



ASSAf  
NATIONAL SCHOLARLY  
BOOK PUBLISHERS' FORUM

# Revised Terms of Reference of the National Scholarly Book Publishers' Forum (NSBPF)

*Approved by the  
Committee on Scholarly Publishing in South Africa (CSPiSA)  
on 20 May 2025 and  
endorsed by the ASSAf Council on 18 June 2025.*



science, technology  
& innovation

Department:  
Science, Technology and Innovation  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



## Revised Terms of Reference of the National Scholarly Book Publishers' Forum (NSBPF)

*Approved by the Committee on Scholarly Publishing in South Africa (CSPiSA) on 20 May 2025 and endorsed by the ASSAf Council on 18 June 2025.*

### 1. Background Considerations and Policy Environment

The National Scholarly Book Publishers Forum (NSBPF) was established under the auspices of the Academy of Science in South Africa (ASSAf) to support, strengthen, and promote high-quality scholarly book publishing in South Africa. This initiative is a direct response to the critical recommendations outlined in the 2006 ASSAf *Report on research publishing in South Africa*, and the 2009 *Report on the production, use, and evaluation of scholarly books in South Africa*. The 2009 report outlined 11 key recommendations to support and promote the publishing of high-quality scholarly books. These recommendations highlighted the need for a National Scholarly Book Publishers' Forum, sustainable book publishing support systems, the adoption of open access principles, a general quality assurance system, independent peer review, and post-publication peer reviews.

Recognising the profound impact that scholarly books have on advancing knowledge, education, and research, the NSBPF aims to foster a collaborative discussion platform that brings together scholarly book publishers with stakeholders, which may include authors, higher education institutions, funders, trade organisations, and government entities. The Forum is dedicated to addressing the challenges faced by the scholarly publishing industry, facilitating knowledge exchange, and advocating for policies that enhance the standards, sustainability, and visibility of scholarly book publishing in South Africa.

Guided by ASSAf's mission to advance science and scholarship, the NSBPF is committed to promoting excellence and innovation in scholarly publishing. The Forum will work closely with the Publishers' Association of South Africa (PASA), higher education institutions, and other key stakeholders to ensure that scholarly book publishing decisions are made in an environment that values academic rigour, quality assurance, and the dissemination of knowledge.

The NSBPF serves as a critical advocate for the scholarly publishing community, representing their collective interests to government bodies, policymakers, and relevant stakeholders. Through its advocacy efforts, the Forum seeks to secure financial support and funding mechanisms that enable publishers to produce high-quality scholarly books, promote diversity, and ensure affordability and accessibility.

Through its dedicated efforts, the NSBPF aspires to be a significant stakeholder in South Africa's National System of Innovation (NSI), shaping policies, promoting scholarly excellence, and advancing the country's research and knowledge economy.

### 2. Mission Statement

The National Scholarly Book Publishers' Forum will be a significant new stakeholder in the South African National Innovation System (NSI), with a voice that helps shape policy and promotes excellence and high visibility of the country's research activities through the promotion of scholarly book publishing in and from the country.

### 3. Broad Mandate of the Forum

- The Forum is intended to focus on shared objectives between scholarly publishers and the Academy, leveraging ASSAf's facilitatory capacity to influence public policy and enhance the reach, volume, and impact of scholarly book publishing in South Africa.
- The Forum should promote the adoption of a set of guidelines for best practices in editing and peer-reviewing for monographs and collected works.
- The Forum articulates proposals and recommendations with the assistance of the Academy, which will take them forward to relevant stakeholders.
- The Forum will operate under principles of mutual accountability and transparency, with ASSAf maintaining and supporting the Forum's activities.

### 4. Objectives

The objectives of the National Scholarly Book Publishers Forum are as follows:

#### a) Advocacy and Representation:

- Advocate for policies, regulations, and funding mechanisms that support the growth, sustainability, and quality of the scholarly book publishing industry in South Africa.
- Represent the collective interests of scholarly book publishers, in collaboration with ASSAf, to government bodies, higher education institutions, policymakers, and relevant stakeholders.

#### b) Collaboration and Networking:

- Foster collaboration and networking opportunities among scholarly book publishers, authors, higher education institutions, funders, the Publishers' Association of South Africa (PASA), and other stakeholders.
- Organise conferences, workshops, and events to facilitate knowledge exchange, partnership building, and professional development within the industry.

#### c) Relationship with Higher Education Institutions:

- Cultivate and maintain strong relationships with higher education institutions in South Africa.
- Collaborate with universities, institutions, academic libraries, and digital distribution platforms to promote scholarly publishing, support academic research outputs, enhance the accessibility and visibility of scholarly books and develop a sustainable national system of disseminating scholarly books in institutional repositories or on relevant platforms.

