

HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

Research Publications, Research & Innovation Wing

Standard Operating Procedures for Accreditation & Funding of Research Journals & Capacity Building of Editors

Online System for Accreditation of Research Journals

- All Research Journals (National/ International) will be categorized in W, X & Y categories within their respective scientific disciplines, as per minimum and optimal standards of accreditation established in the Revised Policy of Research Journals¹, through an online accreditation system namely **HEC Journal Recognition System (HJRS)**.
- A Weighted Average Score will be calculated on the basis of Scientific Impact Measures like Impact Factor (IF), SCImago Journal Rank (SJR), Source Normalized Impact per Paper (SNIP), Impact per Publication (IPP), Eigen Factor (EGF) etc. from diverse sources of well reputed Indexing Agencies/Research Databases including but not limited to Web of Science and Scopus. A minimum bench mark will be fixed for each Category in each of the scientific disciplines on the recommendations of respective **HEC Scientific Review Panels**. Predetermined benchmarks for each scientific area will be incorporated in the HJRS to accredit/recognize research journals in W, X or Y Categories.
- National Journals registered with well reputed indexing agencies such as Web of Science and/or Scopus will be recognized in W, X and Y categories automatically in HJRS using weighted average score.
- National journals seeking recognition in Y category that are eligible journals but not yet indexed with a reputed indexing agency will be recognized after submission of application in response to an “Annual Call for Applications” and subject to evaluation as per prescribed procedure.
- The accreditation/recognition of journals through HJRS will be valid for one year and fresh list of recognized journals (national/ international) will be issued every year through HJRS following the aforementioned mechanism.

De- Recognition of Research Journals

¹ Revised Policy of Research Journals approved by the Commission in August 2019

- A recognized journal can be delisted/ derecognized after conducting proper investigation as and when necessary e.g. in case it does not meet eligibility criteria/ qualify standards as per HEC policy or is listed/ reported to be a predatory journal or found to be unethical in academic/research practices adopted by the editorial team of journal.
- Journals dropped or placed in a black list of Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) or by Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) are not eligible for HEC accreditation/funding. To confirm the status of journals from these lists, websites of ABDC and DOAJ should be consulted before submitting application.

Responsibility for Evaluation of Research Journals and Publications

- Following eight (08) Scientific Review Panels, formed under the HEC Scientific Review Panels- Assessment Framework², have the responsibility to effectively evaluate research journals/ books and publications in their respective areas/disciplines supported by HEC and will exercise a continuous watch over compliance of quality standards by research journals.
- External reviewers may be engaged by the Chair/Members of the said Review Panels where required/ appropriate.
 - (i) Agricultural Sciences
 - (ii) Biological and Medical Sciences
 - (iii) Mathematical and Physical Sciences
 - (iv) Engineering and Technology
 - (v) Arts and Humanities
 - (vi) Management Sciences
 - (vii) Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences
 - (viii) Education and Human Resources

Application Submission for Recognition/ Funding of Research Journals

- Call for submission of applications will be issued once a year on HEC Website for National Research Journals to apply for award/grant of recognition and funding.
- Editors of new/ emerging research journals as well as already listed journals, aspiring to seek recognition/accreditation and funding, may apply on prescribed online

² HEC Scientific Review Panels- Assessment Framework Policy duly approved by the Commission in August 2019 and Dec 2020

application form via HEC online portal along with required documentary evidences by the specified deadline.

- All journals new/ existing under the previous policy of research journals will be required to apply afresh to seek recognition/ funding from HEC.
- Journals recognized in Y Category under the revised policy (as mentioned above) will be required to apply afresh in order to seek recognition and funding in subsequent years. Journals recognized automatically through HJRS in W & X Category need not to apply for recognition every year but are required to apply for funding from HEC in subsequent years.

Scrutiny of Applications

- Initial scrutiny of documents received within the stipulated time as per call for proposals will be conducted taking into consideration eligibility criteria outlined for each category and required documents checklist.
- In case of incomplete documents or non-compliance with the eligibility criteria, the case will not be considered for further process and will be returned/ rejected.
- Only complete applications in all respects will be processed further.
- Journals' applications complete in all respect will be evaluated by the designated officer(s)/Team on prescribed Evaluation Proforma and the recommendations will be submitted to the Competent Authority for approval.

Decisions regarding accreditation/ funding shall be notified on website of HEC and emails will be sent to the concerned Editors along with necessary justifications, if required.

Grievance Redressal Procedure

- Editors of Research Journals/ Authors of Books may file grievance to HEC within seven days of receipt of intimation/ notification of the decision.
- Grievance, if any, will be presented before the "Research and Innovation Ethics Appeal Review Board" with appropriate justifications provided by the Editor/Author of Book. Decision of said Board shall be deemed final in this regard.

