



Audit Bureau of Circulations of South Africa

# Reporting Standards

## Free Publications

Version 1

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## INTRODUCTION

This document contains the Reporting Standards for print and digital edition of products registered in the Free Newspaper sector.

The PDF versions of the Reporting Standards are issued at a certain point in time. As Reporting Standards are updated periodically, please check the website [www.abc.org.za](http://www.abc.org.za) to ensure you are using the latest applicable standards.

Each category of circulation in the Reporting Standards has the following:

- Definition
- Principles
- Requirements
- Reporting
- Guidance

If you are after a quick understanding of the key points of any section then the definition and principles will provide an overview.

The guidance sections provide examples of how the requirements might be complied with. We will add to or amend these over time where we consider there may be a benefit following the identification of specific circumstances or requests for advice.

If you have any queries regarding how the Reporting Standards affect you or any specific queries please contact the ABC on 011 447 4290 or [email abc@abc.org.za](mailto:abc@abc.org.za).

# GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND RECORD KEEPING

## INTRODUCTION

This section sets out some key requirements relating to the overall reporting and auditing of your ABC claim.

## PRINCIPLES

1. **Publication must be eligible to report under the Reporting Standards**
2. **Copies must comply with the Reporting Standards**
3. **Transactions related to the claim must be bona fide 'arms length' arrangements**
4. **Evidence to support the claim must be retained and available for a minimum period**

## REQUIREMENTS

### 1. The publication must be eligible to report under the Reporting Standards

- a) You may apply to register a printed publication under the Free Publication Reporting Standards if it publishes in a defined area.

### 2. Copies must comply with the Reporting Standards

- a) Copies claimed must comply with the relevant sections of these Reporting Standards with the following exceptions which you specifically cannot claim:

- i) Free copies to contributors
- ii) Free copies to advertisers
- iii) Free copies to advertising agencies
- iv) Free copies to press cutting agencies

Note: Single Free Door to Door Delivery copies to contributors, advertisers, advertising agencies or press cutting agencies can be claimed if they form part of the normal distribution.

- v) File or office copies
- vi) Free publisher employee copies.
- vii) Electronic versions of the publication unless they meet the requirements to be claimed as a Digital Edition.

### 3. Transactions related to the claim must be bona fide 'arms length' arrangements

- a) Transactions or arrangements (such as circulation or distribution services) with your own organisation or Related Parties will initially be deemed as not bona fide 'arms-length' for ABC purposes, meaning they cannot be included in your claim. However they can be included if you are able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of your auditor or ABC that these comply with the Reporting Standards and are bona fide 'arms length' arrangements.
- b) Related Parties for ABC purposes will include where:
  - i) One party has direct or indirect control of the other party; or

- ii) The parties are subject to common control from the same source; or
- iii) One party has influence over the financial & operating policies of the other party to an extent that the other party might be inhibited from pursuing at all times its own separate interests; or
- iv) The parties, in entering a transaction, are subject to influence from the same source to such an extent that one of the parties to the transaction has subordinated its own separate interests.
- v) Transactions between contract publishers and their clients are deemed not to be arms length in relation to a specific publication produced for that client.

This means the following are considered Related Parties for ABC purposes:

- The publisher, its subsidiary, parent and fellow undertakings (and Directors of these)
- Associates and Joint Ventures (and their investors)

#### **4. Evidence to support the claim must be retained and available for a minimum period**

- a) You must retain and be able to provide all records supporting the claim, including but not limited to:
  - i) An analysis of the claim by issue.
  - ii) Evidence supporting the number of copies printed for each issue claimed.
  - iii) Evidence supporting the number of copies distributed for each issue claimed.
  - iv) Evidence for each copy supporting the relevant circulation category in which it is claimed on an issue by issue basis (i.e. not on a transactional basis).
  - v) A copy of each issue and any Editions claimed.
  - vi) Financial records.
- b) Records supporting the claim must be retained for 24 months after the reporting period
- c) Records supporting the claim must be retained and made available to your Auditor or ABC on request, in accordance with the ABC Byelaws.

### **GUIDANCE**

#### **G4. Evidence to support the claim must be retained and available for a minimum period**

- a) In relation to evidence supporting the number of copies distributed for each issue claimed, this must enable identification of the publication name, issue and quantity of copies. This means copies posted using a franking machine will not normally be able to be claimed as the records will not identify what has been posted.
- b) In relation to print evidence you will normally provide print invoices and evidence of payment. If printing is carried out in-house or within a Related Party organisation then production records may be required. Other financial records may also be reviewed.
- c) In relation to distribution evidence you will normally provide distribution schedules..
- d) The auditor may accept copies of records stored electronically, but we advise you check first.
- e) If records are not available or not accepted by your auditor/ABC then this may result in copies being disallowed, certificates being withdrawn or cancellation of the publication's ABC registration.

