Research Councils UK Policy on Access to Research Outputs

1. Introduction

Free and open access to the outputs of publicly-funded research offers significant social and economic benefits. The Government, in line with its overarching commitment to transparency and open data, is committed to ensuring that such research outputs should be freely accessible. As major bodies charged with investing public money in research, the Research Councils take responsibility in making the outputs from this research publicly available – not just to other researchers, but also to potential users in business, charitable and public sectors, and to the general public.

This policy applies to articles published in peer-reviewed academic journals or conference proceedings, referred to as ‘research papers’ in this policy. This revised policy replaces the Research Councils UK (RCUK) position statement released in 2005 and later revised in 2006. It should be read in conjunction with the guidance document available here.

2. Definition of Open Access

The Research Councils define Open Access to mean unrestricted, on-line access to peer reviewed and published scholarly research papers. Specifically a user must be able to do the following free of any publisher-imposed access charge:

1. Read published research papers in an electronic format.
2. Search for and re-use (including download) the content\(^1\) of published research papers both manually and using automated tools (such as those for text and data mining) provided that any such re-use is subject to proper attribution.

Open Access therefore allows unrestricted use of manual and automated text and data mining tools, as well as unrestricted re-use of content with proper attribution – as defined by the Creative Commons CC-BY license\(^2\). The Research Councils acknowledge that some publications may need to amend their copyright conditions if they are to meet this definition of Open Access.

3. Research Council Expectations of Researchers

The Research Councils expect authors of research papers to maximise the opportunities to make their results available for free.

Peer reviewed research papers which result from research that is wholly or partially funded by the Research Councils:

1. must be published in journals which are compliant with Research Council policy on Open Access (see section 4).
2. must include details of the funding that supported the research, and a statement on how the underlying research materials – such as data, samples or models – can be accessed.

4. Compliance of Journals

The Research Councils will continue to support a mixed approach to Open Access. The Research Councils will recognise a journal as being compliant with their policy on Open Access if:

1. The journal provides via its own website immediate and unrestricted access to the publisher’s final version of the paper (the Version of Record), and allows immediate deposit of the Version of Record

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\(^1\) The Research Councils consider that the ‘content’ of a paper includes, but is not limited to, the text, data, images and figures within a paper.

\(^2\) ‘CC-BY’ refers to the Creative Commons ‘Attribution’ licence, which lets others modify, build upon and/or distribute the licensed work (including for commercial purposes) as long as the original author is credited. For further information see http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/.

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in other repositories without restriction on re-use. This may involve payment of an ‘Article Processing Charge’ (APC) to the publisher. The CC-BY license should be used in this case.

Or

2. Where a publisher does not offer option 1 above, the journal must allow deposit of Accepted Manuscripts that include all changes resulting from peer review (but not necessarily incorporating the publisher’s formatting) in other repositories, without restrictions on non-commercial re-use and within a defined period. In this option no ‘Article Processing Charge’ will be payable to the publisher. Research Councils will accept a delay of no more than six months between on-line publication and a research paper becoming Open Access, except in the case of research papers arising from research funded by the AHRC and the ESRC where the maximum embargo period is 12 months.

Some Research Councils, such as MRC and ESRC, have a requirement that research papers must be deposited in specific repositories, such as UKPMC\(^3\) and ESRC Research Catalogue\(^4\). This is detailed in the policies of individual Research Councils.

RCUK recognises the historical right and tradition of authors to publish online manuscript versions of their papers even before submission, and that this will continue.

5. Article Processing Charges

RCUK have in the past provided support for APCs through both direct and indirect costs as part of grant funding. From 1st April 2013 and until further notice, RCUK will support the payment of APCs and other publication charges related to Research Council-funded research solely through block grants to UK Higher Education Institutions, approved independent research organisations and Research Council Institutes. Research grant applications will, therefore, no longer include provision for Open Access publication or other publication charges.

In all cases universities and research organisations upon receipt of funding should transfer these charges to their institutional publication fund. A university or research organisation can then access these funds to pay for APCs for any article resulting from research council funding.

6. Implementation and compliance

The policy applies to all research papers whose work was funded by RCUK being submitted for publication from 1 April 2013 until further notice.

However, researchers are strongly encouraged to publish their research papers in compliance with the policy as soon as possible.

The Research Councils will be amending their conditions of award to reflect these new requirements and will be extending existing mechanisms to include compliance monitoring for this policy. The Research Councils will also monitor the use of the block grants provided to institutions, to ensure they are appropriately spent as well as to track the shift to open access and the anticipated changes in the cost to the wider community of access to research outputs through other routes.

