manage the peer review process, and makes final decisions on article acceptance or rejection based on section editors' recommendations. The team maintains the quality and integrity of the Journal's output. Beyond content curation, they are responsible for shaping the Journal's thematic directions, identifying emerging areas of interest, and fostering scholarly debates within the field.

The Editor-in-Chief plays a key role in enhancing the Journal's visibility and impact within the academic community. The team represents the Journal at conferences, builds relationships with institutions and scholars, and helps secure high-quality submissions. They also contribute to the Journal's strategic growth, which may include expanding its reach through special issues, interdisciplinary collaborations, or digital innovations. Their leadership is central to upholding ethical standards in publishing, promoting diversity in authorship and editorial participation, and ensuring timely publication schedules. In essence, the Editor-in-Chief balances academic rigor with innovation and diplomacy to guide the Journal's evolution and relevance.

The Executive Editors also provide an editorial piece for each issue of the Journal. Through a brief overview, the team introduces the reader to the contents of the Journal by offering insights into the thematic focus of the articles, highlighting key contributions and pointing areas for future focus for the journal. As a team located on three continents, the combined contribution to the editorial is often enhanced by experiences from their geographic locations as well.

Editorial Board Members, Sub-Editors and Section Editors

The Editorial Board, Sub-Editors or Section Editors play a vital role in managing the peer review and editorial process for individual submissions or specific subject areas within a journal. They are responsible for overseeing manuscripts from initial submission through to final decision, ensuring that each article meets the journal's academic and ethical standards. This involves selecting appropriate peer reviewers, coordinating the review process, evaluating reviewer feedback, and making recommendations to the Executive Editors team

regarding acceptance, revision, or rejection. Their subject matter expertise allows them to assess the quality, originality, and relevance of research within their assigned domain, contributing significantly to the journal's scholarly integrity.

In addition to handling submissions, Sub- or Article Editors support the journal's editorial goals by helping to shape its thematic direction within their specific fields. They may identify emerging trends, propose special issues, or recruit high-quality submissions from their professional networks. These editors also act as liaisons between authors, reviewers, and the broader editorial team, ensuring clear communication and timely processing of manuscripts. Their work not only enhances the efficiency and rigor of the editorial process but also strengthens the journal's reputation within its disciplinary community.

Board and Editorial Terms

The governance of the Journal of Student Affairs in Africa (JSAA) rests on transparency, accountability, and academic integrity. Editorial Board Members and International Board Members are appointed for renewable three-year terms, with possible rotation to ensure continuity and renewal. Appointments are based on scholarly expertise, professional standing in student affairs, and regional representation to reflect the diversity of African higher education contexts. Board members are expected to contribute actively to peer review, strategic discussions, and the promotion of JSAA in their networks. The Executive and Sub-Editors are responsible for inviting new members, and ensuring compliance with governance standards, including conflict-of-interest disclosure.

Reviewers

Peer reviewers are subject matter experts and therefore play a critical role in maintaining the quality, credibility, and academic integrity of scholarly publishing. They identify strengths, weaknesses, and potential ethical concerns relating to the submitted manuscripts. As subject matter experts, they provide objective, constructive feedback on those manuscripts, assessing the originality, methodology, clarity, and significance of the research. Their feedback to authors helps authors to revise and improve their work. Peer reviewers ensure that only rigorously vetted and valuable contributions are published. Their evaluations help editors make informed decisions about manuscript publications

Journal Manager

The Journal Manager plays an administrative and operational role in ensuring the efficient day-to-day functioning of the journal. The manager coordinates communication among editors, authors, reviewers, and the publishing team, overseeing timelines and ensuring that manuscripts move smoothly through each stage of the editorial process. In addition, the Journal Manager tracks manuscripts through the submission systems. The Journal Manager

provides the organizational backbone that supports the journal's scholarly mission and professional standards.