#### d) Engagement with Funders:

- Engage with funders, research councils, foundations, universities and government agencies to advocate for the importance of scholarly book publishing.
- Secure financial support and funding mechanisms that enable publishers to produce high-quality scholarly books, promote diversity, and ensure affordability and accessibility.

e) Policy Advocacy and Government Relations:

- Actively engage with the government and policymakers to influence policies related to the scholarly book publishing industry, such as the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) for the accreditation of scholarly books or individual chapters in such books and the sustainable, appropriate and transparent subsidisation of high-quality scholarly books published in South Africa.
- Provide expertise, research-based insights, and recommendations to shape policies on intellectual property and copyright protection, piracy prevention, open access and funding incentives, including facilitating or commissioning relevant research to support evidence-based policymaking.

f) Professional Development and Education:

- Organise professional development programmes, workshops, and training sessions for publishers, authors, and industry professionals.
- Enhance skills, knowledge, and best practices within the scholarly book publishing industry to foster excellence and innovation.

g) Public Awareness and Outreach:

- Undertake awareness campaigns to highlight the value and impact of scholarly book publishing in South Africa, enhance the visibility of scholarly SA books, and promote collaboration with scholars everywhere by expanding electronic platforms where appropriate, including encouraging book reviews and critical engagement.
- Engage with educational institutions, libraries, media, and the public to raise awareness about the significance of scholarly books in advancing knowledge, education, and research.
- Undertake or collaborate with awareness campaigns around copyright ownership, to sensitise the public that the e-copying or sharing of e-content is illegal.

h) Publishing standards

- Adopt and maintain guidelines for best practice in editing and peer reviewing monographs and collected works.
- Adopt and maintain guidelines for the production and dissemination of digital formats of books and collected works.
- Promote the integration of policy and practice in scholarly book publishing.
- Adopt guidelines for best practices concerning the engagement with Artificial Intelligence tools in publishing by the industry and by authors, pertaining to transparency of use, ownership, ethical aspects. (As a guide, the COPE standards can be referenced)

## 5. Governance

The governance of the Forum will comprise an Executive Committee (EC) chaired by the chairperson of the ASSAf Committee on Scholarly Publishing in South Africa (CSPiSA), the Director of ASSAf's Scholarly Publishing Programme, and three Publishers' representatives elected by nomination and secret ballot amongst the Forum members. The term of office of the EC shall be three years.

## 6. Membership

- a) Membership in the Forum shall be open to all scholarly book publishers with their head office based in South Africa.
- b) Member publishers may nominate one member to serve on the CSPiSA. Nominees proposed by them, are eligible for selection by the Academy Council to serve on the Committee. The terms of office of individual members will be three years.

- c) There will be no membership fee if ASSAf has the funds to maintain the Forum.
- d) Membership will be renewed annually upon confirmation of continuation and relevant contact details needed to maintain the Forum network and database.
- e) Other relevant stakeholders, including higher education institutions, research funders, and government entities, may be given observer status at the Forum's general meetings at the Executive Committee's discretion.
- f) Member publishers may assign up to three delegates to attend Forum meetings.
- g) Members of the ASSAf CSPiSA will be given ex-officio observer status of the Forum, while academic publishers who do not publish scholarly books and institutional librarians may be given observer status at general meetings of the Forum, at the discretion of the Executive Committee.

## **7. Meetings**

- a) The Executive Committee, through the ASSAf secretariat, shall at least once a year convene a meeting of the Forum to discuss progress in achieving objectives.
- b) A special meeting of the Forum may be called if at least five members jointly request such a meeting.
- c) Meetings can be in-person or virtual, as decided by the Executive Committee.
- d) All Forum members will be invited to attend annual or special meetings by a notice of at least two months and a draft agenda supplied, requesting further items from the membership.
- e) Meetings shall be chaired by the Chairperson or acting Chairperson of the CSPiSA and organised by the Executive Committee.
- f) The quorum for a meeting of the Forum shall be 50% of the Membership; if there is no quorum at the beginning of a meeting, the members attending it may resolve to proceed with the agenda and circulate their deliberations and recommendations to the full membership for ratification.
- g) Resolutions of the Forum will be taken by a show of hands if at least two-thirds of those attending a meeting support a proposal or motion, provided there is a quorum.
- h) Minutes will be prepared by the ASSAf secretariat within 21 days after a meeting and distributed to all Forum members; those who attended the meeting will be asked to confirm the accuracy or otherwise of the draft minutes within a further period of 21 days, in which process the absence of a negative response will be taken as assent.

## **8. Funding**

- a) The costs of running the Forum will be incurred from the budget of ASSAf, which will ensure effective project management and servicing.
- b) Physical attendance by Forum members of annual or other meetings will, however, not be funded in terms of travel and/or accommodation.
- c) The Forum may institute additional sources of revenue to support the functions of the Forum, such as grants, sponsorships and collaborative initiatives.

## **9. Support**

ASSAf is responsible for maintaining, sustaining and providing support to the Forum and acting on its behalf as mandated by the membership, provided such action is in line with its own Statute and mission, as generally overseen by its governing Council. It shall, amongst its other activities, perform the following in support of the Forum:

- a) undertake or commission studies on matters of interest to the Forum;
- b) issue communiqués and public statements on issues of concern to the Forum;
- c) organise and hold workshops or develop policy advice on behalf of the Forum;
- d) investigate systemic aspects of scholarly book publishing, especially the possibility of a 'national scholarly book publishing fund';
- e) develop a database of scholarly book publishers in South Africa and other information resources to document and study the system;
- f) consider guidelines emanating from the Forum for best practice in scholarly book publishing, including peer review, editing, metadata, technological innovations, and other aspects of quality assurance that will enhance the quality, impact and dissemination of South African scholarly books; and
- g) co-operate with institutions and organisations with objectives similar to the Forum's.

#### **10. Duration**

The Forum shall be maintained while most members support its continuation, as tested by a resolution taken at each annual or special meeting, provided there is a quorum.

#### **11. Amendment of Terms of Reference**

The Terms of Reference may be amended from time to time by the Forum with the approval of the Academy of Science in South Africa (ASSAf), ensuring that the amendments align with the Forum's purpose and objectives.