# PUBLICATION DEFINITIONS AND SECTORS

## INTRODUCTION

This section sets out the Publication Sectors that are recognised and for which certificates will be issued.

## SECTORS

### Free Newspapers

Definition: A newspaper with no cover price, distributed free of charge.

### Free Magazines

Definition: A magazine with no cover price, distributed free of charge.

### Advertising Brochures

Definition: A brochure with less than 35% average editorial content over a reporting period, distributed free of charge.

## PRINCIPLES

1. **Members must indicate the Sector in which the publication resides.**
2. **The General Manager will confirm or change the Sector based on the definitions.**
3. **Should a dispute arise, the publisher may appeal the decision.**

## REQUIREMENTS

1. **Members must indicate the Sector in which the publication resides.**
  - a) This choice must be made when application is made to have the publication registered with the ABC
2. **The General Manager will confirm or change the Sector based on the definitions.**
  - a) Should the General Manager determine that the Sector should change, he/she will communicate the change, giving reasons.
3. **Should a dispute arise, the publisher may appeal the decision.**
  - a) The publisher may appeal the General Manager's decision in writing to the Rules Committee, which will determine a decision within 7 working days.
  - b) Should the publisher still dispute the determination by the Rules Committee, an appeal in writing may be made to the Board, who will make a determination within 10 working days, which determination will be final.

## PICK UP/BULK COPIES

### DEFINITION

Copies distributed on a regular and consistent basis to known distribution points for pick up or receipt by consumers.

### PRINCIPLES

1. Documents regarding distribution details are available
2. Distribution follows a regular and consistent pattern to known distribution points
3. Copies are made available at the known distribution points for pick up or receipt by consumers
4. Quantity claimed should not exceed potential demand by the intended consumers
5. Effective management controls over distribution

### REQUIREMENTS

#### 1. Documents regarding distribution details are available

a) This will include:

- i) The method of distribution
- ii) A master list of all distribution

b) The master list of distribution points will include details of all distribution points supplied.

#### 2. Distribution follows a regular and consistent pattern to known distribution points

a) All issues will be part of a Distribution Cycle.

- i) A Distribution Cycle is defined as a controlled and recognisable regular pattern of distribution, based on issues.

- Note: Any claimed free circulation categories not distributed on an every issue cycle must follow the same Distribution Cycle based on issues. For example if you move Free Door to Door Delivery to a 2 weekly cycle then Free Pick Up must either remain on an every issue cycle or also follow a 2 weekly cycle.

- ii) The same distribution points must be distributed to within each Distribution Cycle (subject to notified and allowable changes).

*Example 1: Delivery could be on an all issue Distribution Cycle. This would mean the same distribution points are delivered to for every issue.*

*Example 2: A weekly publication could be delivered on a 3 weekly cycle. This would mean the same distribution points are delivered to on weeks 1, 4, 7 etc, a different set of distribution points are delivered to on weeks 2, 5, 8 etc and a different set of distribution points are delivered to on weeks 3, 6, 9 etc..*

- iii) Gross distribution (i.e. supply) quantities must be broadly the same for all issues within a Distribution Cycle.

- b) A distribution point is defined as an agreed location at which copies are handed to or left for pick up by the consumer. Note:
  - i) A distribution point is defined at the micro level. *For example: a single dispensing bin or single hand merchandiser as opposed to say a group of dispensing bins at a particular location.*
  - ii) Only distribution points in South Africa can be claimed.
  - iii) The distribution points claimed must be consistent with the method of distribution for each Distribution Cycle.
  - iv) ABC must have the right to visit or contact distribution points for verification purposes.
- c) Gross distribution (i.e. supply) quantities must be broadly the same for all issues across all Distribution Cycles.
- d) Distribution points include:
  - i) Deliveries to shops and other outlets nominated on the route schedule.
  - ii) Deliveries to Office Parks, Shopping mall information desks.
  - iii) Copies handed out to commuters at taxi ranks, railway stations, bus depots, pedestrians at street corners.
  - iv) Deliveries to institutions – government departments, libraries, universities, police stations, post offices, hospitals, old aged homes, schools, places of worship, or similar institutions. Written permission, which remains valid for 3 years, must be obtained to deliver more than 10 copies to a specified distribution point.
  - v) Deliveries to residential complexes with no visible post boxes and bulk copies are left outside.
  - vi) Deliveries to residential complexes with no visible post boxes, where entry is gained, but bulk copies are left at reception/security.
- e) Includes Free publications inserted into Paid publications.

