

Coronavirus (COVID-19) & ABC Reporting



Temporary changes to Standards

Introduction

This document sets out the areas where there is now a temporary change to/ or suspension of our requirements to enable media owners to cope with the challenges facing them during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We've been considering the changes you may be making to your publication or its distribution, and how we can help in relation to our reporting. This is a fluid situation and individual circumstances will vary, so we'll continue to monitor and review how we can support our members.

We're reviewing our standards relating to exclusions and will publish an update on this shortly.

Please contact us if you have any questions or would like any advice on changes you are planning.

Headlines

- More flexibility on digital copies.
- Free letterbox delivery introduced for all sectors.
- Lifting of advance notification before making changes to free circulation.
- Greater transparency on ABC certificates.

1. Changes to issue content, format or frequency

- a. We've suspended the requirement for a digital edition to have a print parent. This means titles suspending printing can report a digital version only.
- b. If you drop or merge planned issues of a publication, this will be explained on your next ABC certificate to aid transparency.
- c. If you drop or consolidate different editions of a publication, this will be explained on your next ABC certificate providing transparency on any change in the resulting edition figures. You will also be able to opt to report an additional average circulation of just the editions that were published.

2. Use of new digital distribution platforms and availability of data

We recognise that some media owners may use a new digital platform, supplier or publishing solution to get their product to market. We may have experience of auditing these or they may be new to us. Whilst they may be able to provide you with data that complies with current ABC standards, it may be that the data they can provide does not meet our industry-agreed standard definitions.

During this unprecedented period, in the absence of ABC compliant data, we may still be able to report on your certificate the data that you are able to obtain from the platform (whether this be activity, user or download information, for example). We'll review the data available and consider if we can include it, together with clear and appropriate descriptions and caveats.

Please contact us at the earliest opportunity to discuss details of the data you are able to obtain.

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3. Changes to free circulation method, quantities or outlets

- a. We're making Free Letterbox Delivery temporarily available to all sectors (previously available only under [Consumer Magazines](#) and [Regional Publications](#).)
- b. In relation to free circulation (Monitored Free Distribution, Free Pick Up Copies or Free Letterbox Delivery) we're suspending the requirement to notify us in advance of changes in distribution quantities or distribution locations. You should still ask your ABC contact for advice and share significant changes of strategy with us as soon as you can, so we can check what you're planning can be audited.
- c. Free circulation is reported broken out into regular and sample. Please ensure you retain details of how, where and when your free circulation is distributed from issue to issue, and we'll review how it should be reported at a later stage.
- d. If your free distribution processes normally rely on a signature from the recipient at the distribution point, you may instead rely on the deliverer's signature or other online/technological solution.

4. Transparency on ABC certificates and reports

- a. ABC certificates and reports covering any part of this period affected by government restrictions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic will include a statement drawing attention to that fact and the exceptional nature of the situation.
- b. Publishers will be able to include a statement, explaining significant changes in circulation strategy and/or the publication in the affected period.

5. ABC Certified Suppliers

- a. If you're considering a new method of publishing or distributing your publication, please check our list of [ABC Certified Suppliers](#). These are organisations that have undergone an audit that confirms they are capable of supporting the reporting of your publication to ABC Standards for particular product(s) or service(s). As we're able to place reliance on Certified Suppliers' systems at audit, reporting is simplified and additional costs minimised when verifying individual publishers' circulations.

For further guidance please email us via info@abc.org.uk or call our advice hotline on +44 (1442) 200 770.