Technical Support Team

The Technical Support operates behind-the-scenes role in ensuring the smooth operation and publication of the journal. The team manage and maintain the digital infrastructure of the system. This team ensures that authors, reviewers, and editors can navigate the system efficiently, troubleshooting technical issues and providing timely assistance when problems arise. They provide metadata and digital accessibility of published articles.

International Advisory Board

The Board is made up of academics, researchers, and thought leaders from various countries and disciplines, As an Advisory Board, the members support the journal by providing global relevance, credibility, and scholarly development of the journal. Their involvement enhances the journal's reputation and contributes to its intellectual richness by encouraging cross-border collaboration and dialogue. The plan is to involve members actively in the Award system to read and serve as judges of selected manuscripts.

Role / Team	Primary Function	Key Responsibilities
Editor-in-Chief & Executive Editors	Strategic and Scholarly Leadership	- Set and uphold the journal's editorial vision and academic standards - Oversee submission evaluation, peer review, and final publication decisions - Shape thematic directions and identify emerging research areas - Represent the journal at conferences and in academic networks - Promote ethical publishing, diversity, and innovation - Write the editorial overview for each issue - Guide strategic growth through collaborations and digital initiatives
Editorial Board Members, Sub-Editors & Section Editors	Editorial Management & Scholarly Oversight	- Manage manuscripts from submission to decision within assigned areas - Select and coordinate peer reviewers - Ensure academic quality, originality, and ethical compliance - Recommend acceptance, revision, or rejection - Identify new themes, propose special issues, and recruit authors - Serve as communication link among authors, reviewers, and executive editors
Board and Editorial Terms	Governance & Institutional Continuity	- Ensure transparency, accountability, and scholarly integrity - Serve renewable 3-year terms, with rotation for renewal - Appointed based on expertise, standing, and regional representation - Contribute to peer review, strategic planning, and journal promotion - Executive and Sub-Editors handle appointments and conflict-of-interest compliance
Reviewers	Quality Assurance & Scholarly Evaluation	- Provide objective, expert feedback on manuscripts - Assess originality, rigor, and contribution to the field - Identify ethical concerns and methodological weaknesses - Offer constructive revisions to strengthen articles - Support editorial decision-making and uphold publication standards
Journal Manager	Operational & Administrative Coordination	- Manage day-to-day editorial workflow and communication - Track manuscript progress through the submission system - Coordinate with editors, authors, reviewers, and publishers - Ensure deadlines are met and processes run efficiently - Maintain organizational and professional standards
Technical Support Team	System Maintenance & Digital Accessibility	- Manage and maintain the journal's online and technical infrastructure - Troubleshoot technical issues for users - Ensure metadata accuracy and digital access for published content - Support smooth online submission and publication processes
International Advisory Board	Global Relevance & Strategic Counsel	- Provide international perspective and scholarly advice - Enhance global credibility and visibility - Encourage cross-border collaboration and intellectual exchange - Participate in award judging and recognition of outstanding manuscripts - Support the journal's development and global outreach

PART 2: JOURNAL OPERATION

Submission Guidelines and Standards

JSAA has clear author guidelines designed to uphold academic integrity and publishing excellence. Submissions must conform to the APA 7th edition referencing style and follow the Journal's formatting requirements, including anonymisation for peer review. Authors are required to provide abstracts in English and one other African language, and are encouraged to include ORCID identifiers. A submission checklist is available on the Journal's platform to assist author/s in preparing their manuscripts. JSAA also emphasises ethical compliance: all submissions must be original, not under consideration elsewhere, and free from plagiarism. The Journal adheres to the Code of Best Practice in Scholarly Journal Publishing, Editing and Peer Review of the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf). Preprints are permitted under certain conditions, provided that authors disclose prior posting and explicit permissions are granted by the Editor in Chief. These guidelines ensure that submissions are rigorous, ethical, and aligned with global scholarly standards.

