



BIC Metadata Excellence Award (MEA)

Publisher Guidelines

Prepared by Karina Urquhart
August 2024 Version 1.2

Copyright © 2024 Book Industry Communication Ltd.



Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Section 1: Introduction	3
Accreditation Fees	3
Levels of accreditation	3
Metadata Sets used for each level of accreditation	3
Digital Tick and the ONIX 3.0 Badge	3
Use of <i>Thema</i> and ONIX 3.0.....	4
Section 2: Qualifying Criteria	4
Section 3: Items In and Out of Scope for Accreditation	5
Section 4: Delivery of Metadata to Assessors from Publishers / 3rd Parties	5
Section 5: Measuring the Metadata	5
Measuring New ISBNs / GTINs	6
Measuring all Old ISBNs / GTINs	6
Using both scores to help determine the accreditation level.....	6
BIC MEA Accreditation Summary Grid	7
Reports submitted to the BIC MEA Accreditation Panel.....	7
Price & Availability metadata from 3 rd Party Distributors.....	7
Confirming publisher of record.....	8
Hierarchy.....	8
Missing metadata.....	8
Section 6: Calculating the Accreditation Result	9
Section 7: Granting Certification	9
Duration of certification	9
Renewals	10
Deferrals.....	10
Section 8: Confidentiality	10
Appendix A: Definitions of Dates Referred to in this Document	10

Section 1: Introduction

This document outlines the criteria and principles of the refreshed BIC MEA Accreditation Scheme for applying and renewing publishers and is to be used in accordance with:

- i) [The BIC MEA Quality Checks \(QC\) Grid](#) and
- ii) [The BIC MEA Metadata Elements Grid](#)

The two grids, above, detail exactly which metadata elements are:

- “Mandatory”, i.e. field is mandatory,
- “Conditional”, i.e. field is mandatory if certain conditions are met, or
- “Recommended”, i.e. for best practice purposes but excluded from accreditation measures.

Only the metadata data elements labelled as “Mandatory” and “Conditional” will be measured under this scheme. Additional QC will form part of this revised scheme and details of these conditional checks can be found on the QC Grid document referenced above.

Wherever “publication date” is referred to in this document (or in any other BIC documentation relating to this accreditation scheme), please always read as “publication date or – for books published elsewhere and subsequently made available in the UK market – the UK market publication date, whichever is the latest”.

For full definitions of the various dates referred to in this document, please refer to Appendix A.

Accreditation Fees

Fully paid-up BIC member organisations are eligible to apply for accreditation under this scheme free-of-charge as part of their membership benefits.

At time of writing (August 2024) non-member organisations are still currently able to apply free-of-charge, but from 1st January 2025 a non-refundable Application Fee will be introduced.

Full information regarding this can be found in the [Accreditation Schemes Charges Policy document](#).

We advise non-member organisations wishing to apply to (or renew) this scheme, to read this document in its entirety before applying since it details the process for notifying BIC of the intent to apply/renew, how to pay the fee, when and so on.

BIC member organisations will still be able to apply free-of-charge after 1st January 2025 and thereafter apart of their BIC member benefits

Levels of accreditation

There are 3 levels of BIC MEA accreditation as follows:

1. Gold
2. Silver
3. Bronze

Metadata Sets used for each level of accreditation

Each level of MEA accreditation is achieved using a combination of distinct metadata element sets depending on the accreditation level. There are 3 metadata element sets as follows:

1. BIC Advanced
2. BIC Intermediate
3. BIC Basic

Digital Tick and the ONIX 3.0 Badge

Under the new scheme there will be no Digital Tick or ONIX 3.0 Badge. Accreditation will be based on the applicant’s full range of book products.

Use of *Thema* and ONIX 3.0

- The Gold level of accreditation is not achievable without using *Thema* and the latest major version of ONIX (at launch, this is ONIX 3.0).
- The Silver level of accreditation is not achievable without using *Thema*. The use of either of the last two major versions of ONIX (at launch, this is ONIX 2.1 or 3.0) is accepted.
- The Bronze level of accreditation is not achievable without using *Thema*. The use of either ONIX 3.0, ONIX 2.1, an electronic file in an 'ONIX compatible' tabular format[§], or data supplied via a web portal is accepted.

