



# higher education & training

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Department:  
Higher Education and Training  
**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

## **POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR MEASUREMENT OF RESEARCH OUTPUT OF PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

June 2003

Updated 2012

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## 1. Introduction

This document, titled *Policy for Measurement of Research Output of Public Higher Education Institutions*, replaces the following policies:

*Information Survey Manual - Research Output of Universities (Report 014/97)*

*Information Survey Manual - Research Output of Technikons (Report 024 /97)*

In line with the *White Paper 3, a Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education* (1997) which outlines a single co-ordinated higher education system, this policy applies to all public higher education institutions.

## 2. Policy Framework

- 2.1. The development of this policy was driven by the imperatives for transformation of the higher education system contained in *White Paper 3, a Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education* (1997) and the *National Plan for Higher Education* (2001).

As part of the strategic objective envisioned by the *National Plan for Higher Education*, this policy aims “to sustain current research strengths and to promote the kinds of research and other knowledge outputs required to meet national development needs” (Strategic Objective: Section 5, *National Plan for Higher Education*).

- 2.2. The purpose of this policy is to encourage research productivity by rewarding quality research output at public higher education institutions. The policy is not intended to measure all output, but to enhance productivity by recognising the major types of research output produced by higher education institutions and further use appropriate proxies to determine the quality of such output.
- 2.3. As a general rule, research output emanating from commissioned research or contracts paid by contracting organisations will not be subsidised by the Department.
- 2.4. For the purpose of this policy, research output is defined as textual output where research is understood as original, systematic investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge and understanding. Peer evaluation of the research is a fundamental prerequisite of all recognised output and is the mechanism of ensuring and thus enhancing quality.

Peer Review is understood to be the pre-publication refereeing or evaluation of complete manuscripts by independent experts in the field in order to ensure quality

and determine whether manuscripts are publishable or not. Additional proxies to determine quality, such as bibliometric data, discipline specific panels of experts and post-publication reviews may in future be utilised by the Department.

- 2.5. The policy has taken into consideration the changing modes of disseminating research and research output, such as electronic publications, and outlines processes and procedures that are appropriate to the purpose and commensurate with best practice. Research output published electronically may be recognised if it meets the specified criteria outlined in this policy.
- 2.6. For the purposes of subsidy, the policy recognises research in journals, books and published conference proceedings which meet the specified criteria outlined in this policy. The focus of subsidy is on 'scholarly publishing' which refers to publications by scholars (academics and experts) for a niche market consisting mainly of academics and researchers (not normally students).
- 2.7. The policy does not support differentiation within types of output, for instance, all journal output receives the same level of subsidy.
- 2.8. Higher education institutions may only claim once for each subsidisable research output. Institutions must claim the outputs of the preceding year (n-1) in the current reporting year (n).

### **3. Basic Principles**

- 3.1. This policy serves as a tool for the distribution of research subsidy to public higher education institutions in South Africa. The Department subsidises institutions and not individual authors or academics.
- 3.2. The subsidy for research output is influenced by the affiliation of the authors. The claiming institution accrues full subsidy if all the authors are affiliated to it. In the case where authors are affiliated with two or more public higher education institutions, the subsidy is shared between the claiming institutions. This principle does not take regard of the order of authorship or proportions of their contributions in the publication being claimed for subsidy.
- 3.3. Affiliated authors are defined as academic or research staff, research students, visiting scholars or fellows and retired academics from the claiming institution. The contact address reflected in the research output of such authors must be the address of the claiming institution. If the publication does not make mention of the affiliation to the claiming institution, a letter from Human Resources, confirmed by the DVC/ Director of Research at the claiming institution, must be provided.
- 3.4. The Department does not subsidise all research outputs.