The JSAA Manuscript Publishing Flowchart
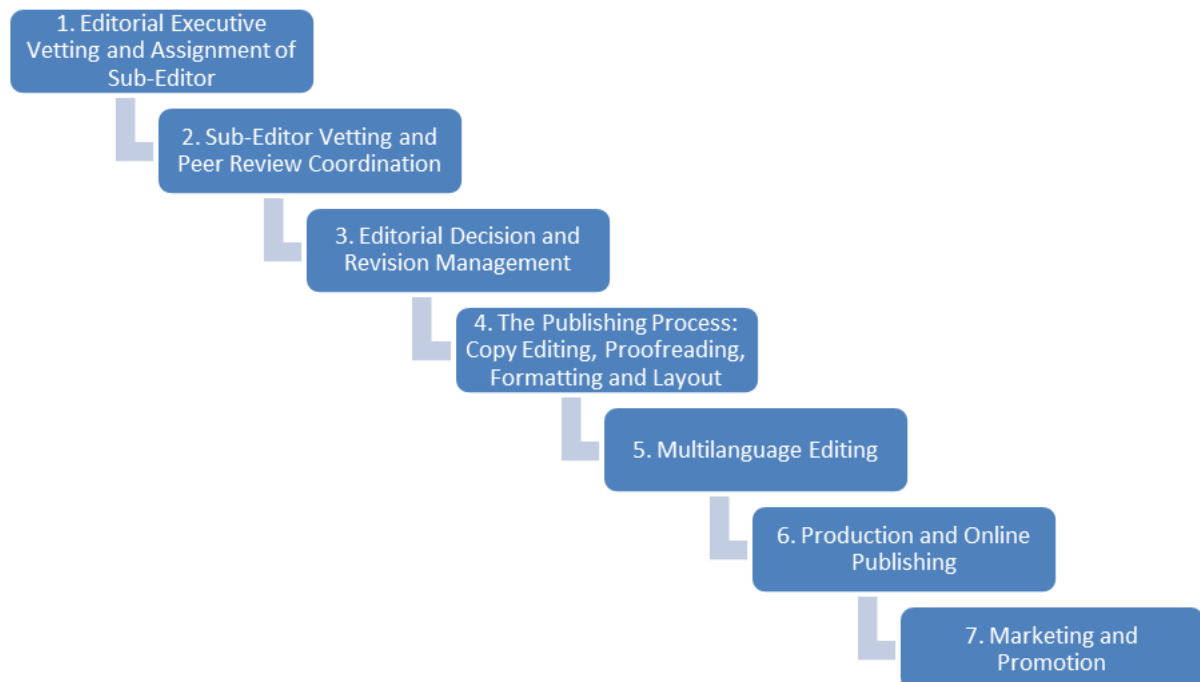
The above flowchart shows the steps that a *successful* manuscript goes through. The steps below indicate the same but also highlight where capacity development interventions may take place and when unsuccessful manuscripts are rejected or redirected.

1. Editorial Executive Vetting and Assignment to Sub-Editors
2. Editor Vetting and Peer Review Coordination
3. Editorial Decision and Revision Management
4. The Publishing Process: Copy Editing, Proof reading, Formatting and Layout
5. Multi-language editing
6. Production and Online publishing
7. Marketing and Promotion

1. Editorial executive vetting and assignment to Sub-Editor

This first step after submission of the author's (FOOTNOTE: although we use single author terminology, an author might also be co-author or multiple authors) online submission of a manuscript. The online submission process is automated and the manuscript receives an automatically assigned manuscript number.

The Journal Manager ensures that the submitted manuscript is anonymized.
The editorial executive receives an automated email alerting to the submission. At this point, the editorial executive may decline a submission based on a range of factors, including issues around scope, scholarly quality of submission, and various other factors related to suitability.