### **3. Copies are made available at the known distribution points for pick up or receipt by consumers**

- a) You must be able to provide evidence, from the third party responsible, of the number of copies of the publication made available for pick up or receipt at each distribution point by consumers. Note:
  - i) Where the copies are made available for pick up or receipt at distribution points by drivers/distributors that are not 3<sup>rd</sup> party to the publisher (such as in-house distributors or from a joint venture), it may be possible to include these in the claim as long as:
    - It can be demonstrated that the drivers/distributors have sufficient independence and are specifically contracted to deliver/distribute the publication.
    - The auditor/ABC has full and unrestricted access to the relevant parties' documentation.
  - b) Where your ABC pick up claim is for the net number of copies picked up or received by consumers at a distribution point, you must be able to provide evidence of the number of copies returned/not picked up at each relevant distribution point.
  - c) All copies must be delivered and made available within 24 hours of the majority of the rest of the distribution (with the exception of top-up copies – see below).
  - d) You can make 'top-up' supplies of an issue after the initial supply at a distribution point, as long as:
    - i) They are delivered before the distribution of the subsequent issue.
    - ii) The initial supply to a distribution point is made within 24 hours of the majority of the rest of the distribution
    - iii) Any top-up supplies to a particular distribution point beyond the initial supply are not individually greater than the initial supply.
  - e) You cannot claim distribution of back issues.



#### 4. Quantity claimed should not exceed potential demand by the intended consumers

- a) Your ABC pick up claim must be reported as a minimum as follows:
- i) Copies must be reported on a net basis (i.e. those made available less copies not picked up by consumers).

#### 5. Effective management controls over distribution

- a) The publisher is responsible for ensuring that the copies they claim have been delivered and if applicable returns/copies not picked up are accounted for. This requires a publisher to have appropriate management controls and processes in place to ensure that this is happening.

### REPORTING

You will report pick up copies as follows, which will be broken out on the ABC Certificate:

1. By total average net distribution of pick-up copies per issue for the period.

### GUIDANCE

#### G1. Documents regarding distribution details are available

- a) The method of distribution should be verifiable from evidence.
- b) The master list of all distribution points.

We would expect this to include the following for each distribution point:

- Address.
  - Whether there is a responsible individual based at the point, a deliverer places copies on display, or it is a hand distribution point.
  - Point description. *For example: bin, location at address.*
  - Normal day/date of delivery.
  - Method of delivery. *For example: in house, name of 3rd party distribution company.*
  - Normal supply quantity.
  - Normal day/date of collection of returned/damaged copies (net copies only).
  - Additional details as above for all regular top-up supplies.
- c) Other information needed for audit typically will include:
- i) Issue by issue free pick up summary
    - This is an issue by issue summary of the claimed free pick up distribution compiled from the Detailed Issue Distribution Lists (see below).
  - ii) Detailed Issue Distribution List
    - This form includes on an issue by issue basis:
      - Name/identification of distribution point
      - Type of distribution point, manned or unmanned
      - Gross supply
      - For copies claimed on a net basis: Returned/damaged copies
      - Net distribution
      - Actual day/date of delivery
      - For copies claimed on a net basis: Actual day/date of collection of returned/damaged copies

## **G2. Distribution follows a regular and consistent pattern to known distribution points**

- a) A distribution point is defined as an agreed location at which copies are handed to or left for pick up by the consumer.
  - i) You should be able to provide details of the terms and conditions between the publisher and the distribution points for the supply and collection of copies.
- b) Examples of ineligible distribution (because it is not regular and consistent) include distribution to irregular exhibitions, rotational sampling.

