



higher education & training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Prof Robin Crewe

Chairperson: Committee of Scholarly Publication in South Africa

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Dear Prof Crewe

Re: Implementation concerns regarding the research output policy of 2015 published in government gazette of 11 March.

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) would like thank you for the letter dated 11 September 2015 regarding the concerns raised at the National Scholarly Editors Forum in relation to the 2015 research output policy. In the letter, there are two specific issues that pertain to the quality of journals that caused concern. The issues are (i) Norwegian Social Sciences Data Services List (NSD List) and (ii) that at least 75% of contribution published in the journals listed on the DHET List must emanate from multiple institutions.

The DHET response on the issue of NSD List:

- The communiqué that was released by the Department regarding the lists of accredited indices didn't indicate that the NSD/Norwegian list would be recognised in its entirety, by merely listed this index as a one of the new/additional indices.

Following the inclusion of this index, the Department had to get the clarity from the NSD about what it means if the journal is on Level 1 or Level 2. A senior official at NSD explained to the Department that journals which are on Level 2 are regarded as high quality journals. Since the revised policy as aimed at improving quality, the Department made an informed decision to consider only journals on Level 2 for subsidy purposes. The Department has since distributed only Level 2 journals of the NSD List to be considered for use in publishing by universities.

The DHET response on the issue of 75% rule:

- The 75% rule will apply to each journal publication (issue or volume); if a journal is published in issues, each and every issue must comply with this rule in order to receive subsidy from the DHET. The rule still applies even if only volumes are published.
- The 75% rule will apply only to subsidisable articles.
- Where internal authors have co-authored articles with external authors, those co-authored articles will fall under the 75% majority.
- The 75% rule will be strictly applied to the South African journals listed on DHET/SA List. The South African journals listed in international indexes will not be affected by this 75% rule. This means that the South African journals listed in international indices will be governed by the criteria applied there.

This 75% rule is to ensure that institutions are not establishing journals for the sake of accruing subsidy but mainly allowing publications from academics locally, regionally and globally. The aim is to ensure that South African scholarship reaches a wider audience, beyond one institution and that it receives recognition locally and internationally. For South African journals to achieve such recognition, they have to diversify their authorship beyond just SA, let alone one institution. The argument about certain disciplines being offered by a few institutions doesn't hold; we expect SA journals to publish articles beyond our borders and not only from SA authors.

Should you have any query please do not hesitate to contact Dr Sandile Williams at Williams.Sandile@dhet.gov.za or Tel: (012) 312 5446.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'S. Williams'.

Dr Sandile Williams

Director: University Policy and Development Support

Date: 29 July 2016