



Saxon House
211 High Street
Berkhamsted
Hertfordshire
HP4 1AD

+44 (0)1442 870800
www.abc.org.uk

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ABC Consumer Magazines Reporting Standards

This document details changes that has been agreed to the Reporting Standards for Consumer Magazines. You can view the updated ABC Reporting Standards on our [website](#).

Have a suggestion or a query about a rule?

As an ABC member you can ask us to look at any aspect of the information we publish or the rules behind them. If you have any suggestions or comments please contact your ABC Account Manager, Charlotte Brown (charlotte.brown@abc.org.uk) or any member of the ABC team.

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1. Digital only issues and Digital only magazines [effective from periods ending January 2021]

From 2021 you may report an issue (or issues) comprised of solely digital copies on a Consumer Magazine certificate (i.e. an issue does not need a 'print parent').

2. Print and Digital Edition bundles [effective from periods ending January 2021]

From 2021 you may no longer claim, on the same certificate, both copies sold as part of a print and digital bundle (currently permitted if exceeds 20% of print copy price). However, the copies may be claimed on separate certificates.

3. Free Requested Delivered Copies [effective from periods ending January 2021]

From 2021 you will be able to claim copies in a new category of circulation, called Free Requested Delivered Copies. Already available in other ABC sectors, this category allows you to claim free copies requested by consumers, without the additional information required currently under Controlled Circulation.

*Addendum - The requirement for postal address to be captured for free digital copies is removed.

Please below for additional information on these changes.

1. Digital only issues and Digital only magazines [effective from periods ending January 2021]

You may report an issue (or issues) comprised of solely digital copies on a Consumer Magazine certificate (i.e. an issue does not need a 'print parent').

- This enables magazines with a mixed print/distribution strategy throughout the period to be reported together.
- This enables a digital only magazine to be reported on a Consumer Magazine certificate.
- As currently with print, if you claim any digital issues, you must include all digital issues published in the period (i.e. cannot be selective).
- For transparency, the certificate issue analysis (which shows the issue circulations across the period), will in addition show the split between print and digital.
- If a magazine is digital only, then the current rate bandings, which classify paid copies in relation to the print copy cover price/subscription rate will instead be in relation to the digital copy single/subscription prices.
- If a magazine has different editions of a digital only issue, then the different digital editions should be sufficiently similar to the Digital Parent edition (in terms of content, advertising etc).

Standards amendments

Shading denotes new text added:

Digital Editions [extract]

2. Digital Edition is sufficiently similar to be considered the same product as the print parent edition

- a) A Digital 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.
 - i) **From periods ending January 2021:** You may report an issue (or issues) comprised solely of digital copies. This enables a publication with a mixture of print and digital issues, or a completely digital publication to be reported on one certificate. In this case there is no requirement for a print parent, and references below to parent edition will should be read as 'digital parent edition' where two or more different digital editions are reported.

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

Claiming by rate

- 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).
 - iii) **From periods ending January 2021:** In the case of a digital only publication, compare the price paid with the relevant digital copy Basic Cover Price (single copy sales) and the relevant digital copy Basic Annual Rate (subscriptions).

Reported Data [extract]

3. Issue details, circulations and variances

- c) You must report additional issue circulation figures as follows:
- i) For publications publishing fewer than 18 issues in a calendar year, for each issue:
 - The issue's identifier and its total circulation*. **From periods ending January 2021 this will be analysed by print and digital circulation.**
 - The issue's actively purchased circulation and purchased percentage.
 - ii) For publications publishing 18 or more issues in a calendar year:
 - The number of issues distributed/made available in each month (determined as detailed in the section 'Issues to be Included').
 - The average of the total circulations* of those issues distributed in each month. **From periods ending January 2021 this will be analysed by print and digital circulation.**
 - The average actively purchased circulation of those issues distributed in each month together with the average actively purchased percentage.

*Not including any adjustments for differences between estimated and actual sales for previous periods (means these breakdowns may not equate exactly to total average circulation).