### **4. Research Integrity**

- 4.1 This policy aims to support and encourage scholarship. Institutions and academics must remember the importance of the research integrity and ethics when implementing this policy and are urged to focus on quality research and not maximum accrual of subsidy. This should be taken into consideration when recycling previously published work and dividing research outcomes between articles. Similarly, when moving between institutions, author affiliation should reflect the institution where research was conducted, supported and funded. At its discretion, the Department may consider punitive measures against an institution which consistently makes incorrect or unethical claims.

## 5. Journals

- 5.1 Journals refer to peer reviewed periodical publications devoted to the dissemination of original research and new developments within specific disciplines, sub-disciplines or fields of study. These include original articles, research letters, research papers and review articles.
- 5.2 Only articles published in **approved scholarly journals** are subsidised. The Department will determine, in consultation with the sector, which lists or indices of journals are approved. It will issue, on or before **31 January** of each calendar year, updated official lists of journals for each of these indices for each reporting year.
- 5.3 New lists or indices and new journals in the lists or indices cannot be approved retrospectively.
- 5.4 Only complete, peer reviewed articles in journals are accepted for subsidy. The following types of articles are not subsidised:
- (a) Correspondence to the editors;
  - (b) Abstracts or extended abstracts;
  - (c) Keynote Addresses;
  - (d) Obituaries;
  - (e) Book reviews;
  - (f) News articles; and
  - (g) Advertorials.
- 5.5 A research article published in an approved journal will be subsidised as a single unit (1 unit), if all the authors are affiliated to the claiming institution. In the case where authors are affiliated with two or more institutions, the subsidy is shared between the claiming institutions. Authors who are not affiliated to a South African public university cannot claim subsidy.

### Inclusion of Journal Titles on the Approved lists

- 5.6 The Department of Higher Education and Training maintains a list of **South African journals** that meet the criteria set out in this policy. **South African** journals not appearing on the approved lists of journals which meet the policy's minimum criteria, can apply for accreditation. The Department's list is for developmental purposes, and for this reason **a journal will only be listed for five years**. This provides the time necessary to develop the journal to international standards and to apply for listing on any of the accredited indices.
- 5.7 The Department encourages the development of local language journals.
- 5.8 Journals removed after this five year period may re-apply after a minimum of **two years** using the procedure below.

- 5.9 Editors-in-chief of the journals are responsible for applying to have their journals included on approved lists. The Department only administers the Approved List of South African Journals and does not administer the process for inclusion of journals onto the other approved indices (local or international).
- 5.10 A South African journal which has been dropped from an approved index may apply for indexing on the Approved List of South African journals. However, reasons for their removal must be included in their application.
- 5.11 South African journals which, in the opinion of the editor, comply with the following criteria may apply to the Department for inclusion in the Approved List of South African Journals:
- (a) The purpose of the journal must be to disseminate research results and the content must support high level learning, teaching and research in the relevant subject area;
  - (b) Articles accepted for publication in the journal must be peer reviewed;
  - (c) The overwhelming majority of contributions to the journal must be beyond a single institution;
  - (d) The journal must have an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN);
  - (e) The journal must be published regularly;
  - (f) The journal must have an editorial board, with an overwhelming majority of members beyond a single institution, which is reflective of expertise in the relevant subject area;
  - (g) The journal must be distributed widely beyond a single institution; and
  - (h) Journals must include English abstracts if the language of the journal is not English.
- 5.12 When applying for inclusion in the Approved List of South African Journals, the following information, accompanied by at least **three consecutive physical copies** of the journal, must be submitted to the Department by **15 June** for the journal to be considered for inclusion effective the following calendar year:
- (a) Title, including translations if not published in English;
  - (b) The ISSN of the journal;
  - (c) Publisher and the publisher's address and contact details;
  - (d) Frequency of publication;
  - (e) Evidence that the journal has been published uninterrupted for a minimum of three years as well as the latest three consecutive issues of the journal;
  - (f) Editorial policy, including evidence of the peer review process;
  - (g) Editorial Board - the status of the members of the editorial board must be stated together with their institutional affiliations;
  - (h) In the case of electronic journals, the journal's internet Uniform Resource Locator (URL); and
  - (i) Proof of the journal's library holdings and/ or downloads for electronic publications.

