

DOI: 10.54861/27131211_2024_10_82

Editorial article

PAID PUBLICATION IN THE HAC JOURNAL: A REAL PRACTICE OR A SCOURGE OF MODERN SOCIETY?

*Lukina Kristina I.**independent researcher*Corresponding author: Lukina Kristina I.: lukina.kristina31@gmail.comORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-7358-2101>

Highlights

- Publications in the list of the Higher Attestation Commission are a prerequisite for conducting scientific activities for Russian researchers and graduate students.
- There are contradictions in the Russian discourse on charging for publication in scientific journals.
- The ethical side of the issue of the legality of paid publications of the Higher Attestation Commission is determined by the qualitative indicators of scientific publications, including transparency of the selection process and in-depth review of articles.

Abstract

Introduction: The article is devoted to a controversial issue regarding the ethical side of the paid publication of a scientific article in journals included in the list of the Higher Attestation Commission. It is shown that the popularity of paid publications of the Higher Attestation Commission is due to an increase in the number of mandatory publications for all categories of scientists and researchers, which contributes to the active development of commercial publications publishing scientific articles on a paid basis. The ethical problem lies in the fact that publication fees can lead to a situation where the importance of research is determined not by the quality of a scientific article, but by the financial capabilities of the authors.

Methods: The article uses methods of analysis, comparison, generalization and scientific understanding.

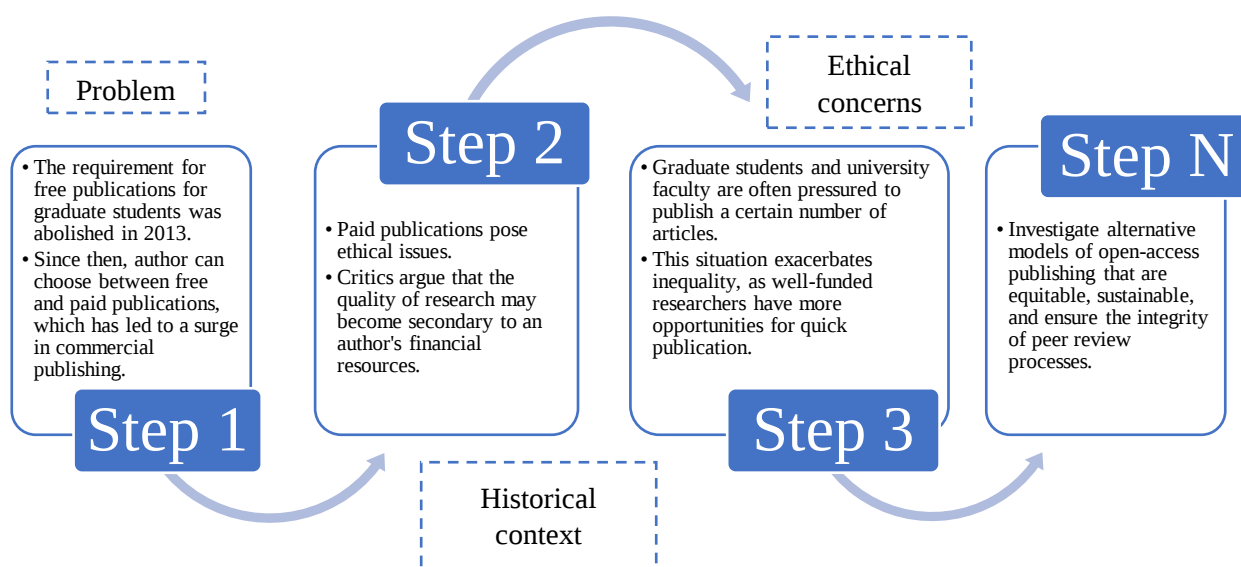
Results: As a result, it was concluded that the fee for publication in the journals of the Higher Attestation Commission is becoming more commonplace than an unnatural phenomenon, since the requirement for mandatory free publications of the Higher Attestation Commission for such a category of students as graduate students was abolished back in 2013. Consequently, authors have a free choice as to whether to publish on a commercial or non-commercial basis. However, since the requirements for articles from non-profit publications are quite high, in some cases

it is not possible to publish the required number of articles in free journals. In this regard, contacting commercial scientific publications recommended by the Higher Attestation Commission is justified.

Available data: No available data.

Discussion: The key criteria for deciding on the possibility of submitting a manuscript, from the author's point of view, are the requirements for the quality of research and the objectivity of peer review in the planned publication of the Higher Attestation Commission, and not the method of financing.

