



**Terms of Reference  
of the National Scholarly  
Editors' Forum  
of South Africa**





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## Terms of Reference of the National Scholarly Editors' Forum of South Africa

*Revised after receipt and implementation of legal advice, and approved by both the ASSAf Committee on Scholarly Publishing in South Africa (5 February 2008) and the ASSAf Council (7 March 2008).*

### A. Background Considerations and Policy Environment

- [1] The ASSAf Report on a Strategic Approach to Research Publishing in South Africa, published in March 2006, developed ten evidence-based recommendations, which the Academy's Council has committed itself to implementing if at all possible, working in every case with key stakeholder partners. As a first step, the ASSAf Council established a Committee on Scholarly Publishing in South Africa (CSPISA), as well as a Scholarly Publishing Unit (SPU) within the ASSAf office, to ensure that the Academy's Council is well advised on the optimum ways of implementing the recommendations in the *Report*, and to ensure that the necessary programme of activities is properly serviced and accountably run within set budgets.
- [2] In line with its mandate, the Committee convened a meeting of over 100 current editors of South African scholarly journals in Pretoria on 25 July 2007. The three-fold purposes of the meeting were to explore:

- the desirability of establishing a national scholarly editors' forum under the auspices of the Academy;
- the likelihood that a national code of best practice in editing and peer reviewing might be adopted to strengthen the system; and
- the willingness of the editors to participate in periodic discipline-grouped peer review of their journals, as a preparatory step (*inter alia*) to increasing government support for open access publishing of national journals.

After in-principle support of these initiatives was expressed by the editors at the meeting, the Academy was requested to draft Terms of Reference for a National Scholarly Editors' Forum, to spell out how it might function, and how it might create a 'voice' for this important sector that has to date been missing in the system.

## B. Operating Principles of the Forum

- [3] Consistent with the agreed notion of mutual accountability and transparency, effective two-way communication channels will be used to ensure that every member editor is kept fully informed at all times of policy and other developments known to the Academy, and in turn, editors both individually and collectively will bring their concerns to this Forum for debate and possible action.
- [4] ASSAf will be vested with the responsibility to maintain and sustain the Forum, and to act on its behalf as mandated by the membership, provided such action is in line with its statute and mission, as generally overseen by its governing Council.
- [5] The costs of running the Forum will be incurred from the budget of ASSAf, which will ensure effective project management and servicing of the Forum. Physical attendance by Forum members of annual or other meetings will not be funded in terms of either travel and/or accommodation because of the prohibitive costs involved.

## C. Activities to Support the Forum

- [6] The Academy will, after consultation with the Forum members, among other activities:
  - i. undertake or commission studies on matters of interest to the Forum;
  - ii. issue communiqués and public statements on issues of concern to the Forum;
  - iii. organise and hold workshops or develop policy advice on behalf of the Forum;
  - iv. investigate systemic aspects of open access publishing, in respect of both the ‘Gold Route’ and ‘Green Route’ models, and the possible utility of national publishing platforms;
  - v. develop a database of scholarly journals in South Africa, and other information resources to document and study the system;
  - vi. initiate programmes for quality assurance that will enhance the sustainability of South African scholarly journals; and
  - vii. cooperate with institutions and organisations that have objective similar to those of the Forum.

## D. Forum Meetings

- [7] The Academy shall at least once a year convene a meeting of the Forum to discuss progress in achieving objectives. A special meeting of the Forum may be called if no fewer than twenty (20) members jointly request such a meeting. All Forum members will be invited to attend annual or special meetings, of which notice of at least two months shall be given and a draft agenda supplied, with a request for further items from the membership. All Forum members will receive reports/*aide mémoires* on all of these meetings.
- [8] Each meeting shall be chaired by the Chairperson or acting Chairperson of the CSPiSA of the Academy, and organised by an *ad hoc* organising committee appointed by the Committee consisting additionally of no fewer than six (6) persons established by the CSPiSA, and including no fewer than three editors.
- [9] The quorum for a meeting of the Forum shall be 33% of the membership; if there is no quorum at the beginning of a meeting, the members attending it may resolve to proceed with the agenda, and to circulate their deliberations and recommendations to the full membership for ratification.
- [10] Resolutions of the Forum will be taken by a show of hands, if at least two-thirds of those attending a meeting are in support of a proposal or motion, provided there is a quorum. Minutes will be prepared within 21 days after a meeting and distributed to all Forum members; those who attended the meeting will be asked to confirm the

accuracy or otherwise of the draft minutes within a further period of 21 days, in which process the absence of a negative response will be taken as assent.

## E. Forum Mission Statement

- [11] The National Scholarly Editors' Forum will be a significant new stakeholder in the South African National System of Innovation (NSI), with a voice that helps shape policy and promotes excellence and high visibility of the country's research activities.

## F. Forum Objectives

- [12] The objectives of the National Scholarly Editors' Forum will be generally to support and promote high-quality scholarly publishing in South Africa, and especially to assist in the efforts of the Academy bringing about:
- i. an improved mechanism for the accreditation of scholarly journals;
  - ii. the development of a new generation of excellent, publishing scholars;
  - iii. a significant expansion of open access publishing, to enhance the visibility of South African journals and to promote collaboration with scholars everywhere;
  - iv. a sustainable national system of harvesting of institutional repositories;
  - v. sustainable and appropriate subsidisation of high-quality journals in South Africa; and
  - vi. information systems about scholarly publishing that are useful in planning and accessible by all.

## G. Forum Membership

- [13] Membership of the Forum is provisionally open to current editors-in-chief, or equivalent, of scholarly journals published in South Africa and accredited by the Department of Education, in the latter's current policy framework but (preferably) in a future, improved system. Membership will be renewed annually on receipt of confirmation of continuation in office, and of relevant current contact details needed to maintain the Forum network and database. There will be no subscription fee as long as ASSAf has the funds to maintain the Forum. Member editors may delegate attendance at Forum meetings or activities to deputy or associate editors of their journals after informing the Academy of the need for so doing.
- [14] Editors-in-chief, or equivalent, of journals not accredited by the Department of Education will be eligible for membership of the Forum if they have formally adopted the Academy's *National Code of Best Practice in Editorial Discretion and Peer Review for South African Scholarly Journals*. Renewal of membership will then require compliance with the provisions described in Clause 13.
- [15] Members of CSPiSA will be given *ex-officio* observer status of the Forum, while publishers, librarians, editorial board members of journals, institutional research executives, executives of professional societies and other stakeholders in the scholarly publishing system may be given observer status at general meetings of the Forum, at the discretion of the *ad hoc* organising committee established by the CSPiSA for each annual or special meeting of the Forum.

- [16] The Forum shall be maintained while a majority of its members supports its continuation, as tested by a resolution taken at each annual or special meeting, provided there is a quorum.