- 5.13 The Department will periodically sample journals to assess if they continue to meet these criteria. However, institutions and individuals may submit a proposal for the removal of a journal. Proposals must be accompanied by a detailed explanation of the reasons for the removal of such journals, in particular, stating which criteria the journal ceases to fulfil. Such proposals must be submitted to the Department not later than **15 June**. South African journals no longer fulfilling the above criteria will be removed from the list. **Removed journals may re-apply for listing after a minimum of two years using the above procedure.** For purposes of transparency, the reasons for removal of journals will be made public.
- 5.14 Editors are encouraged to inform the Department of any change in the information about an approved South African journal. There is no deadline for the submission of such information. Changes to the editor, title, frequency, ISSN or publications format (print/ online) will not impact on the journal's accreditation status.

### Reporting Procedures

- 5.15 Institutions must submit to the Department, on or before **15 May** of each reporting year, **audited** subsidy claims for research output appearing in approved journals.
- 5.16 The auditors' report must contain the following information:
- Name of the institution;
  - The reporting year (n);
  - The number of units being claimed for journal output, listed separately **for each of the approved lists**, for the preceding year (n-1);
  - An audited spreadsheet (whose contents will be supplied to institutions by the Department) **for each list**;
  - The total number of units being claimed for the year (n-1); and
  - If applicable, the number of units being claimed for journal output for the year n-2, listed separately for each approved list, together with an explanation for the late submission of each article. The explanation must be signed by either the Deputy Vice Chancellor (DVC), Director or Dean of Research.

### Guidelines for the Auditors

- Institutions may only utilize their registered external auditors to audit their research output.
- The auditors' report must be issued on the auditors' official letterhead and must be addressed to the Director-General.
- The auditor must express his or her opinion on the institution's subsidy claim for the research output.
- The allocation of units must be calculated according to the stipulations of the policy.
- Fractions of units must be expressed in decimal form and must be rounded off to the second decimal place, for example 12.45.
- Auditors must ensure that articles have not been claimed previously.



## 6. Books

6.1 Books refer to peer reviewed, non-periodical scholarly or research publications disseminating original research and developments within specific disciplines, sub-disciplines or fields of study. Only books that meet specified criteria in this policy may be subsidised. For the purposes of this policy, scholarly books are defined as follows:

- a. An **extensive and scholarly** treatment of a topic by one or more (few) scholars, largely comprising significant and **original (own) research**, embedded in relevant literature;
- b. An **extensive scholarly exposition** by one or more (few) scholars of the **available literature** on a topic, from a position of demonstrable authority, which makes a significant conceptual or empirical synthesis that advances scholarship;
- c. A **collected work**, assembled by one or more (usually many) scholars in a field or group of related fields, which as a planned group of **individually peer-reviewed chapters by appropriately qualified authors** generates a new conceptual synthesis that advances scholarship; and
- d. A **collective work**, assembled by one or more (usually many) scholars in a number of related fields, in which the **individual authors have noted and reviewed each other's chapters and adapted their contributions** to generate a new conceptual synthesis that significantly advances scholarship. (Please note that independent peer review prior to publishing is still a requirement.)

6.2 In order to be considered for subsidy, a book must meet the following criteria:

- (a) The purpose of the book must be to disseminate original research and new developments within specific disciplines, sub-disciplines or fields of study;
- (b) The book must be peer reviewed prior to its publication;
- (c) The book must have an International Standard Book Number (ISBN);
- (d) The length of the book must be a minimum of 60 pages, excluding references, bibliography, index and appendices, this being above the minimum norm of 49 pages proposed by the UNESCO definition of a book; and
- (e) The target audience of the book must be specialists in the relevant field.