Graphical abstract



Keywords

Journal in the list of the Higher Attestation Commission, publication of the Higher Attestation Commission, nomenclature of scientific specialties, paid publication of the Higher Attestation Commission, free publication of the Higher Attestation Commission, publications for graduate students, scientific article of the Higher Attestation Commission.

JEL classification: A10, A23, Y70.

For citation: Lukina K.I. (2024). Paid publication in the Journal of the Higher Attestation Commission: Real Practice or the Scourge of Modern Society? *Progressive Economy*, 10, 82–90.

The article was submitted to the editorial office: 08/12/2024. Approved after review: 10/12/2024. Accepted for publication: 10/14/2024.

Introduction

To defend a dissertation for an academic degree [1], meet the qualification requirements of teaching staff for various positions that may differ in the context of specific requirements of the university [2], publications in publications from the list of Higher Attestation Commission (List of peer-reviewed scientific publications in which the main scientific results of dissertations for the degree of candidate of sciences, for the degree of doctor of sciences should be published) [3]. The number of publications in scientific journals included in the list of the Higher Attestation Commission (HAC) is regulated depending on the purpose of the author's publication.

For example, applicants for the PhD degree must publish at least 3 HAC articles, one of which must be published in journals classified in categories K1-K2, and this list may include publications indexed by the RSCI database. For the degree of Doctor of Science – at least 15 publications, of which at least 5 publications must be published in quartile K-1 or K-2 publications or in scientific publications indexed by the RSCI database. These requirements may vary depending on the field of science.

As of February 20, 2024, the list of journals from the Higher Attestation Commission includes 3,063 peer-reviewed scientific publications accredited under the new nomenclature of scientific specialties of the Higher Attestation Commission. Journals listed by the Higher Attestation Commission are paid free of charge or on a commercial basis. As a rule, journals that are founded by a university publish their manuscripts free of charge, while publications such as LLC or sole proprietor may charge for editorial expenses.

Modern scientific society is facing the growing influence of paid publications in scientific journals listed by the Higher Attestation Commission. The question of the expediency of paid publications has been repeatedly raised and discussed by the professional community. Some scientists see them as an opportunity to expand their audience and increase their reputation, while others criticize this practice as a manifestation of the commercialization of science.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the ethical side of the issue of paid publications in publications included in the list of the Higher Attestation Commission.

Methods

The article uses methods of analysis, comparison, generalization and scientific understanding.

Results

Until 2013, there was a clause "do not charge a publication fee for graduate students". The updated version (adopted after 2013) does not include a clause stating that journals should not be charged for publication. For example, O. V. Popova, analyzing scientific publications included in the list of the Higher Attestation Commission, comes to the conclusion that today there are "journals where they do not charge a fee for articles from graduate students, but they charge money from other categories of scientists". However, it is worth noting that this requirement is

exclusively the policy of some publications, and not the policy of the Higher Attestation Commission. requirements of the Higher Attestation Commission [4].

It is worth noting from the experience of colleagues from the editorial board of the journal "Progressive Economics" that 10–20 years ago, scientists rarely thought about paid publications: only a few went to graduate school, they did not require a strictly defined number of planned publications per year, so each teacher developed in the scientific environment at his own pace. Someone published actively, and many published 1-2 articles in the list of the Higher Attestation Commission. Journals from the free list of the Higher Attestation Commission accepted a good part of the papers submitted for review. Thus, it can be noted that the level of a number of articles was not too high, but at the same time theoretical articles of a review nature were published.

Competition creates demand. Over time, the number of postgraduates and applicants has increased dramatically (Fig. 1). For example, in 2022, the number of accepted postgraduates was the highest in the last 10 years. In 2022, 45,100 people were enrolled in postgraduate studies in Russia. This figure is 1.5 times higher than in 2021 (28,000 graduate students were accepted). The total number of graduate students increased to 109,700 by the end of 2022, compared to 90,200 by the end of 2021. The increase was due to both the increased attractiveness of a research career and the influence of "external factors" [5].

