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## ABC Consumer Magazine Reporting Standards (UK)

Changes have been agreed to the ABC Consumer Magazine Reporting Standards. We have updated the latest Reporting Standards – 2015 Version 2 – to incorporate these changes and you can now view or download these from our website [www.abcstandards.org.uk](http://www.abcstandards.org.uk).

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### **RULE CHANGE 1**

#### **Digital Editions – Gift subscriptions**

The print rules allow for up to 12 gift subscriptions, purchased by one individual to be claimed as single copy subscriptions. Name and address details are provided to enable delivery of the publication.

Setting the standard



There is no reason why gift subscriptions should not be allowed on the same basis for Digital Editions. However the requirements for Digital Editions to supply name and postal address as well as evidence of opt-in by the recipient might be difficult or impossible to meet.

Therefore it has been agreed that Digital Edition Gift Subscriptions can be claimed providing they are purchased for at least 20% of the relevant print Basic Annual Subscription Rate (BAR) and that the email address is substituted for the postal address.

### **Amendment**

Shaded text below shows new text added and struck-through text has been removed:

## **SINGLE COPY SUBSCRIPTION SALES**

### **3. Single copy knowingly paid for by the subscriber**

- a) The subscriber must be the addressee except:
  - i) Where the addressee is an employee whose employer is the subscriber.
  - ii) Where the addressee is the recipient of a gift subscription from the subscriber (maximum 12 gift subscriptions per subscriber).

## **DIGITAL EDITIONS**

### **3. Digital Edition copies are opted in**

- a) The individual must have either specifically purchased the Digital Edition, or requested to receive/view it.

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

- a) Digital 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 Digital Edition copies except as varied by this section.
- b) In relation to all paid categories you must be able to demonstrate the copy has been sold and at what price.
- c) If the end recipient pays less than 20% of the relevant print copy price or it is received free:
  - i) You must capture their name, postal address and email address.

- ii) You can only claim one Digital Edition copy per individual
- iii) You cannot claim the copy if you have provided a paid or free print copy to the same individual (where known).
- iv) For Corporate Subscription Digital Editions:
  - There must be a contractual arrangement between the purchaser (a third party employer) and the publisher for at least two issues.
  - The copies are purchased by the third party employer for its employees
  - The claimed quantity must be restricted to those employees that have personally opted to receive/view the Digital Edition. *For example: A company takes out a subscription for each of its 100 employees. If only 40 of those employees personally register to receive/view the digital edition then only those 40 copies may be included on the ABC Certificate.*
- d) Gift subscriptions, where the recipient receives a subscription as a gift from a paying subscriber (up to a maximum of 12 gift subscriptions per subscriber), can be claimed as Digital Edition Single Copy Subscription Sales as follows:
  - i) The amount paid for the gift subscription must be at least 20% of the relevant print Basic Annual Subscription Rate (BAR).
  - ii) The recipient's email address must be provided.
  - iii) The recipient is deemed (for ABC purposes) as having paid for the subscription.
- ed) If the end recipient pays at least 20% of the relevant print copy price then there is no requirement to provide details of the purchaser.
- fe) In relation to Digital Edition copies sent free to the end recipient (where applicable):
  - 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. A Hard Bounceback is where an NDN (Non-Delivery-Notice) such as an SMTP 550 error or other hard bounceback error message is received.

- 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.
  - g) You must retain and supply us 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 individually distributed print copies and all Digital Edition copies (other than those purchased for 20% or more of the relevant print copy price by the end recipient). We must be able to identify the circulation category/type each copy is claimed in. As referred to above, this list should exclude:
    - i) Duplicate records (i.e. each individual on the list can only be claimed once - the print copy takes precedence).
    - ii) Individuals where Hard Bouncebacks have arisen from email notifications for Digital Editions.
  - h) You must supply us the claim for Digital Edition copies on an issue by issue basis (or as otherwise agreed).
  - i) The print copy price against which the 20% level above is calculated will be the UK price unless you opt to use the relevant local print price for copies outside the UK.
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## **RULE CHANGE 2**

### **Reporting Periods – single issue option**

You can now report a single issue on an optional certificate provided that it is followed by the next 6 month mandatory period. This was previously allowed under the rules but removed when the rules were simplified.

