

Editorial

From Publication to Recognition: Establishing Identity and Legitimacy in Scholarly Publishing

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Cite this article: Khan MJ. From Publication to Recognition: Establishing Identity and Legitimacy in Scholarly Publishing. MedPulse Spectrum 2025;1(2):1-2

The publication of the inaugural issue of *MedPulse Spectrum* marked a significant milestone, yet it soon became clear that publication itself was only the beginning. For any scholarly journal, credibility depends not solely on content but on formal recognition, regulatory compliance, and institutional accreditation.¹ The subsequent pursuit of an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) and submission for recognition by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan represented critical steps in transforming a new publication into a legitimate scholarly entity.

The ISSN is a globally recognised identifier that distinguishes serial publications and ensures their traceability within international bibliographic systems.² Although the application process through the international ISSN Centre initially appeared administrative, it required detailed documentation, including proof of publication, editorial policies, and declarations of frequency, etc. The verification procedures are intentionally rigorous to safeguard the integrity of the global serials registry.²

During this phase, unsolicited offers promising expedited ISSN allocation for a fee highlighted a significant risk for emerging journals. Legitimate ISSN assignment is conducted exclusively through national centres affiliated with the ISSN International Centre and is not a commercial service. Adhering to formal procedures, despite delays, is essential for preserving institutional credibility and protecting against predatory practices.

The formal allotment of ISSNs for print and online formats established the journal's bibliographic identity. With this recognition, *MedPulse Spectrum* acquired a unique and internationally traceable identity (p-ISSN: [3105-4226](#), e-ISSN: [3105-4234](#)) within the global scholarly ecosystem.³

In Pakistan, recognition by the HEC is a functional necessity for journals seeking academic credibility, particularly for attracting high-quality faculty submissions linked to promotion and career progression. The revised HEC Journal Recognition System (2024) introduced more stringent, structured evaluation criteria, emphasising editorial

governance, peer-review integrity, digital infrastructure, publication ethics, and transparency.⁴ The technical requirements proved equally demanding. HEC required evidence that the journal used a recognised manuscript management system, with OJS as the preferred platform. This we had, but the evaluators also required that specific metadata—publication dates, volume and issue numbers—be prominently displayed on the journal's homepage. The cascading style sheets I had painstakingly adjusted during the launch phase required further modification. I revisited PHP files I had naively considered finished, tweaking the code to ensure the newly assigned ISSN appeared in the sidebar and that the publication frequency was clearly stated. The email configuration, still temperamental despite previous troubleshooting, demanded another round of attention when automated correspondence failed to arrive. A solution involving Gmail's SMTP settings in the core HTML file, which temporarily worked during the launch, malfunctioned again. I spent an entire weekend migrating the journal's email infrastructure to a domain-based system, testing each configuration until confirmation messages finally landed in my inbox rather than the spam folder. I thought this was important for HEC submission, but was surprised to find it was not.

Anyhow, the submission, when finally completed, represented hundreds of hours of cumulative effort compressed into uploaded files and form fields. And now, the waiting. Each morning begins with a login to the HEC portal, a steadying breath, and the same message: under review. The subject line I am waiting for—"Decision Regarding Journal Recognition Application"—has not yet arrived. I tell myself that no news is not necessarily bad news, that the volume of applications is high, and that due process takes time. Still, the inbox is checked hourly, and the spam folder is checked twice daily. ISSN confirmed our identity; HEC recognition would confer legitimacy, and until that notification arrives, the journal exists in a suspended state—fully operational yet awaiting formal acknowledgment. I spend my evenings on contingency planning, identifying every possible weakness in our application and preparing revisions should they be requested. The wait, I have come to

understand, is not merely administrative. It is the final threshold, and I am standing at it, waiting every day for good news.

The accreditation process reinforced a fundamental principle: scholarly publishing is inherently collaborative. Advisory board members contributed to policy refinement and application reviews. The social network of editors and their mentorship provided clarity and direction, transforming procedural compliance into timely task completion. This experience affirmed that academic publishing is sustained not by individual effort alone but by collective intellectual and institutional engagement.

Recognition is not guaranteed, and HEC categorisation, when granted, will require continued compliance with publication schedules, strengthened peer-review processes, and measurable

progress toward wider indexing visibility. Journal development is evolutionary rather than episodic; milestones such as ISSN allocation and regulatory accreditation establish foundations, but sustained credibility depends upon consistent quality assurance, ethical vigilance, and editorial discipline.

The transition from launch to recognition will not signal completion; it will only signal progression—from establishment toward consolidation and measured growth. Much of this work remains administrative and procedural, yet it is within these details that scholarly integrity is secured. Once the notification arrives, it will define the responsibility ahead. Until then, the journal remains fully operational, the applications remain submitted, and I stay at my desk, checking the portal each morning, waiting every day for good news.

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