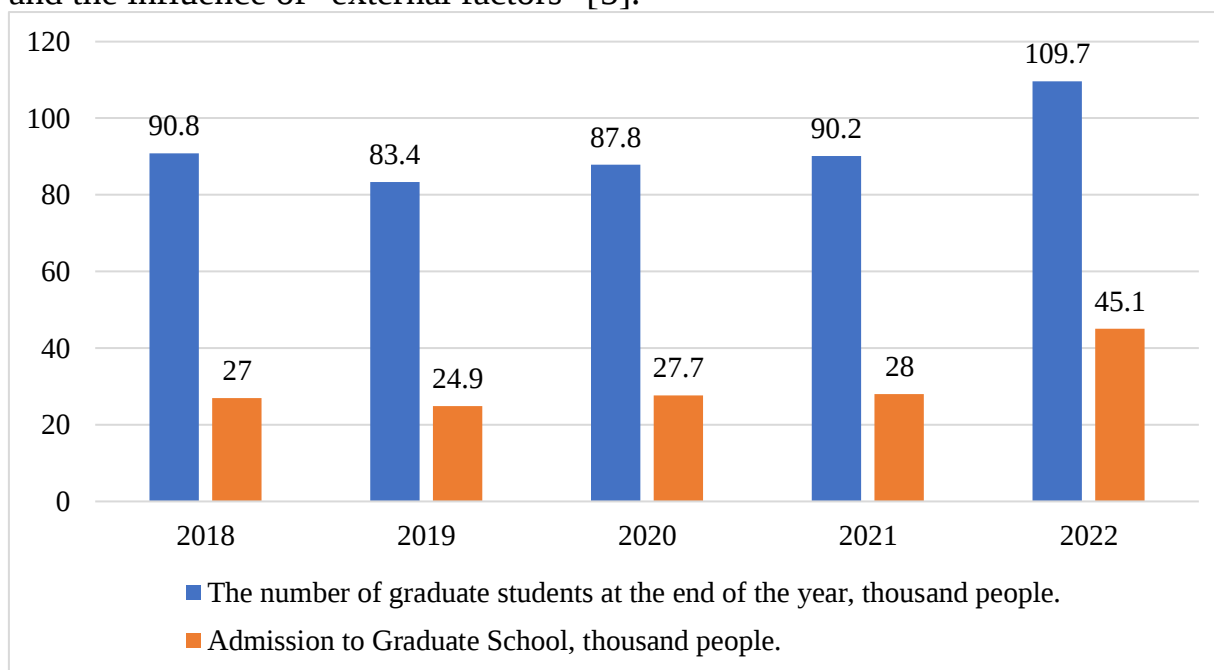


Fig. 1. Number of postgraduate students, thousand people for 2018-2022

Source: compiled by the author from [5]

If we talk about the ratio of graduates of postgraduate studies and their defense of dissertation research, the share of the latter does not exceed 13% in the period 2018-2022, with a positive forecast of the Institute for Statistical Research of the Knowledge Economy of the Higher School of Economics. According to the

presented data (Figure 2), in 2022, 13,900 people completed postgraduate programs, where 12.9% of them defended their dissertations, which is also higher than in the previous five years. In our opinion, the presented indicators are somewhat overestimated and make up no more than 10% of successful defenses out of the total number of graduate students and applicants. However, it was not possible to find statistics from other organizations, so we can say that the maximum increase in successful defenses occurred in 2022.