The editorial executive then, if the manuscript is not declined, assigns the manuscript to any sub-editor, based on good judgement and thematic or disciplinary fit with the sub-editor. cc

2. Sub-Editor vetting and peer review coordination

The assigned sub-editor then does a more indepth assessment of the submission and may decline based on various factors, mainly related to scope, quality and suitability. Then the sub-editor selects two reviewers from the database based on their research expertise. Once chosen, these reviewers receive the anonymized manuscript through the system for a blind review. Peer reviewers are selected based on their research expertise in the subject matter and are expected to provide an objective assessment of the manuscript. Their role includes evaluating its merits, suggesting improvements, and identifying relevant but uncited published work. Reviewers must maintain confidentiality and disclose any potential conflicts of interest. A suggested deadline is provided for their review, and if no response is received by the due date, the Journal Manager sends a reminder through the system.

3. Sub-Editorial decision and manuscript revision

The sub-editor makes a decision to revert to author for further amendments, requests a amendment table and amended manuscript from the author, or may accept or reject the manuscript. The decision is communicated with the author in personalised or automated

emails, depending on the sub-editor. Ultimately, if the manuscript is accepted, it needs to demonstrate it has engaged meaningfully with the reviewers' recommendations.

4. The publishing process

When the sub-editorial proceeds to accept a manuscript an automated email is sent to the author, and the publishing process starts.
The publisher gets an automated email with the accepted version of the manuscript.

Copy Editing
- o Checking grammar, punctuation, and spelling
- o Ensuring clarity, coherence, and consistency
- o Verifying references and citations

Formatting and Layout
- o Formatting manuscripts to journal style
- o Preparing figures, tables, and supplementary materials
- o Ensuring accessibility and readability

Proofreading
- o Final check for errors and omissions
- o Ensuring the final version is clean and professional

5. Multi-language and DEI

Abstracts in the JSAA are in at least 2 languages: Always English and any other language indigenous to the African continent. The author is responsible for the translation of the English abstract into any language of the author's choice.

As a pan-African journal, JSAA is committed to ensuring diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) at every level of its operations. This includes equitable representation of regions, languages, genders and other demographic indicators (race, ethnicity), and institutions in editorial boards, review panels, and authorship. The Journal will track and report diversity indicators, actively recruit contributors from underrepresented contexts, and promote multilingual participation. This strategy ensures that JSAA reflects Africa's intellectual richness while upholding global standards of equity and representation.

Part of JSAA's commitment to institutional diversity is that no single university / higher education institution may have 25% or more of the authorship share of any particular (annual) volume (two issues combined). Moreover, no single author is permitted to publish more than one article per (annual) volume (two issues combined). In this manner, JSAA ensures that the

scarce resource of its scholarly platform is not 'captured' by any particular institution or author(s).

6. Production and publishing

The publisher is responsible for converting publication content (manuscripts) to final publication formats, ensuring through rigorous copy-editing, proof-reading, and type-setting, as well as other measures of quality control, a professional publication. The publilsher also ensures that all hyperlinks in articles are active, and that DOI, ORCid and related hyperlinked article and researcher identifiers are correct. The publisher uploads the final content to the Journal's platform and ensuring proper metadata for indexing and discoverability. Prior to the publication of an issue, the Journal Manager and an Executive Editor review the full publication and sign off on it.

7. Marketing and promotion

When the Journal is published it is announced via the OJS/PKP Online Journal to all users, as well as on social media using the Journal's LinkedIn profile https://www.linkedin.com/company/106877191. The same LinkedIn feed is also used for other announcements such as calls for papers, community of practice events and announcements, awards announcements, changes to the editorial board and executive. All authors, editors and readers/users of the Journal are encouraged to announce the publication of JSAA and/or their respective articles on their own social media and professional platforms, and distribute the e-journal within their networks.

Announcements for various Journal related matters (over and above the publication of a new issue) are sent first via the OJS/PKP Online Journal Platform which is also mirrored in the LinkedIn feed of the Journal. The OJS subscription list is not exactly the same as the LinkedIn followers. Typical other announcements are: call for papers of special and themed issues; professional announcements and announcements related to the members of the journal editorial structures, awards, opportunities, COP events, and the like.

The Journal is also printed regularly in order to hand out physical copies, mainly for marketing and promotion purposes as well as for archiving.

