



**HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION**

**JOURNALS AND PUBLICATIONS POLICY**

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### 1. OVERVIEW

Since 2005, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) has sought to introduce policies for raising the quality of national research journals. However, there are concerns academic quality has not improved. This demands transition to a more transparent, rigorous, and focused system for accreditation and monitoring. The aim of this policy is to nurture and enhance academic and publication standards of national journals through financial support and capacity building. This policy document restates the previously notified provisions of the policy dated Nov. 5<sup>th</sup> 2019, vide [letter ref: 2\(22\)/R&D/SS&H/HEC/2019/337](#), applicable from July 1, 2020.

### 2. OBJECTIVES

The intended objective of the proposed policy for research journals is to bring academic and publication quality of the journals at par with international standards.

### 3. ACTIVITIES

The activities to be undertaken under this policy include:

- a. establishment of minimum and optimal standards, in line with international best practices, for academic review, publication quality, and ethical practices;
- b. establishment and strengthening of monitoring systems;
- c. capacity building of editorial teams; and
- d. provision of financial support and linking of such support to performance, i.e., success in meeting quality criteria.

### 4. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR REGISTRATION

Following eligibility criteria must be met for purposes of registration at the time of submission of the application:

- a. *Objectives*: The journal must have clearly defined aims, objectives and scope of publication.
- b. *Transparency*: The Journal must have an ISSN no., title and URL (verified from International ISSN register). The journal's website should facilitate online availability, and include an archive of previous issues. The submission process, publication fee, and sponsorships / source of funding, must be available publicly, including on the website. The journal must have published at least 5 articles per issue in the preceding calendar year.
- c. *Publisher Characteristics*: The journal must be owned and published by a registered entity, which could be university or HEI or a department of faculty of such an entity, or a registered research institution, or registered nonprofit academic society with a mandate for research. In all such cases, the publisher should have a formal governing body, which must approve the publication decision. "Registered" means registered with the SECP, or the Registrar of Societies.

### 5. CATEGORIES OF RESEARCH JOURNALS

- a. The journals fulfilling the following criteria will be recognized:

- i. *International*: All journals listed in Scopus and/or Web of Science, *except* with effect from January 1, 2021, those that have been dropped or placed in a black list by Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) or the Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC), or where there is evidence to suggest that the journal does not meet the minimal codal formalities, as specified in paragraph 4.
  - ii. *National*: All journals listed in Scopus and/or Web of Science or processed through HEC committee, *except* with effect from January 1, 2021, those that have been dropped or placed in a black list by DOAJ or ABDC, or where the journal fails to provide evidence that it meets the minimal codal formalities specified in paragraph 4, or where HEC determines that the journal violates any of the DOAJ criteria (reproduced in Annex 1).
- b. National journals listed at Category Y, X, or W will receive financial support as per prescribed limits and procedure. Category W is the highest category, while Category Y is the minimum level for eligibility. In case of non-performance, a journal can be delisted/ derecognized, as and when necessary, in accordance with the prescribed procedure. Details of the categories are as follows:

Category	Y	X	W
<b>Definition</b>	Fulfill minimum quality criteria, and can receive seed funding to reach Category X to seek international recognition	Fulfill additional quality criteria, and can receive increased funding (compared to Category Y).	Qualify for accreditation as per HEC requirements, and relatively increased funding. No ranking is assigned to recognized journals and all Category W journals have equal standing for the purpose of academic benefits.
<b>Eligibility</b>	Must be eligible journal	Must be eligible journal, and meet all criteria for Category Y. Journal must be registered with one or more well reputed abstracting/indexing agencies.	Journals internationally recognized by reputed accreditation/ ranking systems listed below OR having international recognition, based on citation information (e.g., IF, SJR, SNIP, IPP, EGF) from diverse sources including but not limited to Web of Science or Scopus.
<b>Governance</b>	An academic editorial board (or equivalent), comprising of members with PhD degrees in relevant fields (i.e., area of publication) or FCPS/FRCS/MCPS degree for medical journals and strong research and publications background	Open Journal Management System (OJS) or similar Journal Management systems to be adopted for submission, acceptance and rejection as well as peer review process of research articles	
<b>Editorial process</b>	Established procedures for <b>external</b> peer review (not by members of the editorial board or the publishing institute). Peer review by well-reputed international scholars encouraged.	Published articles should be peer reviewed by well reputed international experts in relevant field	

<b>Authors</b>	Authors may be international or national. Publications by editor or members of editorial team not allowed. No more than 1/5 of published articles per issue by "local" authors (i.e., from the publishing institute). Authors' names, addresses and contact details provided along with the contribution.	At least one-fourth of the published articles must be by international authors.	
<b>Content</b>	Published articles must be in line with the scope of the Journal	References as per international standards.	

