



HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

JOURNALS AND PUBLICATIONS POLICY 2024

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HEC JOURNALS AND PUBLICATIONS POLICY

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.

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 such support to performance, i.e., success in meeting quality criteria.

4. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR REGISTRATION

The 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 ISSN, 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. In all such cases, the publisher should have a formal governing body, which must approve the publication decision. "Registered" means registered with the SECP Only.

5. CATEGORIES OF RESEARCH JOURNALS

- a. Categorization of national and international journals will be as under:

Indexing Agency	Category
All Journals indexed in any of following collection of Web of Science (WOS): i. Science Citation Index Expanded (SCIE) ii. Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) iii. Arts & Humanities Citation Index (AHCI)	W
All Journals indexed in following collection of Web of Science (WOS): i. Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI)	X
i. Pakistani journals indexed in Scopus (other than those indexed in Web of Science (WOS) subject to fulfilling the following additional criteria. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Indexed with Scopus. ▪ 25 % International authorship. ▪ Open Journal Management System (OJS) or similar Journal Management systems adopted for submission, acceptance, and rejection as well as peer review process of research articles. ▪ Self-Institutional publication and Editor(s) /Editorial Board members publication is not allowed. ▪ Published articles peer reviewed by well reputed international experts in relevant field. 	X
Pakistani journals indexed in Scopus (other than those indexed in Web of Science (WOS) (which are not fulfilling above mentioned additional criteria).	Y
Pakistani journals indexed in MEDLINE (PubMed) (other than those indexed in Web of Science (WOS)/Scopus)	Y
Pakistani journals indexed in China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) (other than those indexed in Web of Science (WOS)/Scopus)	Y
National journals Recommended by HEC local committee	Y

- b. HEC will announce the annual Call for Applications for Accreditation of Local/National Research Journals which are not yet indexed in the HEC recognized Indexing Agencies.
- c. National research journals will be recognized as per calendar year.

- d. HJRS 2023-24 will be applicable till 30th September 2024. Revised policy will be applicable w.e.f. 1st October 2024.
- e. The local/national journals will be recommended for ranking in “Y” category based on following basic and compulsory criteria:

- **Mandatory Eligibility Criteria for Y category (will be checked by HEC, if cleared in initial scrutiny, will be forwarded for review)**

- i. ISSN
- ii. Journal Title
- iii. Journal Publisher/Owner Organization
- iv. The journals owned by non-profitable academic societies with the mandate for research having registration with Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) only.
- v. URL (Online Journals)
- vi. Content Access
- vii. Presence of Peer Review Policy
- viii. Contact Details
- ix. Article Titles and Article Abstracts in English
- x. Regularity/Timeliness and/or Publication Volume/Frequency
- xi. Website Functionality/ Journal Format
- xii. Editorial board and Advisory board 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 Editorial board and Advisory board are separate entities.
- xiii. Defined policy document
- xiv. At least two reviewers report for each article are required. Peer review via OJS/Scholar One or any other online system will be encouraged.
- xv. The journal must have published at least 5 articles per issue in the preceding calendar year.
- xvi. A maximum of 20% self-institutional publications are allowed.
- xvii. A maximum of one article of an author in an issue, either as principal author (1st or corresponding) or as co-author, is allowed.
- xviii. Editors/Editorial Board members’ publication is not allowed.
- xix. National journal recognized by HEC local committee in Y category must be indexed in HEC recognized international indexing agencies within 5 years failing which the local Y category of journal will be discontinued.

- **Quality Criteria for Y (will be evaluated by Experts Committee)**

- i. Content Relevance/Scope
- ii. Bibliographic Information in Roman Script
- iii. Presence of Ethical Statements
- iv. Editorial Affiliation Details
- v. Author Affiliation Details
- vi. Scholarly Content
- vii. Quality of review

- viii. Adherence to Community Standards (Articles in the journal are consistent with accepted best practices in their subject area).
 - ix. Appropriate Citations to Literature
 - x. Validity of Statements
 - xi. Clarity of Language
- f. All completed applications by eligible journals will be evaluated by a review committee comprised of subject experts.
 - g. Editors will be informed of the decision and the final list will be made available on the HEC website.
 - h. Editors will have the right to appeal against the decision as per the prescribed procedure.

6. FUNDING TO HEC RECOGNIZED RESEARCH JOURNALS

The following funding limits shall be applicable HEC recognized research journals:

- 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 allowed for national research journals in specific categories for a maximum of 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. The funding will be provided for a maximum of 2 years in each category including funds already provided by HEC.
- d. W category journals will continue receiving funding from HEC as long as the journal Impact Factor increases by at least 0.5 points.

7. MONITORING OF HEC RECOGNIZED RESEARCH JOURNALS

- a. In case of non-performance, a journal can be delisted/ derecognized, as and when necessary, in accordance with the prescribed procedure.
- b. HEC will monitor accredited national research journals through its authorized representatives/ subject experts, at all reasonable times, to make site visits to review administration and management of the journal at the Editor institution.
- c. Upon unsatisfactory progress of journal, both technical and financial, the journal may be considered as de-recognized.
- d. Without prejudice to the HEC other rights and remedies under the law, the HEC has the right at its discretion to de-recognize the journal and require a total or partial refund of any Grant funds if such action is necessary as a result of the following circumstances:

- i. The HEC is not reasonably satisfied with the progress of journals or the Statement of Income/Expenditures or the manner in which Income/expenditure has been incurred; or
 - ii. The Editor fail to comply with any Term and Condition of HEC. The Grantee's or the Editor's failure to comply with the requirements of any applicable law or regulations.
- e. The Editor shall maintain adequate records and supporting documents (including review record of all issues, Similarity index reports, consents of editorial and advisory board members, accounts, receipts, and other related record e.g. audit reports, appeals of authors etc. The journal records must be made available for inspection to verify the expenditure and income received by the journal out of publication activities and to monitor and conduct an evaluation of operations by any designated Inspection Team appointed by the HEC at reasonable times and upon reasonable notice.

8. CAPACITY BUILDING

The following steps shall be taken for capacity building of editors and members of the 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.

9. VALIDITY OF RESEARCH JOURNALS AND VERIFICATION OF PUBLICATIONS

- a. The Research and Innovation Division 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.
- b. All the Quality Enhancement Cells (QECs) of HEIs are responsible, inter-alia, to facilitate their faculty/students in verification of their research publications as per criteria in vogue. QECs may seek access to required online resources through the digital library of HEC as per prescribed rules.