#### **Amendment**

Shaded text below shows new text added:

### **REPORTING PERIODS**

#### **2. You can report optional shorter Reporting Periods**

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- a) Optional Reporting Periods are whole months or any number of whole months in addition to mandatory Reporting Periods. Note: A month is a calendar month.

i) You can report an optional single issue with the condition that you must then also report to the next 6 month mandatory period end (i.e. to 30<sup>th</sup> June or to 31<sup>st</sup> December).

- b) For newly registered publications only:

i) You can report single issues until the start of the next month.

ii) You can report one or more consecutive optional Reporting Periods (i.e. there is no gap in certification) before reporting your first mandatory Reporting Period.

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## **RULE CHANGE 3**

### **Multiple Copy Sales – Minimum price**

There is a higher minimum price threshold for claiming short-term Multiple Copy Sales deals.

Short-term is currently defined as “where the total number of issues is equivalent cumulatively to a 2 month period or less in duration”. Whilst this is clear for publications with a regular daily, weekly or monthly publishing frequency, a question has been asked about publications published on a quarterly basis.

To avoid ambiguity due to differing publication frequencies and publishing schedules it has been agreed to change the distinction between what is short-term and what is not from the 2 month period to a prescribed number of issues for different frequencies. As arrangements might not be for consecutive issues we have reinserted the previous requirement that the issues counted must be within a 12 month period. This will not have any effect on what is defined as short term for the vast majority of titles.

### **Amendment**

Shaded text below shows new text added and struck-through text has been removed:

**7. The price paid for the publication by the final purchaser (and the intermediary if applicable) must be clear and conspicuous**

a) The price paid must be at least minimum legal tender per copy (net), except for any short-term arrangement, for which the final purchaser must pay at least 20% of the Basic Cover Price per copy (net), defined as follows:

i) ~~Any short-term multiple copy sale transaction with the same purchaser where the total number of issues is equivalent cumulatively to a 2 month period or less in duration, (e.g. broadly 2 issues of a monthly publication, 8 issues of a weekly publication), can only be claimed if the final purchaser has paid at least 20% of the Basic Cover Price per copy (net).~~

An arrangement will be considered short-term unless the number of issues sold under the deal exceeds that shown below (in a 12 month period from the date of the first issue supplied):

Publication Frequency	Short term unless exceeds:
Daily	40 issues
Bi-weekly (2 a week)	16 issues
Weekly	8 issues
Fortnightly	4 issues
Monthly	2 issues
Less frequent than monthly	1 issue

Note: For other publishing frequencies the number of issues must exceed that typically published in an 8 week period.

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## **RULE CHANGE 4**

### **Excluded issues – Issue withdrawn prematurely**

The Reporting Standards allow an issue to be excluded when, for reasons outside the publisher's control, its distribution is achieved but is severely delayed.

The period an issue is available on sale (or made available to the public in the case of Monitored Free Distribution) might be curtailed where a publication is withdrawn prematurely, having a significant effect on the issue's circulation. It has therefore been agreed that, where this is also for

reasons outside the publisher's control, such as from a legal direction or judgment, you may apply for an issue to be excluded.

## Amendment

Shaded text below shows new text added:

### ISSUES TO BE INCLUDED/EXCLUDED

#### 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.
- b) **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:
    - The distribution of an issue fails to achieve the planned level of distribution and that shortfall is greater than 10% of the planned distribution; or
    - The planned level of distribution is achieved but is severely delayed or withdrawn prematurely from sale, resulting in a shortfall in the Actively Purchased sale and that shortfall is greater than 10% of the average of the previous four issues' actively purchased sales figures.
    - The planned level of distribution is achieved but is withdrawn prematurely resulting in a shortfall that is greater than 10% of the average of the previous 4 issues' total average circulations.
  - ii) You submit your application to us using an ABC Exclusion Note Request Form.