Please consult the Metadata Elements Grid, referred to above, for more detail.

§ an 'ONIX-compatible' tabular format includes CSV, tab-separated or Excel files which use ONIX terminology and controlled vocabularies ('codelists') in key columns, e.g. to indicate format, edition type, etc. Full details of this requirement are given in the Metadata Elements Grid.

Section 2: Qualifying Criteria

Criteria for publishers applying for accreditation

To qualify for consideration for accreditation, publishers must meet the following requirements:

1. Publish a minimum of 10 new products per year and each year for the last 5 years. Newly formed organisations will be treated by exception but must have already published at least 10 new products. New publishers will need at least 6 months' worth of data by publication date to be considered for accreditation;
2. Be UK-based, or actively selling to the UK market;
3. For all levels of accreditation publishers must:
 - Send metadata feeds to at least 2 UK Data Aggregators* and at least one BIC Assessor†.
 - Be able to send a full metadata file to 2 UK Data Aggregators and at least one BIC assessor annually upon request (the only exception to this is publishers using a web portal only).
 - Send delta files to at least 2 UK Data Aggregators and at least one BIC assessor at least monthly (the only exception to this is publishers using a web portal only).

Publishers failing to comply with all the above points regarding feeds without good reason** are not eligible for accreditation. If a feed (either full or delta) has not been sent to at least 2 UK Data aggregators in the last 6 months prior to application for / renewal of accreditation the BIC assessor will report this to BIC so that the publisher's application / renewal of accreditation can be rejected / deferred.

*Please note that for the Bronze level of accreditation only, publishers need only send metadata feeds to at least 1 UK Data Aggregator (and at least one BIC Assessor†). All other terms / conditions listed above in this section apply. A list of the UK's data aggregators and BIC's assessors can be found on [main MEA page](#) on the BIC website:

† The BIC assessor may or may not be one of the UK data aggregators

** Reasons must be put in writing to BIC proactively (via info@bic.org.uk) and in advance of the relevant quarterly BIC MEA Accreditation Panel meeting that relates to their application, so that the Panel is able to consider them.

Section 3: Items In and Out of Scope for Accreditation

The refreshed accreditation scheme measures metadata at ISBN and/or GTIN level.

Items included in the measures for accreditation

- All book products where the metadata shows the ISBN/GTIN is for sale in the UK, available to the general trade and/or part of the UK (e.g. airside editions). In the case of multi-national publishers, all titles made available to the UK originating from overseas divisions of the same company. The UK includes GBAIR, GB, GG, JE, IM.
- All formats (including e-books, audio, and digital-audio).
- All methods of manufacture (including Print on Demand).

Items out of scope for accreditation

- Where metadata indicates an ISBN/GTIN is Abandoned.
- Where metadata indicates an ISBN/GTIN is Out of Print.
- Where metadata indicates the ISBN/GTIN is not for sale anywhere in the UK as defined by the sales rights.
- Retailer exclusive ISBNs. Please note, however, it is the publisher's responsibility to ensure that such ISBNs are either:
 - excluded from data aggregator/assessor feeds or
 - are clearly and accurately shown in the metadata to be retailer exclusive, AND with which retailer they are associated.

If neither of these steps are done proactively by the publisher, the ISBNs will be included in the accreditation measures and will affect the result accordingly.

Scope of the Submitted Metadata File

- Publishers will be measured on their product range (including e-books, audio books, digital-audio books, Print on Demand / Virtual stock ISBNs) as outlined above, and as such should submit their full product range per publisher and/or distinct business unit as appropriate.
- Where there is more than a single assessor, BIC will seek to aggregate statistics from different / multiple assessors if a publisher is not sending its entire product range (in accordance with what is listed in "Items in Scope for Accreditation") to any single BIC assessor. However, this might not accurately reflect the publisher's real performance, and publishers should if possible, ensure at least one assessor receives data for the full product range. There is currently one BIC assessor which is Nielsen Book.