## **G3. Copies are made available at the known distribution points for pick up or receipt by consumers**

- a) You must be able to provide evidence, from the third party responsible, of the number of copies made available for pick up or receipt at each distribution point by consumers.
  - i) Typically, suitable evidence will be a delivery note signed and dated by a responsible third party individual (at the time of delivery) confirming the number of copies of the particular issue of the publication supplied and that they have made available for pick up or receipt at the particular location.
  - ii) Where the individual confirming the delivery is the driver/distributor, additional verification such as the deliverer's manager signing to confirm completion, or the inclusion of a time of delivery may be required where ABC deems appropriate for audit purposes.
  - iii) If the evidence is from an individual that is not third party to the publisher (such as an in-house driver) then the records that additionally might be needed for audit could include run/route sheets, evidence of contractual arrangements, wage claims of distributor invoices.
  - iv) Ordinarily an individual based at the distribution point should be signing the delivery note at the time of the delivery. However if the signatory is unavailable at the time of delivery the distributor must sign the delivery note, giving reasons for non-signature
  - v) With ABC's agreement you may be able to maintain documentation on a team basis for a group of merchandisers or a group of dispensing racks at a designated location.
- b) Where your ABC pick up claim is for the net number of copies picked up or received by consumers at a distribution point, you must be able to provide evidence of the number of copies returned/not picked up at each relevant distribution point.
  - i) Typically, suitable evidence will be a returns note signed and dated by a responsible third party individual (at the time of collection) confirming the number of copies of the publication returned/not picked up, including the time collected. If there is no evidence you cannot assume 100% distribution but instead due to lack of evidence must treat distribution as zero.
  - ii) If the evidence is from an individual that is not third party to the publisher (such as an in-house driver) then the records that additionally might be needed for audit could include run/route sheets, evidence of contractual arrangements, wage claims of distributor invoices.
  - iii) Ordinarily an individual based at the distribution point should be signing the returns note at the time of the collection. However if the signatory is unavailable at the time of collection, the distributor must record the reason for non-signature. There must be a suitable returns recording system at the point where the copies are returned.
  - iv) Distributors and their agents must not have a disincentive to accurately report the net number of copies picked up/received by consumers.
  - v) With ABC's agreement you may be able to maintain documentation on a team basis for a group of merchandisers or a group of dispensing racks at a designated location.

**G4. Quantity claimed should not exceed potential demand by the intended consumers**

No further guidance.

**G5. Effective management controls over distribution**

- a) For each publication the detail and extent of these controls and processes will vary as they should be appropriate to the type of distribution. These could include training of staff, spot checks, customer complaint handling etc.

These controls and processes are reviewed by ABC as part of the continuing audit of a publication. These help underpin the audit in that they form part of the consideration of risk and consequently the type and extent of audit work done.

If weaknesses in management controls are found during the audit work, the publication's circulation auditor / ABC will inform the distributor and the publisher of defined improvements to be implemented and a timescale to ensure copies are still eligible for ABC purposes

## DOOR TO DOOR DELIVERY

### Definition:

Copies delivered on a regular and consistent basis to round level intended for onward door to door distribution to known addresses.

### Principles:

1. Documents regarding distribution details are available
2. Distribution follows a regular and consistent pattern
3. Copies are delivered to round level intended for onward distribution as single copies through door to door distribution in the round
4. There will be effective management controls over distribution

### Requirements:

#### 1. Documents regarding distribution details are available

- a) This will include:
  - i) A master list of all distribution rounds, with the number and areas intended for free door to door delivery
  - ii) Details of how the distribution will take place, including the type of distributors employed and the basis, i.e individual distributors; third party teams etc
  - iii) The controls over the distribution, including processes for complaints of non-delivery.

#### 2. Distribution follows a regular and consistent pattern

- a) All issues will be part of a Distribution Cycle.
  - i) A Distribution Cycle is defined as a controlled and recognisable regular pattern of distribution, based on issues.
    - Note: Any claimed free circulation categories not distributed on an every issue cycle must follow the same Distribution Cycle based on issues. For example if you move Free Door to Door Delivery to a 2 weekly cycle then Free Pick Up must either remain on an every issue cycle or also follow a 2 weekly cycle.
  - ii) The same rounds must be distributed to within each Distribution Cycle.

*Example 1: Example 1: Delivery could be on an all issue Distribution Cycle. This would mean the same rounds are delivered to for every issue.*

*Example 2: A weekly publication could be delivered on a 3 weekly cycle. This would mean the same rounds are delivered to on weeks 1, 4, 7 etc, a different set of rounds are delivered to on weeks, 2, 5, 8 etc and a different set of rounds are delivered to on weeks 3, 6, 9 etc.*

- iii) The quantity of copies distributed must be broadly the same for all issues within and between Distribution Cycles. Note:
  - Rounds uncovered due to unavailability of distributors are not considered as changes and can be ignored.

