

**DEPARTMENT FOR BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS
FULFILLING OUR POTENTIAL: TEACHING EXCELLENCE, SOCIAL MOBILITY AND STUDENT CHOICE**

RESPONSE FROM THE PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

The Publishers Association (“The PA”) is the leading representative voice for books, journal, audio and electronic publishers in the UK. Representing the interests of over 100 companies, our members include global publishers such as Elsevier, Wiley, Pearson, Penguin Random House, HarperCollins, Hachette and the University presses, as well as many independent publishing houses. Collectively our members earn £4.7bn in annual revenue, over £1bn of which is derived from learned journal publishing. With digital revenues growing to 35% and export sales accounting for 44% of revenue, UK publishing continues to demonstrate its strength, diversity and innovation.

We are delighted to be able to provide a short overview of the role of publishers in higher education, both in relation to undergraduate education and scientific and academic research, and some initial thoughts on how publishers could assist in reducing the burden of REF exercises.

Overview of the higher education publishing sector

The higher education publishing market in the UK is comprised of three main forms of publication: textbooks, journals and monographs. While the development and increasing popularity of digital resources is perhaps leading to a blurring between the different formats, each still meets a different yet complementary student and academic need.

While the take up of digital resources has been faster with journals than with monographs and textbooks, this is an increasingly digital market across all three formats, with all higher education publishers operating interactive websites and portals.

In 2014 the academic and professional book market was worth in excess of £1 billion with digital sales accounting for 24% of this. Journal sales contributed a further £1 billion with digital sales forming over 90% of this total.

The role of publishers in higher education

Academic publishing is an intrinsic part of the research cycle, ensuring results are better written, more widely available and have greater impact, as well as providing validation, dissemination and archiving. Similarly, the role of higher education publishers is to produce high quality, pedagogically sound, peer-reviewed where appropriate, professionally curated resources; in formats desired by pupils, lecturers and the research community. Taken together, these contributions support high quality teaching, improve student outcomes and support the UK’s strong research standing and global impact.

With digital resources, individual students and academics need to be able to access individual parts, be they chapters, modules or specific subject areas. Access needs to be bespoke access and academic

publishers are at the forefront in providing innovative, flexible ways for their content to be accessed, shared, debated and developed.

However, we face two challenges:

1. The fact that there is no professional or career incentive for academics to author textbooks similar to that which exists with the writing of research papers and the close relationship which exists between the authoring of high impact research and professional career development via increased research funding allocation. We welcome the acknowledgement in the White Paper of this discrepancy and the fact that it needs to be addressed.
2. Internationally, at school and university level, good teaching and high academic standards are strongly associated with adequate provision and widespread use of high quality textbooks. This important role textbooks play in contributing to high quality teaching and delivering improved student outcomes is not being fully recognised. The role of textbooks in higher education remains a central and significant development. Comprehensive work goes into every great textbook including, working with authors and lecturers to ensure it meets the pedagogical need of the students. While transition to digital is slower (as evidenced in the figures above) it has more than started and we remain committed to working collaboratively with universities to provide new ways of getting learning material to students.

Addressing both of these issues would contribute to increasing the quality of teaching in UK higher education establishments.

How publishers can help reduce the burden of REF exercises

The responsible organisation for overseeing the REF should look to leverage existing infrastructure and partner with publishers to increase the ease and efficiency of the process and reduce the burden on institutions, administrators and reviewers. Specifically, HEFCE (or other) may wish to consider linking to content on publisher platforms via DOIs and should continue with existing licensing arrangements which provide access for reviewers directly on publisher platforms. Our members, in particular through the Publishers Licensing Society, have long supported the success of the REF (and the RAE before it) and look forward to discussing opportunities for further collaborating to enhance efficiency going forward.

If you require any further information or would like to discuss these matters further please do not hesitate to get in touch.

*Susie Winter
Director of Policy and Communications
The Publishers Association
January 2016*