Section 4: Delivery of Metadata to Assessors from Publishers / 3rd Parties

- Electronic delivery of all metadata is compulsory for all levels of the accreditation scheme. Electronic delivery means via ONIX for Books, web portals, or consistently structured tabular electronic files such as spreadsheets.
- Whichever delivery method is used, it is a requirement of the scheme that all submissions be made using the ONIX for Books code list structure and vocabulary. Note that this includes data delivered via a tabular electronic file (CSV, Tab-separated, or spreadsheet file).
- To qualify for the highest 2 levels of accreditation, metadata must be delivered via an ONIX file. One of the requirements for achieving the Gold level of accreditation is that metadata is delivered via the latest major version of ONIX for Books available (at scheme launch, this is ONIX 3.0).

Section 5: Measuring the Metadata

- Both "New" and "Old" ISBN's/GTINs are measured under the refreshed BIC MEA scheme.
- All measurements will be cumulative each month for each of these two ISBN/GTIN categories

- The measurement process will take place after automated processing of data in the BIC assessor's internal systems.

Measuring New ISBNs/GTINs

For the purposes of this accreditation scheme, the term “New” refers to those ISBNs/GTINs (regardless of format or method of manufacture / production) that have been published within the 12 months prior to accreditation.

- Completeness and Timeliness Measures for New ISBNs/GTINs:

For all levels of accreditation, the relevant metadata element set needs to be fully complete a minimum of 16 weeks (112 calendar days) before publication date for a minimum of 60% of the New Title ISBNs - this is for all formats, with the exception of digital audio books only. For digital audio books the relevant metadata element set needs to be fully complete a minimum of 3 weeks (21 days) before publication for a minimum of 60% of the New Title ISBNs. *N.B. publication date is not to be confused with expected availability date.*

- Measuring Timeliness:

Timeliness is measured upon publication date. The arrival of the last data element that renders the record complete is the date the record is considered to be complete.

If a publication date changes and is brought forward, e.g. from 25th April 2019 to 4th April 2019, timeliness criteria may be adversely affected, as the timeliness deadline will also be brought forward: there will be a 3-week reduction in time to ensure a complete record is achieved.

If a publication date drops back, e.g. from 25th April 2019 to 30th May 2019, more time is available for the publisher to complete the record in accordance with the timeliness criteria.

Timeliness is always backward looking from the most recently received publication date held by the assessor. *It is always the applying / renewing publisher's responsibility to ensure the correct publication date is given to the assessor and to ensure that any 3rd party sending this information to the assessor on behalf of the publisher does so in a timely manner.*

Measuring all Old ISBNs/GTINs

For the purposes of this accreditation scheme, the term “Old” refers to all ISBNs/GTINs (regardless of format or method of manufacture / production) that have a publication date more than 12 months in the past at time of accreditation and are reported by the publisher and/or its designated 3rd party as being available for purchase and/or order (i.e. are NOT reported as Out of Print or Abandoned). Since the publication date is in the past, timeliness is not measured for Old ISBNs/GTINs. Completeness is measured, however.

- Completeness Measures for all Old ISBNs/GTINs:

For all levels of accreditation, the relevant metadata element set needs to be complete for a minimum of 80% of the Old ISBNs for all formats. *N.B. publication date is not to be confused with availability date.*

Using both scores to help determine the accreditation level

In addition to the metadata feed requirements already outlined above, **both** minimum percentage measures from the New ISBNs/GTINs and the Old ISBNs/GTINs need to be reached for each level of accreditation. For example, if a publisher submitting the BIC Advanced metadata set via ONIX 3.0 achieves 95% complete & timely for New ISBNs and only 75% completeness for its Old titles using the BIC Intermediate metadata set, the publisher would not qualify for Gold. Instead, the publisher would need to be assessed for its suitability for Silver or Bronze.

