

HSRC Press Book Proposal Guidelines

For authors and volume editors

The HSRC Press has three distinctive imprints: **HSRC Press** (flagship) is the peer-reviewed core imprint, grounded in policy-relevant social science and humanities research on South African society and the Global South. **AISA Press** - produced in partnership with the Africa Institute of South Africa, turns the lens outward to the continent, covering African politics, development, and international relations, and has the same double-blind peer-review rigour as the flagship imprint. **Best Red** is the accessible, general-nonfiction imprint that brings academic thinking to a broader readership - without the formal peer-review apparatus - bridging scholarly research and public understanding.

All new book proposals under the HSRC Press and AISA Press imprints are reviewed by an independent Editorial Board. Once a proposal is accepted, we invite the full manuscript for external double-blind peer review. Proposals for the Best Red imprint are reviewed by external reader(s) with expertise in publishing and are simultaneously evaluated internally for their marketability and commercial viability.

How to submit

1. Submit one complete proposal as a single Microsoft Word (.docx) file — we do not accept PDF submissions – along with two sample chapters in MS Word sent as separate attachments;
2. Third-party material (photos, figures, graphs) may be embedded as low-resolution files at proposal stage but must be captioned with source and copyright information.
3. Email your submission to: publishing@hsrc.ac.za

What your proposal must include

1. Indicate which imprint you are submitting your manuscript to;
2. Provisional book title;
3. Author(s)/editor(s) names, in the order they should appear on the cover;
4. Author biographies (max. 150 words each);
5. A description of the book (100–350 words): what it's about, why it matters, the gap it fills and the m/s relevancy/topicality;
6. Estimated manuscript length, and estimated number of illustrations/tables/figures/maps, noting copyright status and permissions (obtained or in progress); flag if colour reproduction is specifically required and why;
7. Table of contents, with a brief synopsis of each chapter;
8. Projected manuscript completion date, and any external deadlines (conferences, courses, funder requirements). Note: The HSRC Press has long lead times, so plan accordingly;

HSRC Board: Prof. Xoliswa Antoinette Mtose (Chairperson), Prof. Eleanor Alvira Hendricks, Dr Deenadayalen Konar, Prof. Ibbo Day Joseph Mandaza, Dr Alex Mohubetswane Mashilo, Mr Lumko Caesario Mtimde, Prof. Zerish Zethu Nkosi, Ms Busisiwe Nosiphiwo Glenrose Ramabodu, Adv. Faith Dikeledi Pansy Tlakula, Prof. Fiona Tregenna, Prof. Sarah Mosoetsa (CEO)
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9. Current CVs for all authors/editors, including contact details, current position, and ORCID/relevant professional profiles;
10. If you have submitted your proposal/manuscript elsewhere, inform your commissioning editor;
11. If you have funding to contribute to the publication, include the amount in your proposal, and the donor/funder information.

PhD-based proposals: These are considered only where the thesis has been substantially reworked into a book for a broader scholarly audience. It must show evidence of a restructured argument and style, reduced thesis apparatus, and positioned within wider debates.

Marketing information

We know this is hard to pin down this early, but it shapes how we position and promote your book, and it gives us your best initial thinking. You will refine this once the manuscript is further along, and a full marketing questionnaire will follow once a book is in production:

- Expected readership: primary and secondary readers, any tertiary/course-adoption potential, and whether there's realistic international interest. Include a brief rationale;
- Three or four comparable or competing titles already published by yourself or others. Include some HSRC Press titles;
- Any forthcoming conferences, exhibitions, or events tied to the subject, including possible launch opportunities and key dates;
- Any contacts - individuals, organisations, or media - who could help publicise the book, and a list of academic journals, bloggers, media personalities or podcasters well placed to review it.

What we look for

Scholarly soundness; originality and importance of the subject; credible methodology; a coherent structure and argument; clear writing; and relevance to current research, and to the HSRC Press's mandate and editorial priority areas.

Length guidelines

4. Single-authored monographs: 60,000–100,000 words;
5. Edited volumes: 80,000–130,000 words.

For edited volumes

Edited volumes succeed or fail on the strength of their editing. As volume editor/s, you are responsible for:

6. Giving contributors a clear, shared brief and theoretical/thematic framework;
7. Ensuring chapters speak to one another rather than standing alone. Circulate the introduction and chapter summaries (or ideally the full draft) to all contributors;
8. Writing an analytical introduction (not a summary of chapters) and, where useful, a forward-looking conclusion;
9. Enforcing a schedule and reviewing chapter quality before submission.

Format

10. Consistent referencing style throughout (confirm our house style with your commissioning editor);
11. List of acronyms, glossary of terms, and list of tables and illustrations, if used;

Once your manuscript is accepted for publication:

12. Figures/tables placed in the chapter text, with the underlying Excel/source file supplied separately;
13. Images at 300dpi or higher, with permissions cleared.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools

If generative AI tools were used in preparing the proposal or manuscript (for example, drafting, editing, translation, or research assistance), this must be disclosed to HSRC Press, including which tool(s) were used and for what purpose. AI tools may not be credited as an author, and may not be used to generate or fabricate data, sources, quotations, or citations. Authors remain fully responsible for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the submitted work. See our AI and Publication Ethics Policy for full detail on our website.

Contractual points to know

14. On acceptance, copyright is assigned to the HSRC, and a formal contract is issued to each author/editor (and, for volumes, each contributor);
15. HSRC Press is an open access, non-royalty-paying publisher (except for our Best Red imprint);
16. Authors warrant that the work is original, unpublished, and not plagiarised;
17. Authors are responsible for securing and paying for permissions to reproduce copyrighted material;
18. The HSRC Press holds final decision-making rights over the book title (for marketability and discoverability), cover design, editing, typesetting, format, and how the work is marketed and promoted - exercised in consultation with authors wherever possible;
19. The HSRC Press is obligated to publish your work within two years of acceptance of the final approved production-ready manuscript;
20. Authors are encouraged to provide book subventions and to support marketing and promotional efforts to publicise their work.

Additional information for authors

1. Timeline: For peer-reviewed books, on average, from proposal stage to print publication can take anywhere between 12 and 36 months. For non-peer-reviewed books, the timeline can be 12 – 18 months.
2. Accreditation: Books that have undergone our formal Editorial Board approval and peer review processes are eligible for the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) accreditation.

Should you have any further enquiries, please consult our website and contact our commissioning editor/s directly.

Yours,
The HSRC Press team