- b) Only distribution in South Africa can be claimed.
- c) You may deliver your publication using distributors, teams or a contract distribution company.
- d) Distribution points include:
  - i) Residential complexes with visible post boxes in which copies can be inserted.
  - ii) Residential complexes without visible post boxes, where entry is gained, and copies are inserted in interior post boxes or delivered door to door.

**3. Copies are delivered to round level intended for onward distribution as single copies through door to door delivery in the round.**

- a) ABC must have the right to contact distributors for verification purposes.
- b) You must be able to provide evidence of the number of copies of the publication that has been received by the distributor, team leader or contract distributor who is engaged to deliver them in the round(s). If the receipt is for more than one round, then it must be clear that this is the case, and each round identified.
- c) You may use different types of distributors, as follows;

**Distributors:** - A distributor is a named individual who is allocated a round or rounds and delivers the publication in person to the addresses.

You must keep:

- i) A list of the names and addresses of all distributors involved in the delivery of each issue, that identifies for each distributor:
  - The rounds they have covered
  - The number of copies they have delivered

**Contract distributors:** - A contract distributor is an external company that you have contracted to deliver the publication. *If you use a contract distribution company that is a subsidiary or associated company of your company (or your publishing group) then this section does not apply, instead you should refer to distributor.*

You must:

- i) Retain responsibility to report the distribution figures and make sure the required records to support the distribution claim are available (whether at your offices or those of your contractor).
- ii) Be able to provide invoices from the contract distributor and evidence that these have been paid.

**4. There will be effective management controls over distribution.**

- a) If your systems and controls indicate any apparent failure in the scheduled distribution then the copies affected must not be claimed.
- b) You must keep up to date records for each and every round. You should ensure that historical records are available for each issue in the Reporting Period.

The records must:

- Clearly define the boundaries of the distribution area
- Identify any areas within the boundaries that are not delivered to
- Detail the streets and roads covered by individual distribution rounds and any exceptions.
- Contain instructions to identify any households within the round that are not to be delivered to
- Be updated within a month of any change to the distribution area or distribution rounds. The dates and detail of any changes to rounds must be recorded.

- c) It is good practice to maintain a record of complaints of distribution failings. These can arise from a variety of sources ranging from addressees not receiving a publication to discrepancies identified from your own processes. Your records should be kept in a uniform way, noting the complainant the nature of the complaint, and the actions taken, including any amendments to your claim.
- d) If you use a contract distributor we will require them to have effective distribution controls and reporting in place. Scrutiny of these should be available to your auditor and ABC

## REPORTING

1. You will report copies as follows, which will be broken out on the ABC certificate:
  - a) By total average free door to door copies per issue for the period.

## GUIDANCE

### **G4. There will be effective management controls over distribution.**

- a) The publisher is responsible for ensuring that the copies they claim have been delivered and undelivered copies are accounted for. This requires a publisher to have appropriate management controls and processes in place to ensure that this is happening.

For each publication the detail and extent of these controls and processes will vary as they should be appropriate to the type of distribution. These could include training of staff, spot checks, customer complaint handling, live monitoring of electronic distribution records etc.

These controls and processes are reviewed by ABC as part of the continuing audit of a publication. These help underpin the audit in that they form part of the consideration of risk and consequently the type and extent of audit work and reality testing done.

If weaknesses in management controls are found during the audit work, the publication's circulation auditor / ABC will inform the distributor and the publisher of defined improvements to be implemented and a timescale to ensure copies are still eligible for ABC purposes

## REQUESTED DELIVERED COPIES

### DEFINITION

A single free copy requested by and distributed to a known individual.

### PRINCIPLES

1. **Single copy per issue, distributed to a known individual**
2. **Individual has personally requested to receive the publication**
3. **Only copies distributed in South Africa can be claimed**

### REQUIREMENTS

#### 1. **Single copy per issue, distributed to a known individual**

- a) You must be able to demonstrate the copy is distributed to the individual.
- b) You do not need to deliver to the same addresses from issue to issue. However in terms of total free requested delivered copies claimed:
  - The number of copies delivered per issue must be consistent and regular in quantity.
- c) You must retain a list of individual recipients (including address details) for each issue in the reporting period.
- d) You cannot claim distribution of back issues.

#### 2. **Individual has personally requested to receive the publication**

- a) You must have third party evidence that the individual has, within the last three years, made a clear request to receive the publication before you send it to them.