The relationship between level of accreditation, metadata element set, delivery method, New and/or Old ISBNs is shown in the BIC Product Data Excellence Accreditation Summary Grid below:

BIC Metadata Excellence Award Accreditation Summary Grid

Accreditation Level	Web portal/Structured electronic file*	Use of ONIX 2.1	Use of ONIX 3.0	Use of <i>Thema</i>	New ISBNs			Old ISBNs		
					Minimum BIC data set	% complete and timely	QC %**	Minimum BIC data set	% complete	QC %**
Gold	Not accepted for Gold level	Not accepted for Gold level	Required for Gold Level	Required from launch of scheme	BIC Advanced	60%	TBC	BIC Intermediate	80%	TBC
Silver	Not accepted for Silver level	Required for Silver level	Accepted for Silver level	Required from launch of scheme	BIC Intermediate	60%	TBC	BIC Basic	80%	TBC
Bronze	Required for Bronze level	Accepted for Bronze level	Accepted for Bronze level	Required from launch of scheme	BIC Basic	60%	TBC	BIC Basic	80%	TBC

*The structured electronic file should use ONIX 3.0 compatible data formats and ONIX 3.0 controlled vocabulary.

**Will need to be accurate a minimum of 16 weeks before publication date (3 weeks before publication date for digital audio). BIC will announce the minimum % criteria after launch of revised scheme then start measuring in earnest 6 months later. Publishers are advised to address the QC requirements ASAP, i.e. not wait for this announcement. This is due to the collection of data being on a cumulative basis.

Over the life of the scheme, it is expected that the minimum percentage requirements will rise. BIC will issue advance notification to all accredited organisations regarding any such changes that may be planned regarding this.

Reports submitted to the BIC MEA Accreditation Panel

The BIC assessor(s) will submit summary reports to the BIC MEA Accreditation Panel members in time for each accreditation review meeting. The summary reports / measures used by the Accreditation Panel will review the preceding 12 months and the final cumulative figures (for i) New and ii) Old ISBNs/GTINs) will be the ones used to help determine if each publisher should be accredited and at which level. This is in addition to the requirements regarding metadata feeds detailed above. To this end, the BIC assessor(s) will report to BIC separately on the following criteria:

- Data format
- The version of ONIX used by the publisher
- Ability to send full files.
- Update (delta file) frequency

These will be reported on at the metadata supplier level rather than the ISBN level, based on the supplier's feed profile and a typical sample feed, rather than a check on every file or record.

Price & Availability (P&A) metadata from 3rd Party Distributors

- The scheme judges the combined performance standards of publishers and their distributors (where applicable).
- It is the publisher's responsibility to ensure that the assessor always has accurate imprint hierarchy information and distribution details.
- It is the publisher's responsibility to always ensure their distributor is providing P&A metadata in an accurate and timely manner. Inaccuracies and poor timeliness in this area may affect the overall accreditation result for the publisher.

Confirming Publisher of Record

- The publisher needs to confirm to the BIC assessor that they (the publisher) are the publisher of record for their range of ISBNs/GTINs and that the information on their ISBNs/GTINs will only come from the UK and not international subsidiaries.

Hierarchy

- It is the responsibility of the publisher to ensure that their imprint / publisher hierarchy information is always accurate and consistent. The assessor should confirm this information with the publisher prior to beginning any measuring. Both publisher and imprint are mandatory fields in all 3 of the BIC metadata sets for this scheme.
- It is the publisher's responsibility to ensure the naming convention for both publisher name and imprint name is always consistent. Inconsistency of naming convention in this area should be noted by the assessor and could adversely affect the publisher's accreditation result.

Missing metadata

The BIC assessor will prioritise the metadata received from the publisher of record and its nominated distributor. However, in those instances where required metadata elements are missing from the record supplied by the publisher / distributor, the BIC assessor will look to other sources (e.g. an overseas arm of the same publisher, and/or a distributor in another territory) to provide the missing information. In many cases this will improve the completeness of the metadata but may call into question its accuracy or timeliness. To avoid any issues with accuracy and timeliness, BIC always recommends that as complete a metadata set as possible is provided for all ISBNs/GTINs in the first instance by the publisher of record. The collection of missing metadata from third parties in this way by the assessor will generally tend to work to the applying publisher's benefit, but if data from publisher / distributor is incomplete, the effect of poor or incorrect data from third parties cannot be excluded.