Note: IF=Impact Factor; (ii) SJR=SCImago Journal Rank; (iii) SNIP=Source Normalized Impact per Paper; (iv) IPP=Impact Per Publication; v) EGF=Eigen Factor.

- c. HEC has developed an IT based accreditation and ranking system tailored to HEC needs and requirements, Link: <https://hjrs.hec.gov.pk/>
- d. Other ranking systems are as follows:
  - JCR enlisted Journals with Impact Factor, <https://jcr.clarivate.com/>
  - Master Journal List, Link: <https://mjl.clarivate.com/>
  - Norwegian Scientific Index and ERIH PLUS (level-1 and level 2 journals)
  - For NSI: [https://dbh.nsd.uib.no/publiseringskanaler/Forside?request\\_locale=en](https://dbh.nsd.uib.no/publiseringskanaler/Forside?request_locale=en)
  - For ERIH: [https://dbh.nsd.uib.no/publiseringskanaler/Forside?request\\_locale=en](https://dbh.nsd.uib.no/publiseringskanaler/Forside?request_locale=en)
  - Australian Business Dean Council (ABDC) Journal Quality List <https://abdc.edu.au/research/abdc-journal-list/>

## 6. FUNDING LIMITS AND PROCEDURES

The following funding limits shall be applicable, and the following procedures shall be followed:

- a. HEC provides seed funding up to a maximum amount (Rs. 250,000) for Category Y Journals; performance-based funding up to a maximum amount (Rs. 450,000) for Category X journals; and eligibility funding up to a maximum amount (Rs. 700,000) for Category W journals.
- b. Funding is also allowed to national research journals in specific categories for a maximum two years for the following purposes:
  - i. Registration with one or more well reputed abstracting/ indexing agencies
  - ii. Website maintenance, OJS or similar platform
  - iii. External peer review fee (national/ international)
- c. Funding will be stopped if the journal fails to improve quality standards or to meet quality criteria for the next level. However, the competent authority may decide, for reasons to be recorded in writing, to extend funding by one year, with close monitoring of the journal performance.
- d. The following procedure will be followed in making the funding decisions:
  - i. Call for applications will be issued once a year (every February) on the HEC Website.
  - ii. New/ emerging journals as well as already listed journals may apply for funding.
  - iii. Applications can be submitted by email or on the online portal before the specified deadline.
  - iv. Applications should be on the prescribed form, and must include all documentary evidence required as per application form

- v. All completed applications by eligible journals will be evaluated by a review committee comprised of subject experts.
- vi. Editors will be informed of the decision and the final list will be made available on HEC website.
- vii. Editors will have the right to appeal against the decision as per prescribed procedure.

## **7. CAPACITY BUILDING**

The following steps shall be taken for capacity building of editors and members of editorial team:

- a. HEC will organize capacity building programs for editors and members of editorial teams of eligible journals.
- b. An open call will be issued on HEC website for nominations from journal editors, who may nominate any members of their editorial team.
- c. All eligible journals (regardless of their funding status) may apply.
- d. The selected candidates will be invited to participate in the training workshop.
- e. HEC will provide remuneration to resource persons and/or trainers.
- f. Collaboration with COPE (Committee on Publishing Ethics) and similar national or international organizations will be developed in order to strengthen the accreditation mechanism and mobilize support for training programs.

## **8. VALIDITY OF RESEARCH JOURNALS AND VERIFICATION OF PUBLICATIONS**

Research and Innovation Wing of the HEC shall be responsible for the ranking, financing, and capacity building of journals. It will play no role in establishing or monitoring criteria for utilization of journals, validity of research journals, or verification of publications for the purpose of faculty appointments, promotions, appointments as PhD supervisors, or award of PhD degrees.