8. Ethics, AI/Harvesting, Conflicts of Interest and Disclosure

JSAA upholds the highest standards of academic integrity, guided by the ASSAf Code of Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing. All manuscripts undergo blind peer review, with strict adherence to confidentiality, impartiality, and conflict-of-interest management.

Regarding artificial intelligence (AI) and automated systems, JSAA has established clear harvesting and attribution rules: content may be harvested, mined, or reused by AI systems only with full and correct citation of the source and its author/s. Misuse, misrepresentation, or failure to provide attribution constitutes a violation of JSAA policy.

Moreover, authors using AI tools in the preparation of manuscripts must disclose such use transparently. This policy protects scholarly integrity while recognising the evolving role of AI in knowledge creation and dissemination.

The editorial executive holds the final responsibility for ethical oversight. This includes the compliance with the Journal's guidelines and ASSAf standards (REF?).

All contributors to JSAA, authors, reviewers, editors, and board members, must disclose any potential conflicts of interest (COIs) that could compromise objectivity. Conflicts may be financial, institutional, personal, or intellectual.

Authors are required to include (1) a COI statement at the time of submission, which is published at the end of their article. Authors must also provide (2) a statement disclosing any funding sources as well as (3) a statement how they have applied appropriate research and professional ethics in relation to their research (including reference to institutional review / research ethics board review and related research ethics clearance numbers.) Lastly, they must (4) disclose their use of AI tools in their research and preparation of manuscripts, as mentioned above.

Reviewers and editors must recuse themselves from handling a manuscript where a conflict exists. COIs will be transparently documented, and if relevant, published alongside articles. The Journal Manager maintains records of all disclosures. Failure to disclose may result in rejection, retraction, or removal from the editorial team or board.

9. Administrative Tasks

The editorial executive maintains and updates editorial board and reviewer databases, ensures the automated emails and correspondence with authors, reviewers, and editors is appropriate. The editorial executive is also responsible for updating Journal policy updates.

10. Quality Control, Complaints, Appeals and Corrections

The editorial executive is responsible for collecting and analysing feedback from authors, reviewers, and readers, and implementing improvements based on feedback and technological advancements.

JSAA provides a structured process for handling complaints and appeals to ensure fairness and transparency. Authors may appeal editorial decisions by submitting a written justification to the Editor-in-Chief within 30 days of the decision. Complaints about editorial conduct, peer review, or ethical concerns may be directed to the Executive Editors, who will convene a subcommittee to review the matter. Corrections to published work (errata, corrigenda) will be issued promptly when minor errors are identified, while more serious concerns (plagiarism, fabrication, ethical breaches) will trigger a formal investigation and, where necessary, retraction.

PART 3: PROFESSIONALISATION BEYOND THE PUBLISHING PROCESS

Calls for Papers and Special Issues

JSAA regularly publishes special or guest-edited issues on themes of relevance to student affairs, higher education, and student success ecosystem development in Africa. Calls for issues and papers are announced on the Journal's website and social media platforms, inviting contributions from diverse scholars and practitioners. Guest editors, often affiliated with partner organisations or institutions, coordinate special issues with support from the JSAA editorial team. Selection of themes is informed by emerging trends, policy priorities, and scholarly debates, ensuring the Journal remains responsive to developments in the field. Special and Guest-ed issues provide opportunities to showcase regional expertise, interdisciplinary collaborations, and practitioner insights, thereby broadening the Journal's reach and deepening its impact.

Community of Practice

The JSAA Community of Practice is an online CoP that produces, enhances, promotes, develops and enriches the knowledge production of student affairs related research, leadership and practice in Africa. The CoP is a living community, open group, and works towards the adoption of a concept note for the CoP, as well as the drafting of an operational plan for the next 5 years. This CoP is geared towards developing student affairs research in the African higher education context and growing JSAA authorship, readership and community. (see: https://upjournals.up.ac.za/index.php/jsaa/community-of-practice)

Knowledge Dissemination and Policy Influence

The Journal seeks to extend the impact of its published research beyond academia into policy and practice. This includes summarising key findings into accessible briefs for communities, higher education leaders, government policymakers, and student affairs practitioners. JSAA will also partner with regional bodies, universities, and professional associations to host dialogues that translate research into action. By positioning itself as both a scholarly and practice-oriented resource, JSAA ensures that its content informs decision-making and strengthens student support systems across Africa.