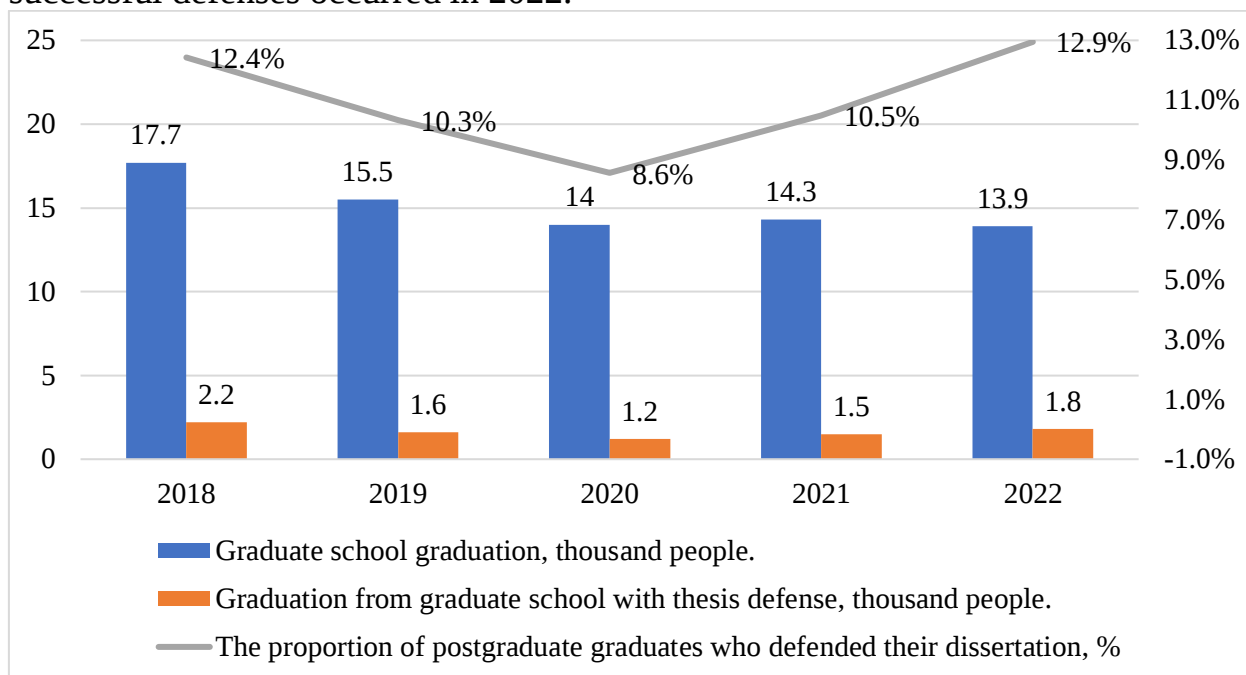


Fig. 2. Graduate school graduation, thousand people in 2018–2022

Source: compiled by the author from [5]

Analysis of the number of graduate students showed that in the reporting year 2022, the number of graduate students was the maximum, amounting to 109.7 thousand people. When studying in graduate school, mandatory publications of the Higher Attestation Commission are required, which raises the question of the possibility of "serving" such a large number of graduate students, not counting the research and teaching staff. In this case, if the PhD student does not publish on time, he / she risks being expelled. Therefore, free publications were replaced by commercial journals, through which some graduate students "lasted" several semesters.

In addition, due to the increase in the number of mandatory publications of the Higher Attestation Commission, it became relevant for university teachers to publish articles in a shorter time period through paid journals that had good impact factor indicators, reputation, and other parameters that are not inferior to University Journals. The requirements are increasing, and therefore free publications take a back seat for many, since the quality of the article, as a rule, should be much higher than in commercial peer-reviewed publications.

For example, to write an article of the Higher Attestation Commission in a reputable Russian publication (it concerns, in particular, economic, pedagogical and other related sciences), in fact, you need to write a candidate's or doctoral dissertation, but in a more concise form. The authors of articles are required to maintain a globally high level, while the requirements for the number of such publications are constantly increasing. To write a study of this kind, you need to have methodological, as well as mostly mathematical tools, then conduct an experimental study, identify relationships, etc.

The term of writing such an article may vary from six months to one and a half years, not including the terms of reviewing and publication by the peer-reviewed publication. At least three articles from the HAC list are required per year, so the question arises: how can I write 3 similar studies with the current workload of teachers? Trying to rewrite the same results three times is not a good idea. Moreover, if there is an overlap of texts (too much self-citation), the article (s) may be withdrawn (the scientific article may be retracted).

In addition to the general requirements for the publication of scientific articles from the HAC list, there are special requirements of universities that can form their own "white" list of journals in which you need to publish your articles, including often paid publications.

The ethical side of the issue of the legality of paid publications of the Higher Attestation Commission is determined by the following provisions:

1. 2013 was a turning point when the mandatory requirement for free publications of the Higher Attestation Commission for such a category of students as graduate students was abolished. This requirement did not apply to the teaching staff of scientific researchers, hence even 10–15 years ago there were commercial publications that charged for editorial services.

2. The increase in the number of mandatory publications for all categories of scientists and researchers contributed to the active development of the commercial sector and the creation of publications that publish on a paid basis. At the same time, the ethical side is more concerned with distinguished older scientists who did not participate in the "write more articles than your neighbor" race at one time. During this period, authors have a free choice as to whether to publish on a paid or free basis.

3. Some of the faculty members make "unsubscriptions" to paid journals, which are inherently predatory (they publish any text for money), since their manuscripts will never be accepted in reputable publications, and if the conditions are not met, the teacher may lose his place.

4. Many scientists believe that paying for a publication violates the principles of science and the integrity of the scientific community. This can lead to a situation where the importance of research is determined not by the quality of the scientific article, but by the financial capabilities of the authors. Opponents of paid publication argue that the practice of such publications in HAC journals can distort scientific knowledge and undermine the credibility of scientific research.

