

## Research Output Policy 2015 and DHET Communication: A Summary

The DHET's *Research Outputs Policy of 2015*, published in the Government Gazette on 11 March 2015 has replaced the *Policy for the Measurement of Research Outputs of Public Higher Education Institutions (2003)*. This updated policy outlines the criteria for the measurement and evaluation of research outputs of all public higher education institutions (HEIs), and will be implemented from 1 January 2016 and be applicable to the 2016 research outputs which will be evaluated in 2017 and onwards (DHET Communique, 2, 2015)

The purpose of this summary is to highlight important facts in the updated policy and the important changes made to the *Policy for the Measurement of Research Outputs of Public Higher Education Institutions (2003)*.

### Key Points

- The purpose of the policy is to encourage research productivity by rewarding quality research output at HEIs with funding, and is not intended to measure all output, but to enhance productivity by recognising the major types of research output produced by HEIs. This includes research published in journals, books and conference proceedings which meet the specified criteria outlined in the policy. Peer review of the research is an essential requirement of all recognised output, as it is the mechanism of ensuring and enhancing quality.
- The policy defines peer review as 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. The DHET may in future use additional proxies, such as bibliometric data, discipline specific panels of experts and post-publication reviews, to determine quality.
- The DHET will not subsidise research output emanating from commissioned research or contracts paid by contracting organisations.
- Whilst the policy does not support differences within the types of research, e.g. journal outputs are subsidized on the same level irrespective of whether they are published locally or internationally, the DHET may in future introduce relevant and appropriate quality measures to determine different subsidy levels.

## I. Journals

1. Only articles published in approved scholarly journals are subsidised. The DHET will determine, in consultation with the sector, which lists of accredited journals and indices are approved in terms of this policy. The Department will issue, on or before **31 January** each year, updated official lists of journals for each reporting year. In order to ensure stability of the system, approved lists will not change drastically from year to year or in a way that would cause confusion.

Three additional journal lists will be added to the approved indexes, bringing the total of DHET subsidised lists to six (*DHET Communiqué, 2, 2015*), namely:

- **ISI Web of Science**
- **IBSS,**
- **SA list,**
- **Scopus,**
- **SciELO SA, and**
- **Norwegian list**

These Indexes are no longer stated in the policy as was the case with the previous policy. In future, changes to the list of subsidised Indices will be communicated through the *Annual Ministerial Statement on University Funding*.

2. The DHET will continue to periodically sample and review **South African journals listed on the DHET list**, to assess if they still meet the policy requirements. South African journals which no longer meet the policy criteria will be removed from the list.
3. A research article published in an approved journal will continue to 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

## II. Books and Chapters in Books

1. The updated policy includes an expanded definition for subsidy earning scholarly books as follows:
  - a. An extensive and in-depth scholarly treatment of a topic by one or more scholars, largely comprising significant and original (own) research, embedded in relevant literature;
  - b. An extensive and in-depth scholarly exposition by one or more scholars of the available literature on a topic, from a position of demonstrable authority, which makes a significant conceptual or empirical synthesis that advances in 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
2. The calculation of book units have changed. A book may be subsidised to a maximum of 10 units based on the number of pages being claimed relative to the total number of pages of the book, where relevant.
3. The following is a guide on unit allocation for book publications as stipulated in Clause 6 (6.4) of the research output policy 2015:
  - i. · A chapter in a book = 1 unit
  - ii. · A book of a minimum of 60 pages but less than 90 pages = 2 units
  - iii. · A book of 90 pages and above, but less than 120 pages = 3 units
  - iv. · A book of 120 pages and above, but less than 150 pages = 4 units
  - v. · A book of 150 pages and above, but less than 180 pages = 5 units
  - vi. · A book of 180 pages and above, but less than 210 pages = 6 units
  - vii. · A book of 210 pages and above, but less than 240 pages = 7 units
  - viii. · A book of 240 pages and above, but less than 270 pages = 8 units
  - ix. · A book of 270 pages and above, but less than 300 pages = 9 unit
  - x. · A book of 300 pages and above = 10 units
4. **Peer Review and Research Explanation:** 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.
5. 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. A new requirement is that a **written justification** (maximum 500 words), signed by the author of the book, or the general editor (in the case of an edited book with several chapters from various contributors), 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 or preface of the book**, but should rather describe the methodology used as well as the unique contribution made to knowledge production. 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.

As part of the justification, there must be unequivocal **declaration** to the fact that no part of the work was plagiarised or published elsewhere. The target audience must be stated. If such information is already provided in the actual publication, a marker or reference to this must be made rather than providing the justification.

7. Clear evidence of new research must be provided for second or later editions being submitted for subsidy. 50% of the publication being claimed must have not been published previously. A statement from the institution's evaluation committee, indicating that it checked both the previous and current editions and affirm that at least 50% of the work was not previously published, is required for every claim.

### III. CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

1. Only articles published in approved conference proceedings are subsidised. Approved conference proceedings are those which:
  - a. Appear in approved conference lists or other approved indices, or
  - b. Those which meet the criteria laid out in the *Research Outputs Policy (2015)*
2. The DHET has suspended the *DHET list of accredited conferences (introduced in 2012)* until a more stringent and permanent criteria for *approved conference lists/indexes* can be introduced (*DHET Communique, 2, 2015*)
3. Conference proceedings which appear in the above subsidised indices or those which meet the criteria laid out in the *Research Output Policy (2015)* will be recognised in the typical manner as they have been in the past.
4. The Department will determine, in consultation with the sector, which lists or indices of published conference proceedings must be approved. These

approved conference lists or other indices for conference proceedings will be published by DHET before 31 January each year

5. The DHET will periodically sample published conference proceedings to assess if they continue to meet the criteria laid out in the Research Output Policy 2015.
6. Articles published in approved proceedings will continue to be subsidised to a maximum of 0.5 units, 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.
7. Important changes/updates included in the *Research Outputs Policy (2015)*, with regards to the criteria for subsidising proceedings publications include:
  - a. The complete articles (not abstracts) accepted for publication in the proceedings must be peer reviewed prior to publication, and there must be evidence to such;
  - b. The proceedings can now have an International Standard Book or Serial Number (ISBN or ISSN). Previously only an ISBN was acceptable. Proceedings published on-line must have an e-ISBN or e-ISSN;
  - c. More than 60% of contributions published in the conference proceedings must come from multiple institutions;
  - d. The conference must have an editorial board and/or organising committee, with a significant majority of members beyond a single institution, which is reflective of expertise in the relevant subject area
  - e. Included to the list of articles in proceedings which are not subsidised are:
    - i. Keynote addresses and invited papers; and
    - ii. Articles published as "Work in Progress Papers", "Short Papers", "Brief Communications" and "Technical Notes"