### REPORTING

You will report Free Requested Delivered Copies as follows, which will be broken out on the ABC Certificate:

1. By total average circulation over the period.

### GUIDANCE

#### G1. **Single copy per issue, distributed to a known individual**

- a) You must be able to demonstrate the copy is distributed to the individual. Examples are:
  - i) If via a third party: This will usually be from a third party company whose normal business is single copy distribution.
  - ii) If via an in-house/non-3<sup>rd</sup> party distribution set up: You must be able to provide evidence of how the distribution is organised and carried out.

**G2. Individual has personally requested to receive the publication**

- a) You must have third party evidence that the individual has, within the last three years, made a clear request to receive the publication before you send it to them. The following provide guidance and examples of acceptable methods of achieving this:
- i) The requestor must have been asked and agreed, or they have stated, that they wish to receive a copy of the publication. Bear in mind you will need to be able to demonstrate this at audit. *For example using a question such as 'sign here to request a copy of <publication name> or 'Complete this form to continue receiving this publication'.*
  - ii) For a written or faxed request, the evidence could be demonstrated as third party by requiring the requestor to sign and date the form/request.
  - iii) For a request made over the telephone, by email or online, the following gives guidance and examples of how details could be demonstrated as third party:
    - In the case of telephone requests, recording the telephone calls in a manner that can be made available for review at audit. If you would like our advice on whether a call recording system might be acceptable please contact us. Note: It remains your responsibility to comply with any legislation regarding the recording of telephone conversations.
    - It may help if a copy of the data captured via online or telephone campaigns is kept in its original state as once this data is entered or merged onto a main database the audit trail evidencing the collection of the data can be lost. You may also consider retaining invoices from external contractors evidencing the work carried out in this regard.
    - You are advised to retain copies of online forms/screenshots or telephone scripts to provide evidence of questions asked and responses recorded



## e-EDITIONS

### DEFINITION

An e-Edition is an edition of the print publication published electronically as a unit which once published is, as a principle, inert (i.e. does not change).

### PRINCIPLES

1. **Prior notification of e-Edition claims and plans are required**
2. **An e-Edition is sufficiently similar to be considered the same product as the print parent edition**
3. **e-Edition copies are opted in**
4. **An e-Edition is published and available to the consumer**
5. **e-Edition copies must meet requirements of the relevant print category except where varied by this section.**

### REQUIREMENTS

1. **Prior notification of e-Edition claims and plans are required**
  - a) You must register your intention to claim in advance of the publication of the issues as part of the audit is carried out during the reporting period.
  - b) You must provide planned distribution dates in advance and notify us of any changes.
2. **e-Edition is sufficiently similar to be considered the same product as the print parent edition**
  - a) An e-Edition must be identified as an edition of a publication reported on the ABC Certificate (the Parent Edition). This means it must carry a logotype/masthead incorporating the generic name of the Parent Edition and be consistent with the general appearance of the Parent Edition.
  - b) An e-Edition is published electronically as a unit and once published is, as a principle inert.
  - c) It may be reformatted to suit the different delivery medium. *For example: changes in page size or order.*
  - d) Editorial or advertising may include electronic enhancements or be adapted to take advantage of the medium. *For example: pictures replaced with video*
  - e) An e-Edition must carry the same national advertisements as the print parent edition.
  - f) e-Editions and their print parent edition must be published on or about a common distribution date.

**3. e-Edition copies are opted in**

- a) The individual must have either specifically requested to receive/view it.

**4. An e-Edition is published and available to the consumer**

- a) You must provide ABC with free access to the digital edition for every issue.

**5. E-Edition copies must meet requirements of the relevant print category except where varied by this section.**

- a) e-Edition copies can be claimed only for specified circulation categories depending on the sector. The requirements of those categories in relation to print copies apply to e-Edition copies except as varied by this section.
- b) In relation to e-Edition copies:
  - i) You must send an email alert to the individual informing them that the issue is available for view/download.
  - ii) You must exclude copies where the email alert generates a Hard Bounceback measured at least 24 hours after the email was sent.
  - iii) You must be able to provide evidence of the emails sent and Hard Bouncebacks received.
  - iv) Recipients may be contacted as part of the audit process.
- c) You must retain on an issue by issue basis (or as otherwise agreed) a list of individual recipients for each issue (the 'Total Distribution List' (TDL)) which includes details of all the recipients of all e-Edition copies. This list should exclude:
  - i) Duplicate records (i.e. where both print and digital versions of the publication have been supplied - the print copy takes precedence).
  - ii) Individuals where Hard Bouncebacks have arisen.
- d) You must supply us the claim for e-Edition copies on an issue by issue basis (or as otherwise agreed).