**ANNEX-1**  
**Principles of Transparency and Best Practices in Scholarly Publishing**

Source: <https://doaj.org/bestpractice>

**1. Website**

A journal's website, including the text that it contains, shall demonstrate that care has been taken to ensure high ethical and professional standards. It must not contain information that might mislead readers or authors, including any attempt to mimic another journal/publisher's site. An 'Aims & Scope' statement should be included on the website and the readership clearly defined. There should be a statement on what a journal will consider for publication including authorship criteria (e.g. not considering multiple submissions, redundant publications) to be included. ISSNs should be clearly displayed (separate for print and electronic).

**2. Name of journal**

The Journal name shall be unique and not be one that is easily confused with another journal or that might mislead potential authors and readers about the Journal's origin or association with other journals.

**3. Peer review process**

Journal's content must be clearly marked as whether peer reviewed or not. Peer review is defined as obtaining advice on individual manuscripts from reviewers/experts in the field who are not part of the journal's editorial staff. This process, as well as any policies related to the journal's peer review procedures, shall be clearly described on the journal's Website, including the method of peer review used. Journal websites should not guarantee manuscript acceptance or very short peer review times.

**4. Ownership and management**

Information about the ownership and/or management of a journal shall be clearly indicated on the journal's website. Publishers shall not use organizational or journal names that would mislead potential authors and editors about the nature of the journal's owner.

**5. Governing body**

Journals shall have editorial boards or other governing bodies whose members are recognized experts in the subject areas included within the journal's scope. The full names and affiliations of the journal's editorial board or other governing body shall be provided on the journal's website.

**6. Editorial team/contact information**

Journals shall provide the full names and affiliations of the journal's editors on the journal's website as well as contact information for the editorial office, including a full address.

**7. Copyright and licensing**

The policy for copyright shall be clearly stated in the author guidelines and the copyright holder named on all published articles. Likewise, licensing information shall be clearly described in guidelines on the website, and licensing terms shall be indicated on all published articles, both HTML and PDFs. If authors are allowed to publish under a Creative Commons license then any specific license requirements shall be noted. Any policies on posting of final accepted versions or published articles on third party repositories shall be clearly stated.

**8. Author fees**

Any fees or charges that are required for manuscript processing and/or publishing materials in the journal shall be clearly stated in a place that is easy for potential authors to find prior to submitting

their manuscripts for review, or explained to authors before they begin preparing their manuscript for submission. If no such fees are charged that should also be clearly stated.

**9. Process for identification of and dealing with allegations of research misconduct**

Publishers and editors shall take reasonable steps to identify and prevent the publication of papers where research misconduct has occurred, including plagiarism, citation manipulation, and data falsification/fabrication, among others. In no case shall a journal or its editors encourage such misconduct, or knowingly allow such misconduct to take place. In the event that a journal's publisher or editors are made aware of any allegation of research misconduct relating to a published article in their journal, the publisher or editor shall follow [COPE's guidelines](#) (or equivalent) in dealing with allegations.

**10. Publication Ethics**

A journal shall also have policies on publishing ethics. These should be clearly visible on its website, and should refer to: i) Journal policies on authorship; ii) How the journal will handle complaints and appeals; iii) Journal policies on conflicts of interest / competing interests; iv) Journal policies on data sharing and reproducibility; v) Journal's policy on ethical oversight; vi) Journal's policy on intellectual property; and vii) Journal's options for post-publication discussions and corrections.

**11. Publishing schedule**

The periodicity at which a journal publishes shall be clearly indicated.

**12. Access**

The way(s) in which the journal and individual articles are available to readers and whether there are associated subscription or pay per view fees shall be stated.

**13. Archiving**

A journal's plan for electronic backup and preservation of access to the journal content (for example, access to main articles via CLOCKSS or PubMedCentral) in the event a journal is no longer published shall be clearly indicated.

**14. Revenue sources**

Business models or revenue sources (e.g., author fees, subscriptions, advertising, reprints, institutional support, and organizational support) shall be clearly stated or otherwise evident on the journal's website. Publishing fees or waiver status should not influence editorial decision making.

**15. Advertising**

Journals shall state their advertising policy if relevant, including what types of adverts will be considered, who makes decisions regarding accepting adverts and whether they are linked to content or reader behavior (online only) or are displayed at random. Advertisements should not be related in any way to editorial decision making and shall be kept separate from the published content.

**16. Direct marketing**

Any direct marketing activities, including solicitation of manuscripts that are conducted on behalf of the journal, shall be appropriate, well targeted, and unobtrusive. Information provided about the publisher or journal is expected to be truthful and not misleading for readers or authors.