6.3 The Department acknowledges the important role of the following publications, however, for various reasons they are not normally subsidised;

- (a) Dissertations and theses;
- (b) Text books, professional handbooks and study guides;
- (c) Reference books, Dictionaries and Encyclopaedias;
- (d) Inaugural speeches;
- (e) Reports forming part of contract research and other commissioned work;
- (f) Works of fiction; and

- (g) Introductions and conclusions (unless the entire book is claimed).
- 6.4 A book may be subsidised to a maximum of 10 units or a portion thereof, based on the number of pages being claimed relative to the total number of pages of the book. A guide on unit allocation for book publications is as follows:
- (a) A chapter in a book = 1 unit;
  - (b) A book of 60 pages = 2 units;
  - (c) 120 pages = 4 units;
  - (d) 180 pages = 6 units;
  - (e) 240 pages = 8 units; and
  - (f) 300 pages (and above) = 10 units.
- 6.5 Where authors are affiliated with two or more institutions, the subsidy is shared between the claiming institutions.

### Reporting Procedures

- 6.6 The Department establishes for each reporting year, an evaluation panel of senior professionals from the higher education community to evaluate all books and conference proceedings submitted by claiming institutions. This independent panel evaluates these publications together with the relevant accompanying information.
- 6.7 Institutions must submit to the Department, on or before **15 May** of each reporting year (n), research output appearing in books for the previous year (n-1). Over and above the information that will be contained in a spreadsheet (to be supplied by the Department to all institutions), the electronic submission to the Department must be accompanied by the following:
- (a) A physical copy of the book for the research output to be evaluated;
  - (b) The book(s) must be numbered on the spine (*the institution must clearly and sequentially number and label all books. Numbers must be preceded by the letter B, for example B1, B2*);
  - (c) Markers must be inserted in books indicating where the following information can be found:
    - evidence of peer review (see sub-section below);
    - research justification (see sub-section below);
    - author affiliation (and evidence thereof if necessary);
    - International Standard Book Number (ISBN);
    - publisher;
    - title or chapter of the contribution being claimed;
    - name(s) of author(s) of the contribution(s) being claimed; and
  - (d) Any other material which the Department may request.

## Peer Review and Research Explanation

- 6.8 Evidence of the pre-publication peer review process must be provided for every book or chapter submitted for subsidy. The **peer-review evidence must be clear and unambiguous**. Details on the peer review process followed or peer review reports will strengthen the submission.
- 6.9 The Department may develop a list of reputable publishers or make use of other mechanisms and indices to assist with determining quality book publications and in order to reduce the technical requirements on an institution. Any such mechanisms will be clearly communicated to institutions in advance.
- 6.10 A justification (maximum 500 words) from the author of the book or chapter explaining the contribution that the book makes to scholarship must be attached to each publication claim. This justification should not be an abstract of the contents, but should, rather, describe the methodology used as well as the unique contribution made. It should be clear that the book or chapter against which subsidy is being claimed disseminates original research and new developments within the specific discipline. The target audience should be mentioned. If such information is already provided in the actual publication, a marker or reference to this must be made rather than providing the justification.
- 6.11 In the case of second or later editions being submitted for subsidy, clear evidence of new research must be provided. It is necessary that at least 50% of the publication being claimed must have not been published previously. A statement from the auditors indicating that they have checked both the previous and current edition and affirm that at least 50% of the work was not previously published is required for every claim. The DHET may request additional information at its discretion.
- 6.12 Dissertations and Theses that have been converted into books must be clearly identified as such and there must be evidence of substantial reworking and additional research carried out. A statement from the auditors indicating that they have checked both the original thesis and published book and that there has been substantial reworking is required for every claim. The DHET may request additional information at its discretion. Proof of peer review (and not supervisors reports) for such publications is still a requirement.
- 6.13 In the event that a book is published in a language other than English, the institution must submit a one page summary of the output in English. Similarly, any supporting documentation must also be provided in English.
- 6.14 The minimum contribution from a book that will be considered for evaluation will be a complete division, such as a chapter.