Section 6: Calculating the Accreditation Result

The following chart shows how the annual accreditation results will be calculated / monitored by the assessor:

Refreshed BIC Product Data Accreditation Scheme								
Worked Example of Assessor Measured Stats								
Stats measured on a cumulative monthly basis								
Publisher	Data Set	Using ONIX 3.0?	Using Thema ?	New ISBNs		Old ISBNs	Result (decided by BIC Accreditation Panel)	Reason for result
				% Complete	% Complete and Timely (target = 60%)	% Complete (target = 80%)		
Publisher A	BIC Basic	Yes	No	95	85	95	No award	Not using Thema . If using Thema would have been awarded Gold
	BIC Intermediate			90	80	90		
	BIC Advanced			86	78	N/A		
Publisher B	BIC Basic	No	Yes	95	85	90	Silver award	Not using ONIX 3.0 so can only be considered for Bronze or Silver. If using ONIX 3.0 would have been awarded Gold
	BIC Intermediate			80	70	82		
	BIC Advanced			65	61	N/A		
Publisher C	BIC Basic	Yes	Yes	90	58	81	No award	Failed to meet 60% minimum for % complete and timely target for New ISBNs
	BIC Intermediate			78	59	78		
	BIC Advanced			40	38	N/A		
Publisher D	BIC Basic	No	Yes	70	65	82	Bronze award	Silver would have been awarded if 60% minimum for New ISBNs against BIC Intermediate data had been reached
	BIC Intermediate			65	59	70		
	BIC Advanced			40	38	N/A		
Publisher E	BIC Basic	Yes	Yes	81	70	95	Silver award	Gold would have been awarded if 80% minimum for Old ISBNs against BIC Intermediate data had been reached
	BIC Intermediate			75	65	79		
	BIC Advanced			65	60	N/A		
Publisher F	BIC Basic	Yes	Yes	99	90	95	Gold award	Achieved minimum targets set for both intermediate and advanced data sets. Using ONIX 3.0 and Thema
	BIC Intermediate			85	78	81		
	BIC Advanced			75	65	N/A		
Indicates the deciding stats/criteria for level award given								
Indicates the reason for no award/failure to achieve higher level of award								
Assumes all other requirements (as detailed above) have also been met								

Please note: how the new QC % figures will fit into the calculations (above) are to be determined by BIC after the launch date of the scheme once sufficient data has been collected and reviewed. Applicants to the scheme will be given 6 months' warning after this announcement. However, BIC strongly advises publishers to address the QC requirements ASAP, i.e. not wait for this announcement. This is due to the collection of data being on a cumulative basis.

Section 7: Granting Certification

- Certification will be granted at the sole discretion of an independent BIC Accreditation Panel on the basis of information provided on the application questionnaire, and the information provided by the BIC assessor, parts of which will be reviewed by the UK data aggregators, to confirm that observed performance is consistent with the information provided.
- The BIC MEA Accreditation Panel meets on a quarterly basis to consider new applications, reaccreditations and to review currently accredited publishers' performance.
- The decision of the BIC MEA Accreditation Panel will be final and not subject to appeal. Publishers whose applications have been rejected are, however, entitled to reapply when at least six months have passed from the initial decision of the accreditation panel.

Duration of certification

Certification will be granted for a period of one year.

Renewals

After initial accreditation under the refreshed scheme, renewals for fully paid-up BIC member organisations will be automatically reviewed by the BIC MEA Accreditation Panel without the need for another completed questionnaire, unless something substantial has changed for the applying publisher.

For organisations wishing to renew their accreditation that are not BIC members, from 1st January 2025 onwards consideration for renewal by BIC will no longer be automatic. There will be an Application Fee due for payment in advance of any renewal being considered/reviewed. BIC advises non-member applicants to read its [Accreditation Scheme Charges Policy](#) in full before applying for renewal. This document details how to apply for renewal, how to make the payment and so on.

Deadlines

Deadlines for first applications/renewals will always be published on the BIC website. For this reason, it is imperative that accredited organisations keep BIC informed of any organisational changes that affect the main point of contact for the scheme.