**REPORTING**

You will report total average e-Edition copies.

**GUIDANCE**

**G5. e-Edition copies must meet requirements of the relevant print category except where varied by this section**

- a) Typically to provide evidence of the email alerts to individuals informing them that the issue is available for view/download you will provide system generated proof (such as a notification log of the email alerts sent). This system generated proof would normally need to include evidence of what has been distributed, when and to whom, such as:
  - i) Date sent
  - ii) Time sent
  - iii) Name of publication
  - iv) Issue identifier
  - v) Email address
  - vi) Size of file delivered
  - vii) Addressee identifier
- b) Our testing of email alerts may involve email 'writebacks' to individuals on an on-going basis during the reporting period which is why we will ask for information throughout.

# REPORTED DATA

## INTRODUCTION

This section sets out other data and information that is reported on the ABC Certificate.

## REQUIREMENTS

### 1. Total Average Distribution

- a) You must report the total Average Distribution per issue.
  - i) Copies claimed in the following categories, both print and e- Edition (where applicable) will be included in the total combined Average Distribution figure:
    - Pickup/Bulk Copies
    - Door to Door Delivery
    - Requested Delivered Copies
    - e-Editions

### 2 Geographical Region(s) Served

- a) You must report a concise description of the geographical region(s) (footprint) served by the publication during the Reporting Period.

## ISSUES TO BE INCLUDED/EXCLUDED

### DEFINITION

All published issues for which the majority of the distribution took place within the Reporting Period must be included except for any issues allowed to be excluded according to this section.

### PRINCIPLES

1. All issues published in the Reporting Period must be included
2. Published issues that are allowed to be excluded according to this section may be removed from the average circulation figure

### REQUIREMENTS

1. All issues published in the Reporting Period must be included

- a) For each component of distribution the date distributed/made available is determined as follows:
  - i) Copies made available for pick up by consumer: The date the copies are made available/handed out to the consumer.
  - ii) Free e-Edition copies: The date email notifications are sent.

2. Published issues that are allowed to be excluded according to this section may be removed from the average circulation

- a) There are certain circumstances under which you may exclude an issue from the reported circulation. The circumstances and information surrounding any exclusion are subject to audit.

**ABC granted exclusion:** You may exclude an issue for which we have issued an exclusion note. You can apply for an ABC granted exclusion if:

- i) Due to circumstances outside your control:
  - You can demonstrate a shortfall in the distribution and that shortfall is 15% or more of the average normal distribution of the previous four equivalent issues (e.g. for a Monday compare to Mondays etc). Note:
    - o The shortfall must have arisen because of the circumstances outside of your control. *For example: machinery breakdown, severe adverse weather significantly affecting distribution.*
    - o If one or more of the last four issues are excluded because of an official National Public Holiday or Christmas/New year trading period exclusions then do not use this as one of the four comparable issue but go back one further issue.
    - o If one or more of the last four issues are excluded because of an ABC Granted Exclusion then it will be counted as one of the four comparable issues.
- ii) You submit your application to us using an ABC Exclusion Note Request Form within 7 days of the cover date of the affected issue.

If we do not issue an exclusion note we will issue a rejection notice detailing the reason for rejection

- c) **Optional exclusion:** You may optionally exclude the following without applying for an exclusion note:
  - i) The following may be excluded and the number of publishing days reduced accordingly:

- Circulation on public holidays.
- Weekly and bi-weekly newspapers may exclude the edition preceding a public holiday.
- Where a public holiday falls on a Tuesday or Thursday and the newspaper is published on a Monday or Friday, the circulation for both the public holiday and the publishing day.
- Where special circumstances arise, application may be made to the board for condonation.
- In respect of the following, application must be made to the Company for approval:
- Organised stayaways, strikes, mass action, "acts of God", provided that
- The Company is notified within 15 days following the day so selected, who will then notify all Members of such a choice;
- The situation giving rise to the exclusion must be beyond the proprietor's control;
- The loss must exceed 15% of the average of 2 comparative weeks not affected.

## REPORTING

You will report the following which will be reported on the ABC Certificate:

1. Number of issues included in the distribution claim.
2. The total net distribution.

## GUIDANCE

None

# REPORTING PERIODS

## DEFINITION

Each ABC Certificate has a defined Reporting Period which identifies the date or dates it covers.

