



## **HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION JOURNALS AND PUBLICATIONS POLICY-2024**

*(As Amended w.e.f 5<sup>th</sup> of November, 2025)*

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# **HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION JOURNALS AND PUBLICATIONS POLICY**

## **1. OVERVIEW**

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. In case of private sector entities excluding HEIs, the term "*Registered Entity*" means registered with the SECP or \*\*<sup>1</sup>[Registrar of Societies].

d. <sup>2</sup>[**Application Processing Fee:** The Journal applying for recognition/ accreditation/ grant/ grievance etc. shall submit a non-refundable/non-transferable fee as following:

Type of Organization	Application Fee
Public Sector Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), R&D Organizations and Think Tanks	Rs. 25,000/-
Private Sector Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Professional Societies, Foundation and Think Tanks etc.	Rs. 50,000/-

e. **Appeal Fee:** The Journal applicant aggrieved with the decision of the HEC with regards to recognition/accreditation/grant etc may file an appeal in accordance with the Ethical Appeal Review Board (EARB) guidelines after depositing the same fee as tabled above]

## 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

<sup>1</sup> Applicable w.e.f 13<sup>th</sup> of July, 2025

\*\*Provincial registration authorities of societies may be considered only if the journal is registered under a unique name and ISSN number, ensuring there is no duplication of the journal's title or ISSN in any other district across Pakistan.

<sup>2</sup> Applicable w.e.f 05<sup>th</sup> of November, 2025

<p>i. Pakistani journals indexed in Scopus (other than those indexed in Web of Science (WoS) subject to fulfilling the following additional criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Indexed with Scopus.</li> <li>b. 25 % International authorship.</li> <li>c. 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.</li> <li>d. Self-Institutional publication and Editor(s) /Editorial Board members publication is not allowed.</li> <li>e. Published articles peer-reviewed by well-reputed international experts in relevant fields.</li> </ul> <p><sup>3</sup>[Provided that additional criteria for National Strategic Journals shall be the same as above except for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. 15% International authorship.</li> <li>b. Self-Institutional publication and Editor(s) /Editorial Board members publication is allowed for public sector think tanks with the same conditions as applicable with regional language journals] </li></ul>	X
<sup>3</sup> [All national and international] journals indexed in Scopus (other than those indexed in Web of Science (WOS)(which are not fulfilling above mentioned additional criteria).	Y
<sup>3</sup> [All national and international] journals indexed in MEDLINE (PubMed) (other than those indexed in Web of Science (WOS)/Scopus)	Y
<sup>3</sup> [All national and international] journals indexed in China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) (other than those indexed in Web of Science (WOS)/Scopus)	Y
<sup>3</sup> [All national and international journals indexed in Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)(other than those indexed in Web of Science (WOS)/Scopus)]	Y
National Journals Recommended by HEC's local committees	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 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024. Revised policy will be applicable w.e.f. 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024 except where stated otherwise for some provisions as detailed in the footnotes.
- 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 is given below which 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) or \*\*<sup>4</sup>[Registrar of Societies].

<sup>3</sup> Applicable w.e.f 05<sup>th</sup> of November, 2025

<sup>4</sup> Applicable w.e.f 13<sup>th</sup> of July, 2025

- 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. <sup>5</sup>[In case of exclusive journals of regional languages of Pakistan and National Strategic Journals, it is allowed with following conditions:
  - a) Contributions from editorial board members must not exceed 10% of the total number of articles in any given issue.
  - b) An editorial board member is permitted to publish only one article in the journal within a two-year period. After publication, the member will be ineligible to submit another manuscript to the same journal for the next two years.
  - c) All submitted manuscripts must undergo a through peer review by independent foreign international experts who are not affiliated with the journals and the author's institution.]
- xix. National journal recognized by HEC local committee in Y category must be indexed in HEC recognized international indexing agencies within <sup>5</sup>[following specified timelines] failing which the local Y-category of journal will be discontinued:

Category	Specified Timelines
Journals already recognized under this policy w.e.f 1 <sup>st</sup> of October, 2024.	7 Years
Journals to be recognized under policy w.e.f of their date of recognition.	5 Years

- xx. <sup>6</sup>[The CABEILLS list of predatory journals will be used for identifying and excluding predatory publishers. Any journal appearing on this list will not be recognized by HEC, regardless of whether it meets other eligibility criteria.]

*\*\*Provincial registration authorities of societies may be considered only if the journal is registered under a unique name and ISSN number, ensuring there is no duplication of the journal's title or ISSN in any other district across Pakistan.*

<sup>5</sup> Applicable w.e.f 05<sup>th</sup> of November, 2025

<sup>6</sup> Applicable w.e.f 05<sup>th</sup> of November, 2025

## **Quality Criteria for Y which will be evaluated by the 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. GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

<sup>6</sup>[The maximum limit of articles published per issue is 30 regardless of frequency either monthly, bimonthly, quarterly, triannual, biannual, annual, biennial etc.

- a. The following weighted authorship model to be applied across all research publications with more than 3 authors:
  - First Author: **30% weightage**
  - Corresponding Author: **30% weightage**
  - Remaining Authors: **40% weightage** evenly distributed based on their individual contribution among remaining authors
- b. It will be the responsibility of authors and universities to verify the authenticity of journals and ensure that publications are not made in hijacked or cloned journals.
- c. For recognition of journals indexed in international agencies like Web of Science and Scopus, the accreditation shall be carried out on the basis of latest available Journal Citation Report (JCR) issued by Web of Science (Clarivate) or similar report published by respective indexing agencies.]

## **7. 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 <sup>7</sup>[only newly accredited or indexed journals from deserving public sector HEIs] Y-Category Journals; [provided that journals do not charge any publication fees, including but not limited to Article Processing] Charges (APCs).
- 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. Eligible journals must apply to HEC for seed funding once a year, submitting documentary evidence confirming that they do not charge any publication fees and require financial assistance during the initial period.

## **8. 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.

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<sup>7</sup> Applicable w.e.f 05<sup>th</sup> of November, 2025

## **9. 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.

## **10. 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.