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

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## **RULE CHANGE 5**

### **5. Digital Editions – Society copies**

**Effective from periods ending June 2015.**

All Digital Editions to be claimed for ABC purposes must be specifically paid for or requested – in other words opted in. Society Circulation (where the publication is an official publication of the Society) is not an exception - the Society member specifically pays or requests it.

Many societies do not specifically charge for their official print magazine but provide it as part of the membership package which the member buys (called 'Society - non-optional' on the ABC certificate). This means whilst they can include these Society copies in their ABC for a print version, if they switch the same people to a Digital Edition they are no longer eligible for the ABC.

In line with the Business Magazine sector it has also been agreed to allow Society non-optional Digital Edition copies as an exception to this requirement in the Consumer Magazine sector.

Whilst this changes the convention of digital edition copies being 'opted-in' it is considered a reasonable exception within the confines of a defined and limited circulation (members of a Society) where the official publication is distributed to a finite audience that generally receives the publication free as a targeted benefit of their membership.

#### **Amendment**

Shaded text below shows new text added and struck-through text has been removed:

### **DIGITAL EDITIONS [EXTRACT]**

#### **3. Digital Edition copies are opted in**

- a) The individual must have either specifically purchased the Digital Edition, or requested to receive/view it.
- b) Free Digital Edition copies do not need a specific request if they are claimed in the Society categories of circulation

#### **REPORTING**

You will report total average Digital Edition copies as follows, which will be broken out on the ABC Certificate:

1. By geographical type:

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- a) United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland;
- b) Other Countries

2. By circulation type:

- a) As for print copies, in the same rate bands:
  - i) Retail and Single copy sales
  - ii) Single Copy Subscription Sales
  - iii) Requested Sponsored Subscription Sales
  - iv) Society circulation —~~paid optional single copies unpaid requested single copies~~
  - v) Controlled Free Circulation – individually requested
- b) Digital Edition specific:
  - i) Corporate Digital Edition subscriptions
  - ii) Retail and Single Copy Sales below 20% of Full Rate

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## **RULE CHANGE 6**

### **Digital Editions – print only subscriptions not available**

According to ABC reporting Standards both print and digital edition (DE) subscriptions reported must be compared to a print Basic Annual Rate (BAR) to determine the correct rate banding. Print and Digital Editions Subscriptions reported at full rate are therefore purchased at a single price.

A number of ABC Standards rely on the existence of a print BAR to establish how digital edition copies should be claimed and the evidence required.

Where print only subscriptions are not available and a print BAR does not exist, we need a solution as to how to band digital edition subscriptions and print/Digital Edition subscription bundles.

On the assumption that a cover price for the print magazine is still available and subscriptions are often sold at a discount off the cover price, it has been agreed that, for ABC purposes, an “alternative BAR” figure, which is set at 75% of the annualised print cover price, be used in lieu of the Print BAR.

### **Amendment**

Shaded text below shows new text added and struck-through text has been removed:

## SINGLE COPY SUBSCRIPTION SALES [extract]

### 5. Standard subscription rates must be published

- a) The 'Basic Annual Rate' (BAR) is the standard 1 year subscription rate for the publication, in contrast to a special price only available to a limited class, or under limited conditions.
- b) There can only be 1 BAR per country/wider geographical region.
- c) If print subscriptions are not available separately then there is no need to publish a BAR.