## PRINCIPLES

1. You must report a continuous series of Reporting Periods on a mandatory frequency

## REQUIREMENTS

1. You must report a continuous series of Reporting Periods on a mandatory frequency
  - a) Once we have issued a publication's first ABC Certificate for a mandatory reporting period we must continue to issue Certificates for subsequent consecutive mandatory Reporting Periods (i.e. so there is no gap in certification) while the publication remains registered.  
The mandatory Reporting Period will be quarterly.

## GUIDANCE

None.

# CERTIFICATES

## DEFINITION

The ABC Certificate is published by ABC for a specific period and contains the data and information that is subject to audit.

## PRINCIPLES

1. You must report using a standard Certificate type

## REQUIREMENTS

1. You must report using a standard Certificate type
  - a) The key feature of the standard Certificate is that publications must report information in a standardised format

## GUIDANCE

None.

# INPUT FORM SUBMISSION, AUDIT, CERTIFICATION

## DEFINITION

The Input Form is a submission in which the circulation claim is reported to ABC for certification. Each circulation claim is subject to audit.

## PRINCIPLES

1. **An Input Form must be submitted for the registered product for every applicable Reporting Period**
2. **The Input Form must be submitted by the Submission Deadline**
3. **ABC will issue a Certificate based on the Input Form**
4. **Each circulation claim is audited to verify it is in accordance with the applicable Reporting Standards**

## REQUIREMENTS

1. **An Input Form must be submitted for the registered product for every applicable Reporting Period**
  - a) You must submit a Return Form for the applicable mandatory period.
  - b) You will submit your Input Form electronically via the ABC website.
  - c) Whilst our systems contain some arithmetic and logic validation processes, the accuracy of the Input Form remains your responsibility.
  - d) Estimates and assumptions must not be made on the Input Form unless the Reporting Standards allow for them.
2. **The Return Form must be submitted by the Submission Deadline**
  - a) We will publicise the applicable Submission Deadline.
  - b) It is your responsibility to ensure Return Forms are submitted by the Submission Deadline. Failure to do so can result in suspension of your product's ABC registration under the ABC Byelaws.
3. **ABC will issue a Certificate based on the Input Form**
  - a) We will issue a Certificate based on the Input Form. If you use ABC Auditors, the certificate must be signed by an appropriate official representing your organization, and uploaded onto the ABC system. If you use a non-ABC Auditor, the signed certificate must be initialed by the auditor, and together with the Auditor's Report uploaded onto the ABC system.
  - b) We will publicise the applicable dates for uploading.
  - c) It is your responsibility to ensure that the Certificate and Auditor's Report (where applicable) are uploaded by the deadline. Failure to do so will result in the suspension of your title's registration under the ABC Byelaws.
  - d) We first release the circulation figures for publications in a quarterly release of data. We publicise the date and time of this release and you must not issue or publicise any figures before this release.
    - i) If we do not receive the Input Form in time for inclusion in an ABC report, the publication will be reflected as 'No submission'.



**4. Each circulation claim is audited to verify it is in accordance with the applicable Reporting Standards**

- a) The audit must be carried out either by ABC Staff Auditors or, unless stipulated otherwise, an Approved Auditor appointed by you and approved by us.
- b) Requirements in relation to the auditor and audits will be covered by the ABC Byelaws, ABC Audit Programmes and contractual arrangements.
- c) We carry out Check Audits on all publications that are not audited by ABC Auditors. The Check Audits are carried out by ABC Auditors and all publications will be inspected at least once every two years on average
- d) If following an audit or Check Audit we identify material problems (more than 2% of Average circulation) with the Return Form or Certificate then we will revise the claim. If a Certificate has already been issued we will issue a revised Certificate. This replaces your original Certificate and must be used in its place. The process is as follows:
  - i) We will send you a letter detailing the reason/problem giving rise to the amendment.
  - ii) You will have 5 working days from the receipt of this letter to provide any further information to us, or object to the revision of the claim.
  - iii) If you wish to object to the revision of the claim you must do this in writing to the General Manager who will investigate and provide a decision within 7 working days. If the objection is to a decision by the General Manager then the first level of appeal will be in accordance with the Review Procedure detailed in the ABC Byelaws.
  - iv) Subsequent Certificates will not be issued until we have resolved all queries on a previous audit and issued the revised Certificate, if applicable.
  - v) We publish details of Check Audits on our website.

**GUIDANCE**

None.