Significant differences between publications in commercial and non-commercial publications are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Differences between free and commercial publications in Higher Attestation Commission publications

Comparison parameters	Non-commercial journal	Commercial journal
Article type	Practice-oriented article (calculations, experiment)	Review articles, methodological and analytical articles are allowed Research
complexity	Identification of significant scientific results (similar to a dissertation), real novelty, formulation of the hypothesis that the author proves in the course of the research	There may be mediocre (nominal) results and novelty (or lack of novelty, hypothesis)
Article length	From 6 pages (14 font, one-and-a-half interval)	As a rule, 25 thousand characters or more, not including metadata and a list of references
Originality	From 70% in the Anti-plagiarism system university without taking into account the list of sources and metadata	As a rule, from 85% of the test article. Most publications do not specify the method of checking the article (including the list of sources or not, etc.).
The review period	is from 2–3 days to 1 month.	On average, 5–6 months.

Source: compiled by the author

The presented comparison parameters are not exhaustive, but on their basis modern researchers can make informed decisions regarding the choice of a specific HAC publication for publishing a scientific article. The main criteria that the author relies on when making a decision on submitting a manuscript are the requirements for the quality of research and the objectivity of peer review in the intended journal, and not the source of funding.

Available data

No available data.

Discussion

To date, payment for publication in HAC journals has become more commonplace than unnatural, but universities continue to fight diligently against such publications, approving "white lists of journals" within each educational

organization, thereby limiting graduate students / applicants in choosing a journal, despite the fact that the dissertation councils do not provide for such requirements: It is important that the article is published in a Higher Attestation Commission publication accredited for your scientific specialty nomenclature.

Despite the presence of quite a significant number of paid publications in the list of the Higher Attestation Commission, Russian science sees a serious problem in paid publications.

First, publication fees can become a financial barrier for authors, especially for those who work in low-funded research fields. This can lead to limited access to scientific information and a narrowing of the number of researchers who can publish their work.

Secondly, paying for a publication can increase the risk of "predatory journals" that accept articles without proper evaluation and peer review, in order to gain commercial benefits, which can negatively affect the quality of scientific publications and undermine the credibility of the academic environment. It should also be noted that paying for publication in HAC journals does not always guarantee a high level of peer review and editorial work. Some journals may abuse this practice by accepting articles without proper quality control of the manuscript. In the context of modern society, scientific information should be accessible to all researchers without financial constraints. Paid publication may limit the availability of scientific results and slow down their dissemination and use in the scientific community.

However, for the sake of justice, it is worth mentioning the example of foreign publications in the Scopus database, which do not see problems in a paid publication, where the fee only for reviewing an article is \$ 125, and many authors accept these conditions as due. When submitting an article, the author must pay a submission fee (review fee). In this case, the article may be rejected by the editor without sending it for review. You can only resubmit the article after paying the fee again.

Thus, the fee for publication in HAC journals has its pros and cons. It is important to develop alternative open access models that are more equitable and financially sustainable. At the same time, it is necessary to ensure transparency in the process of selecting and reviewing articles in order to guarantee high quality of scientific publications, which directly depends on the quality of peer review, first of all, regardless of the fee-free and commercial basis for accepting manuscripts.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

K.I. Lukina Coordination. Data interpretation, Writing – Original draft preparation.

Declaration of competing interest

The author declare that he has no conflicts of interest.

Acknowledgements

No available data.

Funding

Without financial support.

References

1. Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 842 of 24.09.2013 (as amended on 26.10.2023) On the procedure for awarding academic degrees. *SPS Consultant Plus*. Retrieved from: https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_152458/.
2. Qualification requirements (qualification requirements) for the positions of ITMO University teaching staff related to the teaching staff with the size of official salaries. *ITMO University*. Retrieved from: https://job.itmo.ru/uploads/documents/kv/kvalifikatsionnye_trebovaniia_po_dolzhestviam_professorsko_prepodavatelskogo.pdf.
3. List of peer-reviewed scientific publications in which the main scientific results of dissertations for the degree of Candidate of Sciences, for the degree of Doctor of Sciences (as of 20.02.2024) should be published. *Higher Attestation Commission of the Russian Federation*. Retrieved from: <https://vak.minobrnauki.gov.ru/uploader/loader?type=19&name=91107547002&f=22243>.
4. Popova O. V. (2020). Writing scientific articles for publication in publications included in the list of peer-reviewed scientific publications recommended by the Higher Attestation Commission: methodological recommendations. *Altai State Humanitarian and Pedagogical University named after V. M. Shukshin. Biysk: FSBEI HE "AGSPU"*, 27.
5. The number of graduate students accepted in 2022 was the highest in the last 10 years. *Vedomosti*. Retrieved from: <https://www.vedomosti.ru/society/articles/2023/05/16/975178-chislo-prinyatih-v-2022-godu-aspirantov-stalo-maksimalnim-za-10-let>.