

Licensing Forum



Decline in Photocopying

- a feasibility survey was conducted prior to establishment of ERRA at the beginning of the pandemic that highlighted practices of photocopying and digital reproduction among students and faculty. However, since that period, a marked transformation has occurred.
- HEIs in the UAE largely rely on digital access to learning materials through direct agreements with publishers which are disseminated through institutional learning management systems and e-libraries. During the pandemic, universities redirected much of their library budgets towards digital platforms and subscriptions, a trend that continues to define their content-access strategies.
- In most cases, where materials are not covered under bulk subscription plans, institutions procure content directly from publishers or through intermediaries services.



Direct licensing and Rights Clearance

The feedback we have received from UAE HEIs indicates strong reliance on publisher-provided databases and subscriptions. These typically include permissions for downloading, printing, link-sharing, etc., activities that traditionally fall within the scope of RRO licensing. Furthermore, the technological safeguards built into these systems limit reproduction beyond licensed parameters.

Where materials are procured individually, institutions often clear reproduction rights directly with publishers or intermediaries. Unlike the technological safeguards built-into the bulk subscriptions, those remain absent in such individually procured materials risking reuse across academic years or exceeding the initially declared number of users.

In this context, ERRA's challenge lies in demonstrating the added value of a blanket license in an environment where institutions perceive their existing arrangements as comprehensive. Many HEIs consider that an ERRA license would not necessarily harmonize or enhance their existing practices, but could instead duplicate rights already cleared through publishers or intermediaries.



Market Dynamics

The UAE hosts a diverse higher education ecosystem comprising both international branch campuses and locally established institutions. While some institutions pursue accreditation through the UAE's Ministry of Higher Education, others rely on academic recognition from their home jurisdictions.

In the past year, ERRA has engaged with nearly all higher education institutions (HEIs) in the country. These engagements have offered valuable insights into the challenges and evolving realities surrounding educational licensing, particularly in an environment where access to content is increasingly digital and globally sourced.

As a relatively young RRO, ERRA operates in a territory where universities have long-standing academic affiliations abroad. Many international branch campuses draw curricula, content, and compliance standards from their parent institutions in countries with well-established RRO systems.



Classification and Key structure

Recognizing the classification of institutions as Public and Private in the UAE, ERRA has already introduced two differentiated fee tiers, designed to ease the financial burden on Public institutions while ensuring fair compensation for rightsholders. Although Public HEIs are not profit-making entities, they still charge market-standard tuition fees and reinvest funds to enhance educational quality. Most such Public HEIs operate at the Emirate level.



Federally Funded Institutions

Through our discussions with HEIs, we understand that certain federally funded institutions provide education either free of cost or at heavily subsidized rates. For these institutions, payment of a license fee represents an additional expense for the government, which also serves as the regulator. This overlap has contributed to slower decision-making and hesitancy in adopting licensing models, as the issue spans multiple ministries and financial oversight bodies, while also raising concerns about the fee amount given the large student populations involved.

Government Collaboration

- **Proposed Third Tier**

ERRA is currently exploring the creation of a separate licensing tier tailored for federally funded HEIs. The goal is to encourage participation and build trust by positioning licensing not as a financial burden, but as a strategic investment in the UAE's knowledge-based economy.

- **Awareness and Government Collaboration**

Awareness of the copyright-based economy remains limited within certain regulatory agencies. ERRA is therefore exploring opportunities to organize joint awareness campaigns with government entities to promote adoption of licensing models, both among federally funded and other public HEIs.

Thank you