## 7. Published Conference Proceedings

- 7.1 Proceedings refer to a published record of a conference, congress, symposium or other meeting where the purpose is to disseminate original research and new developments within specific disciplines, sub-disciplines or fields of study.
- 7.2 Only articles published in **approved conference proceedings** are subsidised. Approved conference proceedings are those which appear in approved journal lists or other approved indices or those which meet the criteria laid out in this policy. The Department will determine, in consultation with the sector, which lists or indices of published conference proceedings are approved. It will issue, on or before **31 January**, updated official lists of proceedings for each of these indices for each reporting year.
- 7.3 New lists or indices and new proceedings in the lists or indices cannot be approved retrospectively.
- 7.4 In order to be considered for subsidy, published conference proceedings must meet the following criteria:
- (a) The purpose of the proceedings must be to disseminate original research and new developments within specific disciplines, sub-disciplines or fields of study;
  - (b) Complete articles (not abstracts) accepted for publication in the proceedings must be peer reviewed prior to publication;
  - (c) The proceedings must have an International Standard Book or Serial Number (ISBN or ISSN);
  - (d) The target audience of the proceedings must be specialists in the relevant field;
  - (e) The overwhelming majority of contributions to the published conference proceedings must be beyond a single institution; and
  - (f) The conference must have an editorial board or organising committee, with an overwhelming majority of members beyond a single institution, which is reflective of expertise in the relevant subject area.
- 7.5 Where proceedings are published in an approved journal, the output will be treated as a journal article. Conference Proceedings published in non-accredited journals will not be subsidised, although those published in conference proceeding series can be submitted for consideration if they meet the stated criteria.
- 7.6 The following types of articles appearing in proceedings are not subsidised.
- (a) Correspondence to the editors
  - (b) Abstracts or extended abstracts
  - (c) Obituaries
  - (d) Book reviews

- (e) News articles
- (f) Advertorials
- (g) Previously published material
- (h) Keynote addresses and invited papers
- (i) Those published as “Work in Progress Papers”, “Short Papers”, “Brief Communications” and “Technical Notes”.

7.7 Articles published in **approved** conference proceedings will be allocated a maximum of **0.5 units**. In the case where authors are affiliated with two or more institutions, the subsidy is shared between the claiming institutions.

### **Inclusion of Conference Proceedings on approved lists**

- 7.8 Conference organisers are responsible for applying to have their conference proceedings included on approved international lists. The Department does not administer the process for inclusion of conference proceedings onto the international indices.
- 7.9 The Department will establish a list of South African approved conference proceedings. This list will be compiled from data collected by the Department through the normal submission of conference proceedings for subsidy purposes. The Department may request additional information, such as the editorial policy. The Department’s list will only include South African conferences not included in the international lists. The list will be made available on an annual basis together with the international lists.
- 7.10 The Department may, at its discretion, periodically invite conference organisers to apply for inclusion on the Department’s list. The application process and the information required will be communicated to institution prior to such a process.
- 7.11 The Department will periodically sample published conference proceedings to assess if they continue to meet the criteria laid out in this policy. However, institutions and individuals may submit a proposal for the removal of proceedings. Proposals must be accompanied by a detailed explanation of the reasons for the removal of such proceedings. Proposals must be submitted to the Department not later than 15 June every year. Conference proceedings no longer fulfilling the Department’s criteria will be removed from the list.
- 7.12 Conference organisers are encouraged to inform the Department of any change in the information about an approved published conference proceeding.

### **Reporting Procedures**

- 7.13 Institutions must submit to the Department, on or before **15 May** of each reporting year, **audited** subsidy claims for research output appearing in approved indexed conference proceedings.

7.14 The auditors' report must contain the following information:

- (a) Name of the institution;
- (b) The reporting year (n);
- (c) The number of units being claimed for approved conference proceedings output, listed separately **for each of the approved lists**, for the preceding year (n-1);
- (d) An audited spreadsheet (whose contents will be supplied to institutions by the Department) **for each list**;
- (e) The total number of units being claimed for the year (n-1); and
- (f) If applicable, the number of units being claimed for conference proceedings output for the year n-2, listed separately for each approved list, together with an explanation for the late submission of each article. The explanation must be signed by either the DVC, Director or Dean of Research.