Conflict of Interest Declaration

- The Review Panels' Members/ External Reviewers must declare "No Conflict of Interest" in the Journal(s)/ publication(s) under their consideration before proceeding to review as per HEC Conflict of Interest Guidelines.
- HEC Team Members involved in the affairs of journals/books shall remain totally impartial during the whole process of evaluation. In case of any conflict of interest, they will have to inform the fact to higher authorities and shall separate themselves from the process up to the extent of that specific matter.
- The Reviewers/ Members of Scientific Review Panels will not be allowed to review the journal(s)/publication(s) or to participate in the Panel Meeting if any of the following conditions exists:
 - i. The Expert/Member or his/her spouse is associated with journal(s)/ publication(s) as an Editorial/Advisory Board Member or as a reviewer or with the concerned publishing organization or acted in these capacities during last one year.
 - ii. Have published research article in the journal being evaluated or its previous volumes in the last 1 year.
 - iii. Author / Co-Author of the Book under evaluation.
 - iv. Family member and/or having Blood relation with Members of Editorial/Advisory Boards or with authors of books.

Online Feedback/ Complaints

- All the stakeholders from academic and research community may give their feedback on HEC recognized journals (by rating or recommending a journal) or may report journal involved in predatory/unethical practices or is enlisted in list of predatory/blacklisted journals/publishers like Beall's list (<https://beallslist.weebly.com>) or report corrupt practices by the Editorial Team/ publishing institutes
- The Feedback/complaints will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant team of Research and Innovation Wing and necessary action will be taken accordingly.

Funding Limits & Conditions

- National journals recognized in Category W, X & Y will receive financial support as per prescribed limits given below;

Sr.#	Category of Journal	Type of Funding	Maximum Limit of Funding per Year (PKR)
1	W	Eligibility Funding	700,000/-
2	X	Performance Based Funding	450,000/-
3	Y	Seed Funding	250,000/-

- The funding will be provided for covering expenditure in the following Heads of Accounts;
 - (i) Licenses/Registration Fee with well-reputed Indexing/Abstracting Agencies including but not limited to Web of Science or Scopus
 - (ii) Launching, Hosting and Maintenance of Website/ OJS and similar platforms as per HEC guidelines.
 - (iii) External Peer Reviewers' fees/remuneration/honorarium.

Conditions for Funding

- Funding is subject to tangible measures for improving quality standards and meeting HEC's criteria for not only maintaining existing accreditation level but also for taking solid measures to reach higher levels of accreditation.
- HEC will have an exclusive right to stop funding if the journal is not adhering to the highest ethical academic and research standards or if the journal fails to maintain minimum criteria for existing level of accreditation or if the journal has not been able to improve its existing level for more than 2 years unless the journal reaches W Category Level.
- The competent authority may decide, for reasons to be recorded in writing, to extend funding for another year, with close monitoring of the journal's performance.

Required Documentation/ Evidences

- The following documents are mandatory to be submitted with the application for funding in different categories (W, X & Y)
 - i. Letter of Recommendation from Head of the Publishing Institute.

- ii. In case of Non-Profit Academic/Research Societies, NGOs, Think Tanks, R&D Organizations, Groups or Bodies not working under the umbrella of HEC Recognized Universities/Higher Education Institutions, Certificate of Registration from SECP or the Registrar of Societies or NOC from the competent Government Authority would be required.
 - iii. Budget Estimates for current financial year duly signed by the Editor.
 - iv. Bank Account Details jointly operated by Editor and Head/Treasurer/Director (Finance) etc. of the publishing body.
 - v. Audited Income and Expenditure Statement verified by Treasurer and Resident Auditor (public/ private sector HEIs and Institutes) for the last year's funding received from HEC/any other Government Agency, if any.
- In case of application for **recognition in Y Category**, the following additional documents are also required;
 - i. ISSN Certificate(along with hyperlink of ISSN), Title and URL
 - ii. Information of Editorial/Advisory Board Members (Their Consents and CVs)
 - iii. External peer review record of latest issue.

Validity of Research Journals and Verification of Publications

- Research and Innovation Wing is responsible for the accreditation, 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 Ph. D Supervisors, or for award of Ph. D Degrees.

Procedure for Capacity Building of Editors

- HEC will organize capacity building programs for editorial teams of eligible research journals of the country in order to equip them with internationally accepted publishing ethics/standards.
- The workshops will impart orientation of publishing tools used worldwide to globalize regional research and to attract the international authorship in indigenous journals. Such practices will, on one hand, help create positive impact of locally originated

research while, on the other hand, it will boost citations and visibility/durability of published research.

- Collaboration with COPE (Committee on Publishing Ethics) and similar national or international organizations will be developed in order to promote editorial ethics and to infiltrate the global anti-predatory and anti-plagiarism standards in the national research journals.
- Heads/ Editors of research journals will be invited via open calls issued on HEC's website to send nominations for workshops
- All eligible journals may apply for Capacity Building Workshops irrespective of whether they have applied or not for HEC's recognition/ funding.
- The selected candidates (involved in the editorial, review and publishing processes of research journals) will be invited to participate in the Capacity Building Workshops.
- HEC will provide remuneration and TA/DA to Resource Persons and/or Trainers engaged for the workshops as per HEC Rules.
- The Resource Persons/ Trainers will submit an outline of topics prior to the workshops for approval of HEC
- HEC will provide local hospitality, working lunch & refreshments to the participants, however, TA/DA and Accommodation to participants of workshops shall be borne by their respective university/institutions.