2. Print and Digital Edition bundles [effective from periods ending January 2021]

You may no longer claim, on the same certificate, both copies sold as part of a print and digital bundle (currently permitted if exceeds 20% of print copy price).

However, as a result of the rule change above, you have greater flexibility to instead claim both copies of a print and digital bundle:

- By reporting the print copies on one certificate and the digital copies on a separate consumer magazine certificate.
- Whether they are sold below or above the current 20% threshold.

This means magazines that currently report their digital copies on a separate 'Digital Publication' certificate may, from 2021 report these on a separate Consumer Magazine certificate, using the same categories and bandings. [You may continue to use the Digital Publication certificate for the time being].

Where both copies sold in a bundle are claimed on separate certificates, both will carry a statement identifying the number of bundled copies included.

To avoid the aggregation of these numbers in ABC reports, where two certificates are reported for the same magazine (one for print and one for digital) you cannot use a Group certificate to present an aggregated circulation (this remains possible on a Brand Report).

Standards amendments

Shading denotes new text added:

Digital Editions [extract]

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

Claiming a print and Digital Edition copy

- 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) **For periods ending up to December 2020:** 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) **For periods ending up to December 2020:** 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.
 - iii) **From periods ending January 2021:** You can only claim one of these copies per issue towards the average circulation on a single certificate:
 - If reporting on a single certificate, you may choose whether to claim either the print or the Digital Edition copy (providing they are eligible) but you must adopt the same policy for all copies in the Reporting Period.
 - You may claim both copies in the bundle, by claiming the publication's print copies on one certificate and digital edition copies on a separate certificate. If you do this:
 - o Both certificates must carry the statement regarding bundled copies (see reporting below)
 - o You may not opt to report a Group certificate, aggregating these copies into a total circulation (but may do so via a Brand Report)

REPORTING

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

1. By geographical type:
 - 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) Paid Single Copies (Retail and Single copy sales)
 - ii) Paid Subscriptions (Single Copy Subscription Sales)
 - iii) Paid Subscriptions (Multiple Copy Subscription Sales)
 - iv) Paid Subscriptions (Requested Sponsored Subscription Sales)
 - v) Paid Multiple Copies (Multiple Copy Business Sales)
 - vi) Membership Copies
 - vii) Free Copies - Controlled Free Circulation (individually requested only)
 - b) Digital Edition specific:
 - i) All You Can Read Sales
3. A statement of the total average number of print and Digital Edition copies sold bundled as a package (whether for a single issue or a subscription) where both the print and Digital Edition copy have been claimed. Note:
 - a) **For periods ending up to December 2020:** this is only permitted where 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%.
 - b) **From periods ending January 2021:** This is only permitted where the print and digital edition copies are claimed on separate certificates, in which case the statement must be included on each certificate.

Reported Data [extract]

5. You may choose to report a Group or Series Certificate

- a) You may choose to report an optional Group Certificate that combines the circulations from 2 or more publications' Certificates providing:
- i) Each Certificate relates to the same Reporting Standards
 - ii) Each Certificate is for the same Reporting Period
 - iii) It doesn't include separate print and digital certificates for the same publication, that both contain print and digital sales bundled as a package.

Note:

- o You may include publications with different publishing frequencies
- o ABC will produce Group Certificates from the data submitted for the constituent publications.

3. Free Requested Delivered Copies [effective from periods ending January 2021]

This new category enables you to claim copies where:

- The copy is requested by a known consumer
- You can demonstrate the copy has been delivered to them

This category can be used for print and digital copies, and is an alternative to Controlled Requested copies without the requirement to prove an individual meets a declared Terms of Control criteria.

Copies claimed in this category may be claimed using the following existing requirements:

- Evidence of the active opening of a digital copy may be used instead of an email alert.
- If the individual's details are managed by a third-party operator then you may not need to provide these if we're able to review the operator's distribution process to satisfy ourselves the copies are compliant and the delivery process/database has a mechanism to minimise risk of significant duplicates to same individual via the same distribution method.