Reviewer Development and Capacity Building

JSAA recognises that the CoP and reviewers are the backbone of scholarly publishing and is committed to nurturing their professional growth. The Journal offers periodic reviewer training through webinars, guidelines, and mentorship opportunities, particularly for early-career researchers and emerging scholars and professionals who may be new to the peer review process. Development activities focus on strengthening critical review skills, ethical decision-making, and constructive feedback practices. By investing in reviewer capacity, JSAA contributes to building a robust pool of scholarly expertise across the continent.

Author support and mentorship

JSAA actively supports authors, especially early-career researchers, academics and practitioners, by offering training, development and resources that strengthen their scholarly writing and research and publishing skills. This includes mentorship initiatives that connect experienced scholars with first-time authors, writing workshops hosted online and in partnership with universities, and detailed author guidelines with examples. The Journal's goal is to reduce barriers to publication, empower emerging voices, and strengthen the capacity of student affairs professionals to contribute to global scholarship.

Towards an African Student Affairs Institute

The JSAA is a key knowledge generating platform that informs the vision for a pan-African Student Affairs Institute. This virtual, multilingual, and hybrid training and networking platform is envisaged to offer development, training, short courses, and formal qualifications, designed to build professional capacity and meet the continent's rapidly growing need for trained student support practitioners. This future-oriented vision for this African Student Affairs Institute is rooted in the understanding that student affairs is essential for achieving the student success that is directly related to the deeply interconnected Sustainable Development Goals, with particular attention to those related to inclusive and equitable quality education.

The envisaged African Student Affairs Institute is a next-generation vehicle for scaling impact. Building on this scalable model, it is proposed to work towards the virtual African Student Affairs Institute as a training and professional development platform that builds on the JSAA platform to deepen and expand the reach of JSAA's work. The Institute will offer:

- Online, hybrid, and face-to-face training for student affairs professionals;
- training, development and postgraduate qualifications developed with institutional partners;
- Curriculum content drawn from the JSAA archive and new, practice-based research;
- Delivery in multiple African languages, ensuring regional inclusion.

By 2040, the Institute aims to train more than 2,500 professionals, with at least 300 participating annually in its early years.

This next phase is therefore to scale systems change, not just individual interventions, thereby ensuring that professionals across Africa are equipped to cope with and direct the fast-paced ongoing expansion and massification of higher education and will thus transform student support ecosystems.

PART 4: FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

Fundraising and Sustainability Strategy

The Journal of Student Affairs in Africa is a Diamond Open Access (OA) journal. This means it does not charge article processing charges (APCs) for authors nor charge subscription fees for readers.

To date the journal has been funded through institutional support, mainly institutions where the executive members are affiliated, limited philanthropic contributions, and volunteer editorial work. This has been done to ensure equitable access to knowledge without financial barriers. The journal's goal is to achieve academic inclusivity and knowledge equity, aligning with the principles of open science by removing financial obstacles that might prevent researchers from publishing or accessing scholarly work. The production of the Journal relies on collaborative efforts to maintain quality peer review and editorial processes. This model has particularly been important for the African region which is often underrepresented in the global scholarly world and its scholars have limited opportunities for accessing funding for research and the dissemination of their work.

Sustaining a no-fee academic journal is challenging and requires a diversified fundraising strategy that prioritizes long-term financial stability while maintaining editorial independence. Two key approaches to date have been, first, securing grants from academic institutions that support open-access publishing and knowledge dissemination. Universities and research centers can also be engaged as institutional sponsors, providing financial support in exchange for visibility and partnership opportunities. Additionally, in-kind contributions such as server hosting, technical support, and volunteer editorial work can help offset operational costs.