### Guidelines for the Auditors

- (a) Institutions may only utilize their registered external auditors to audit their research output.
  - (b) The auditors' report must be issued on the auditors' official letterhead and must be addressed to the Director-General.
  - (c) The auditor must express his or her opinion on the institution's subsidy claim for the research output.
  - (d) The allocation of units must be calculated according to the stipulations of the policy.
  - (e) Fractions of units must be expressed in decimal form and must be rounded off to the second decimal place, for example 12,45.
  - (f) Auditors must ensure that articles have not been claimed previously.
- 7.15 All other published conference proceedings which meet this policy's criteria may be submitted with supporting documentation for evaluation by the panel of senior professionals from the higher education community.
- 7.16 Institutions must submit to the Department, on or before **15 May** of each reporting year (n), research output appearing in conference proceedings for the previous year (n-1). Over and above the information that will be contained in a spreadsheet (to be supplied by the Department to all institutions), the electronic submission to the Department must be accompanied by the following:
- (a) A physical copy of the proceedings to be evaluated;
  - (b) The allocated proceedings number on the spine of each proceedings (*the institution must clearly and sequentially number and label all proceedings. Numbers must be preceded by the letter P, for example P1, P2*);
  - (c) Markers must be inserted in the proceedings where the following information can be found:
    - evidence of peer review (see sub-section below);

- International Standard Book Number or Serial Number (ISBN/ ISSN);
  - publisher;
  - title of the contribution being claimed;
  - name(s) of author(s) of the contribution(s) of being claimed; and
- (d) Any other material which the Department may request.

**Peer Review**

- 7.17 Evidence of the pre-publication peer review process must be provided for every conference proceeding submitted for subsidy. The peer-review evidence must be clear and unambiguous. Details on the peer review process followed or peer review reports will strengthen the submission.
- 7.18 In the event that a conference proceeding is published in a language other than English, the institution must submit an abstract in English. Similarly, any supporting documentation must also be provided in English.

## **8. General Processes and Procedures for the Submissions and Evaluation**

- 8.1 Institutions must submit their research output annually for the preceding year (n-1) for each reporting year. All claims must be submitted under the signature of the Vice Chancellor, or the Deputy Vice Chancellor of Research or the Dean/Director of Research.
- 8.2 To enhance the efficacy and efficiency of policy implementation, institutions are advised to:
- (a) be fully acquainted with the policy and procedures;
  - (b) ensure all information submitted to the Department is accurate;
  - (c) submit all documents and information timeously;
  - (d) establish an internal institutional mechanism of screening outputs in terms of this policy prior to submission to the Department; and
  - (e) include independent assessors in the internal screening panel.
- 8.3 Books and proceedings without the requisite information and supporting documentation will not be evaluated. Information required by the Department may be updated periodically depending on the Department's requirements.
- 8.4 Late submissions of research outputs for the year (n-2) may be considered for evaluation and subsidy. However, such submissions must be accompanied by an explanation from the Vice-Chancellor, or Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Research or Dean/ Director of Research stating reasons for the late submission of each publication. Supporting evidence will be an added advantage.
- 8.5 Late submissions for years prior to n-2 and /or submissions without an accompanying explanation will not be considered for subsidy.



## 9. Correnspondence

Institutions should forward submissions with the relevant documentation for the attention of:

The Director-General  
Attention: The Director  
Higher Education Policy and Development Support  
Department of Higher Education and Training

*Physical Address:*  
123 Francis Baard Street  
Pretoria. 0001

*Postal Address:*  
Private Bag X 174  
Pretoria. 0001

Telephone: 012 312 5252  
012 312 5048

Facsimile 012 325 4419