The requirement for postal address to be captured for free digital copies is also removed.

Standards amendments

A new section is added to the Standards and some amendments denoted below by shading:

FREE REQUESTED DELIVERED COPIES [from periods ending January 2021]

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**

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, to be claimed as Regular free 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.
 - i) You must retain a list of individual recipients for one designated issue each reporting period (the Audit Issue – see General Principles and Record Keeping section). In addition, you must be able to recreate a list of any issue in the reporting period on request.
 - ii) We may agree to waive this requirement where you use a bespoke distribution process involving a route to market that is operated by a third party or partner operation under the following conditions:
 - o You are not able to provide a mailing list because the third party/partner operation responsible for the data will not/cannot provide it for the purposes of the audit.
 - o You do not provide to the third party/partner operation details of specific individuals that should receive a copy of the publication under their process.
 - o We are able to review the third party/partner’s operation and distribution system and satisfy ourselves that the copies meet the definition and principles of Free Requested Delivered Copies and that there is not likely to be a significant level of duplication of a particular issue to individuals through this distribution process. [Note: individuals distributed to under this process need not be tested for duplications against copies distributed outside of the process].
 - o You notify us that you are claiming copies that utilise these requirements in order that we can plan appropriate verification work.
- 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 average geographical type:
 - a) United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland
 - b) Other Countries
- 2. By total average circulation over the reporting period, combined with other free copy categories, analysed into:
 - a) Regular - net
 - b) Sample - net

Note:

- i) Free Requested Delivered Copies are defined as regular if the quantities are broadly similar for the majority of issues in the Reporting Period. If not regular the copies will be claimed as sample.
- ii) Free Requested Delivered Copies are deemed to be net for reporting purposes as they are distributed to individuals

Reported Data [extract]

Free Copies	Controlled Circulation Free Requested Delivered Non-Controlled Monitored Free Distribution Free Retail Voucher Free Letterbox Sample Free Distribution	Regular - Net - Gross Sample - Net - Gross	- Controlled Circulation - Free Requested Delivered - Non-Controlled Circulation - Monitored Free Distribution: Net by hand Net Other Gross - Free Retail Voucher - Free Letterbox - Sample Free Distribution Sample Free Distribution – by issue
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Digital Editions [extract]

Requirements

- c) If the end recipient receives the Digital Edition free, copies may be claimed via either of the following methods:
 - i) Notification method
 - You must capture their name, ~~postal address~~ and email address.
 - You can only claim one Digital Edition copy per individual
 - You cannot claim the copy if you have provided a paid or free print copy to the same individual (where known).
 - You must send an email alert to the individual informing them that the issue is available for view/download.
 - 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.
 - You must be able to provide evidence of the emails sent and Hard Bouncebacks received.
 - Recipients may be contacted as part of the audit process.
 - ii) Actively opened method:
 - Copies may be eligible for the categories Multiple Copy Subscription Sales, Controlled Free Circulation - individually requested, **Free Requested Delivered** (regular or sample as appropriate) and Membership Copies
 - Evidence of delivery to identifiable individuals must be demonstrated by the measurement of active openings of the copy
 - The delivery process/database must have a mechanism to minimise the risk of significant duplicates to the same individual within the distribution method
 - The auditor must have access to verify the claim in relation to the delivery process/database and measurement of active openings

Reporting

2. By circulation type:

- a) As for print copies, in the same rate bands:
 - i) Paid Single Copies (Retail and Single copy sales)
 - ii) Paid Subscriptions (Single Copy Subscription Sales)
 - iii) Paid Subscriptions (Multiple Copy Subscription Sales)
 - iv) Paid Subscriptions (Requested Sponsored Subscription Sales)
 - v) Paid Multiple Copies (Multiple Copy Business Sales)
 - vi) Membership Copies
 - vii) Free Copies - Controlled Free Circulation (individually requested only)
 - viii) **Free Requested Delivered Copies**
- b) Digital Edition specific:
 - i) All You Can Read Sales