### 6. Reported by rate, comparing price paid by subscriber with standard rate

- a) You must claim a subscription in the appropriate rate band by comparing the price paid for the subscription with the relevant Basic Annual Rate at the time of sale (pro-rate if less than 1 year). Note - ignore for ABC purposes:
  - i) Bank charges or exchange rate differences
  - ii) The value (or perceived value) of any gifts, or other incentives (including bundled publications or media products that are not claimed for ABC purposes). However cash reimbursements to the consumer must be taken into account.
- ...
- f) If you do not publish a relevant BAR then those copies must be claimed in the lowest rate band.
  - i) An exception is where no BAR is published because print subscriptions are not available separately. In this case you must determine rate band classification by using an "alternative BAR", which is set at 75% of the annualised print single copy cover price.

*For example: If print only subscriptions are not available but the print copy cover price of a weekly publication is £2, then the "alternative BAR" used in lieu of the BAR is 52 weeks x £2 x 75% = £78.*

## REPORTING

You will report single copy subscription sales as follows, which will be broken out on the ABC Certificate (note: the term Full Rate will replace Basic Annual Rate for reporting purposes):

1. By geographical type:
  - a) United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland;
  - b) Other Countries
2. By rate band:
  - a) At Full Rate
  - b) Below Full Rate but not less than 50%;
  - c) Less than 50% of Full Rate but not less than 20%;
  - d) Less than 20% of Full Rate but not less than 10%;
  - e) Less than 10% of Full Rate.

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3. By total average single copy subscription sale over the period
4. The Full Rate at the time of the last issue reported in the period for UK, ROI and Other Countries.
  - a) If there is more than one Full Rate for Other Countries then you must report a range, from the lowest to the highest.
  - b) If no Full Rate is published during the Reporting Period because print subscriptions are not available separately (and you are claiming print and/or Digital Edition Subscriptions), then you must report the “alternative BAR” as defined in section 6f above.

## DIGITAL EDITIONS [extract]

### 6. Reported by rate, comparing price paid with the print copy price

- a) Paid digital edition copies must be claimed in the appropriate rate band by comparing the price paid with the relevant print copy Basic Cover Price (single copy sales) and the relevant print copy Basic Annual Rate (subscriptions). **Note:**
  - i) Relevant price means the UK print price unless you opt to use the relevant local print price for copies outside the UK or the alternative BAR (see Single Copy Subscriptions section 6f)
  - ii) You can ignore the value (or perceived value) of any gifts, or other incentives (including bundled publications or media products that are not claimed for ABC purposes). However cash reimbursements to the consumer must be taken into account (excluding limited low chance lottery style promotions).
- b) If a subscription promotion includes a gift or product that is being claimed for ABC purposes (for example a bundled copy of a publication or access to a paid website) then the price paid must be allocated according to the following, moving down the list until one can be applied:
  - i) According to the specific terms of the offer.
  - ii) Where specific terms are not clear, by pro-rating the price according to the relative prices of the ABC claimed products.
  - iii) Where the specific terms are not clear and in the absence of a means of pro-rating the price paid, it should be divided equally between the number of ABC claimed products included in the sale.
- c) If a publication’s digital edition copy is sold bundled as a package with the print copy (whether for a single issue or a subscription) then the treatment is as follows:
  - i) Both the digital edition and the print copy can be included in the ABC claim if the price paid for the package exceeds the relevant print copy Basic Cover Price (single copy sale) or relevant Basic Annual Rate (subscriptions) by at least 20%.

- ii) If the price paid for a package bundling a publication's print and a digital edition is less than 20% above the relevant print copy Basic Cover Price (single copy sale) or the relevant print copy Basic Annual Rate (subscriptions) then only the print copy can be included in the ABC claim.
  - d) ~~The print copy price against which the 20% level above is calculated will be the UK price unless you opt to use the relevant local print price for copies outside the UK.~~
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If you would like the ABC Consumer Magazine Reporting Standards Group to review any current reporting standard or if you would like more information about how the above changes affect you, please contact your ABC Account Manager [charlotte.brown@abc.org.uk](mailto:charlotte.brown@abc.org.uk).

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