The second approach has been to invite guest editors associated with organizations that share a common interest in the discipline and values, and charge those organizations production fees and hosting fees. This strategy has led to the building up of some small funding base without compromising the journal's commitment to equitable knowledge access.

Beyond traditional funding sources, sustainability efforts can also focus on community-driven financial models such as crowdfunding campaigns around an issue of broad interest that aligns with the mission of the journal where scholars, readers, and supporters are invited to contribute small, once off or recurring donations, ensuring a steady flow of resources. Other revenue-generating activities, such as hosting academic workshops, conferences, or specialized training sessions, can also provide supplementary income. Leveraging digital tools to increase journal visibility, such as social media outreach, partnerships with professional

associations, and integration with open-access repositories, can attract potential donors and institutional partners. A long-term sustainability plan needs to emphasize adaptability, ensuring the Journal remains resilient amid changing funding landscapes while upholding its mission of providing free and accessible scholarship.

Strategic partnerships and collaborations

To reinforce financial and scholarly sustainability, JSAA will cultivate partnerships with universities, African research associations, philanthropic organisations, and international networks committed to open access and societal impact of knowledge. These collaborations may include co-funding special issues, co-hosting conferences, or contributing in-kind support such as training, editorial services, or technical expertise. Strategic partnerships extend JSAA's visibility, broaden its resource base, and position it as a hub for collaborative scholarship on student affairs in Africa.

Mixed Income Strategy

	Type of contributions	Funding proportion
Host institutions	JSAA issue funding Technical services Web hosting	Partial funding Full funding (& time) Full funding
Organisations / Guest institutions	JSAA issue funding Guest editing	Partial funding Full funding (& time)
Editors	Manuscript editing JSAA issue editing JSAA guest issue editing	Full (time) Full (time) Partial (time)
Donations button	Starting 2026	Partial
Crowdfunding	Starting 2026	Partial
COP-related revenue	Starting 2026	Full

Incentivising volunteering and pro bono work

The JSAA can play a pivotal role in supporting and incentivising reviewers and other pro bono contributors by formally recognising their work as an essential part of strengthening scholarship and practice in the field. Beyond traditional acknowledgements, JSAA publishes

the names of reviewers and volunteer contributors in each issue, we are looking towards an annual "Outstanding Reviewer" or "Pro Bono Contributor" award, and highlight exemplary contributions through short features or editorials. Offering certificates of appreciation or digital badges that contributors can showcase on professional platforms will further validate their service and enhance their academic and professional profiles. Additionally, JSAA will explore building a "Hall of Recognition" on its website, where contributors' efforts are archived and celebrated, reinforcing a sense of community and long-term appreciation. These strategies would not only incentivise continued engagement but also elevate the culture of volunteerism and knowledge-sharing within the African student affairs and higher education landscape.

The JSAA Award System

The JSAA has a detailed concept note and operational plan for JSAA Awards System. Both these activities are geared towards growing out JSAA readership and community. (see: https://upjournals.up.ac.za/index.php/jsaa/awards)

The Journal encourages and promotes excellence in academic research and documentation of reflective (professional) practice. This is done by celebrating impactful contributions that are selected to receive the annual/biannual Best Article Award recognizing outstanding scholarship published within its pages. This initiative aims to highlight research that advances knowledge in the journal's field while reinforcing our commitment to scholarly excellence and open-access dissemination. All categories of awards are listed below and are phased in starting with the article on reflective practice and research article.

- JSAA article of the year: reflective practice
- JSAA article of the year: research article
- JSAA article of the year: book review
- JSAA editor of the year
- JSAA reviewer of the year

Award recipients are selected based on criteria such as originality, methodological rigor, societal impact, and contribution to ongoing academic discourse. For the reflective practice a different criterion is set up. Winners receive formal recognition, a certificate of achievement, and increased visibility through special features in the Journal and affiliated platforms. By honoring exceptional scholarship and practice, we inspire researchers, encourage high-quality submissions, and strengthen our academic community.