Deferrals

Where it is not possible to grant accreditation, or renewal of accreditation, accreditations may (at the request of the publisher and the sole discretion of the Accreditation Panel) be extended for a maximum of six months (i.e. two quarters) after which they will be reassessed. Justification for an extension should be supplied by the requesting publisher in advance of the deadline. Reasons for the Accreditation Panel to grant an extension might include a significant merger or acquisition affecting the scope of a publisher's data feed, or a significant systems' change at the publisher or 3rd party providing the feed. Extensions will not be granted for the late or non-payment of the Application Fee by a non-member organisation.

Section 8: Confidentiality

BIC, the BIC Accreditation Panel, the UK data aggregators, and BIC assessor(s) are required to keep all publisher accreditation metrics confidential and not to share them with any parties other than the publisher concerned. Only the result of an accreditation (or loss of accreditation) will be made public.

Appendix A: Definitions of Dates Referred to in this Document

(All definitions listed below are taken from EDItEUR's ONIX for Books Implementation and Best Practice Guide Release 3.1 revision1, dated March 2024).

Publication date

The date on which the product is nominally 'published', though not necessarily the exact date on which it first becomes available at retail.

This date is used for advance planning and is associated with various business processes: it may be linked to the invoice date for product copies delivered prior to publication, to delivery guarantees offered to retailers, to the timing of promotional activity, or to bibliographic cataloguing. However, it is not necessarily the date on which copies of the product will be delivered to retailers, nor the earliest date a retailer may begin retail sales to consumers, nor is it the earliest date on which a consumer may place an advance order ('pre-order') a copy of the product. Actual availability of stock to the retailer may be no more than a few days prior to the nominal publication date, and (excepting cases of issues in distribution) no *later* than the publication date;

- retailers receiving stock prior to the publication date are not expected to wait until the publication date to begin retail sales or pre-order fulfillment, unless an embargo has been set. In the absence of an embargo, fulfillment to consumers may begin as soon as stock is available;
- since most products do not have an embargo date, it is very common for retail sales or advance order fulfillment to begin a few days before the publication date;

- advertising and promotional activity is often timed to coincide with (or refer to) the publication date, but if exact synchronization is required, an embargo or strict on-sale date should be set;
- some publishers choose to term the earliest date on which a consumer may take possession of a product as a 'publication date'. In ONIX, this is a 'sales embargo date', and in an ONIX message, any such embargo date must be set *in addition to* the publication date, not *instead of* a pub date;
- note that librarians often view the Date of first publication as the 'publication date'.

Market publication date

For internationally-traded books, the 'publication date' often varies between markets. For any one market, there is a single date, and strictly, only the *earliest* of these dates across several markets is the publication date. Later dates, in other markets, are often termed market publication dates, local publication dates and so on. In ONIX, where there are several market publication dates, the earliest of these should be listed in the <PublishingDate> composite in Group P.20 to reflect the 'global' status of the book. The individual market publication dates should be listed in the <MarketDate> composite in P25;

- in most cases, the earliest date will be the date of publication in the publisher's home or primary market, but this is not always the case. Where a publisher arranges early availability in a foreign market, the arrangement should be treated as *delayed* availability in the home market. It is that *early* date that is the publication date quoted in the <PublishingDate> composite. To avoid any doubt, both markets should include an explicit market publication date in the <MarketDate> composite.

Expected Availability date

This is the date on which physical stock is expected to be released from the distributor or wholesaler to the retailer, sometimes also called the expected ship date or the release date – stock is released from the warehouse and shipping to the customer begins. For electronic products, this is the date on which master files are expected to be released to the retail platform or retailer;

- this is never carried in <PublishingDate>. It is specified in <SupplyDate> ([List 166](#)), as it is a feature of the distribution arrangements for the product, but is discussed here for convenience;
- the Expected availability date is typically a week or so before the nominal publication date. Physical stock may take a few days after the Expected availability date to reach the retailer, so should be delivered to the retailer prior to publication. In the absence of an Embargo date, it may be placed on sale to end customers immediately;
- in ONIX 2.1, the expected availability date was carried in the <ExpectedShipDate> element.