As for the process, a list is generated of all original research articles and administrative reflection work (excluding articles co-authored by board members or editorial team) that have been published during the given year or stated period. These articles are sent to a

Review Committee comprising of members of the International Editorial Advisory Board, who each nominate one article based on the criteria that are shared. The nominations are collated into a shortlist from which the Committee made up by a combination of the Section Editors and Editorial Executive then rank their top three articles. These rankings generate points and the total points per article are used to identify a winner and runner-up.

The awards and awardees are then shared on social media, the Journal and with subscribers of the Journal.

PART 5: COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

Marketing and Promotion

The JSAA engages with the academic community on social media and other platforms.

OJS online platform

Since 2012, JSAA has had a prime scholarly media presence online by having been started as a fully online scholarly journal run on the PKP/OJS platform with the following current URLs:

Primary URL (since 2013): www.jsaa.ac.za
Secondary URL (institutional) (since 2021): https://upjournals.up.ac.za/index.php/jsaa/index

Full-text Mirror Platforms

Directory of Open Access Journals: https://doaj.org/toc/2307-6267
African Journals Online: https://www.ajol.info/index.php/jssa
ERIC: https://eric.ed.gov/
Scielo (since 2024): https://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_serial&pid=2307-6267

Social Media Presence

As part of the continued enhancement of the Journal's visibility, JSAA has set up a social media presence (as part of work done funded by the Eifl grant). Thus, since 2025, JSAA has an active account on the LinkedIn platform under:
https://www.linkedin.com/company/106877191

The LinkedIn account has been set up to (1) create a professional online network linked to JSAA; (2) promote JSAA publications, events, and the COP; and (3) contribute to online scholarly discourse related to student affairs and services.

Environmental and Social Sustainability

JSAA aligns its operations with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those promoting inclusive education, equity, and sustainability. As a fully digital, diamond open access journal, JSAA minimises its carbon footprint while maximising accessibility. The Journal commits to green publishing practices by reducing print dependency, leveraging renewable digital platforms, and promoting equitable access to knowledge for communities with limited resources. Social sustainability is further supported

by multilingual publication, capacity development initiatives, and a strong emphasis on inclusivity across Africa's diverse higher education systems.

Indexing, Archiving and Digital Preservation

JSAA is committed to ensuring the long-term accessibility, discoverability, and preservation of its published content. To this end, the Journal maintains a robust digital preservation strategy, which includes hosting on the Open Journal Systems (OJS) platform as well as mirror platforms such as African Journals Online (AJOL), the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), ERIC, and SciELO South Africa. Articles are indexed in Google Scholar, BASE, ASCI, WorldCat, Sherpa/Romeo, and other scholarly databases. Each article is assigned persistent metadata to ensure discoverability across platforms, and the Journal maintains backups and redundancy through multiple institutional and international repositories. Moreover, print copies of the Journal are regularly deposited in key university libraries and national libraries. This strategy ensures that JSAA content remains securely preserved, widely disseminated, and globally visible for generations to come.

Addendum: LIST OF TEMPLATES AND FORMS

- Guest Editor Agreement Form
- JSAA Peer Review Form (upjournals.up.ac.za)
- Submission Preparation Checklist / Author Guidelines / Format Template (upjournals.up.ac.za)
- Additional forms to be developed:
  1. Manuscript or article template: for authors to follow structure, headings, referencing, formatting
  2. Title page template: a form/template for title page including author names, affiliations, ORCID, abstract etc.
  3. Conflict of interest or disclosure form: authors declare any possible conflicts
  4. Ethics, consent and permissions form: especially if data, interviews, or human subjects are involved.
  5. Copyright, author rights, licensing form: to formalise the usage rights and publishing license
  6. Revision and response to reviewers template: a structured form/table for authors to respond to reviewer comments
  7. Call for Papers or announcement form: standard format for issuing CfPs
  8. Ethics adherence and clearance form: authors state adherence and clearance procedure and date, signed.