\(^3\) UK PubMed Central – see http://ukpmc.ac.uk.

\(^4\) ESRC Research Catalogue – see http://www.esrc.ac.uk/impacts-and-findings/research-catalogue/
1. Introduction
This guidance is designed to be used in conjunction with the main policy which is available here [add URL]

Free and open access to publicly-funded research offers significant social and economic benefits. The Government, in line with its overarching commitment to transparency and open data, is committed to ensuring that such research should be freely accessible. As major bodies charged with investing public money in research, the Research Councils take very seriously their responsibilities in making the outputs from this research publicly available – not just to other researchers, but also to potential users in business, charitable and public sectors, and to the general public.

The research outputs on which the policy applies are the articles published in peer reviewed academic journals or conference proceedings. We recognise that there are many other forms of outputs, such as data, grey literature, technical reports, monographs, performances and broadcasts, and that like journal articles these are increasingly available in digital form. The business models and intellectual property regimes that apply to outputs of these various kinds, however, are often significantly different from those applying to journal articles. The principles and considerations set out in this policy should therefore be read as applying to publications in the form of journal articles only, along with conference proceedings. It should also be noted that “research papers” as used in the policy, should be taken to encompass conference proceedings.

2. How is a Research Paper made Open Access?
The Research Councils will continue to support a mixed approach to Open Access. The Research Councils recognise that a scholarly research paper can be made Open Access by the following methods:

1. Open Access to the published research paper is provided by the publisher via the journal’s own website immediately at the time of on-line publication. This may involve payment of an ‘Article Processing Charge’ (APC) to the publisher.

2. The version of the published research paper as accepted for publication, including all changes resulting from peer review, but not necessarily incorporating the publisher’s formatting or layout, is archived and made accessible in an online repository – other than one run by the publisher. Ideally, such papers should be made Open Access immediately at the time of on-line publication; however, in practice the Research Councils will accept that access may be restricted to comply with an embargo period imposed by the publisher, provided that this is no longer than the maximum period mandated by the Research Councils (see section 6).

Some Research Councils, such as MRC and ESRC, have a requirement that papers must be deposited in specific repositories, such as UKPMC\(^1\) and ESRC Research Catalogue\(^2\). This is detailed in the policies of individual Research Councils.

3. Guidance for section 3 - Research Council Expectations of Researchers

3.1 What Research Outputs will be covered by Research Council Policy on Access to Research Outputs and where should they be published?

This policy covers all published, peer reviewed research papers that are normally published in scholarly journals or conference proceedings. The policy does not cover non-peer reviewed material, books or monographs. However, the Research Councils encourage authors of such literature to consider making them Open Access where possible.

The previous RCUK policy does not distinguish between early drafts of a paper and the version as accepted for publication. In future, while the Research Councils recognise that many researchers derive value from sharing early versions of papers, they will consider only versions ‘as accepted for publication’ when assessing

\(^1\) UK PubMed Central – see http://ukpmc.ac.uk.
\(^2\) ESRC Research Catalogue – see http://www.esrc.ac.uk/impacts-and-findings/research-catalogue/

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compliance with their policy.

The Research Councils believe that researchers should, as far as possible, be free to publish the results of their work in the most appropriate journal, and policy to date has not restricted a researchers’ choice of journal. Equally, since 2006 all the Research Councils have established requirements that research results arising from their support are made available on an Open Access basis as soon as possible after publication, with some councils setting specific embargo periods.

However, a minority of journals continue to maintain access policies that are fundamentally incompatible with the principle of unrestricted access to publicly funded research. Therefore, while retaining flexibility on the route by which Open Access is achieved, Research Councils are introducing a requirement that results arising from their funding are published only in journals that are compliant with Research Council policy on Open Access. Authors will therefore be expected to select from among such journals when choosing where to publish their research.

3.2 When should a paper become Open Access?

Ideally, a research paper should become Open Access as soon as it is published on-line. However, the Research Councils recognise that embargo periods are currently used by some journals with business models which depend on generating revenue through subscriptions. Therefore, where a publisher does not offer a ‘pay-to-publish’ option the Research Councils will accept a delay between on-line publication and a paper becoming Open Access of no more than six months, except in the case of research papers arising from research funded by the AHRC and the ESRC.

Because current funding arrangements make a six month embargo period particularly difficult in the arts, humanities and social sciences, the Research Councils will accept a delay of up to twelve months in the case of research papers arising from research funded wholly or in part by the AHRC and/or the ESRC. However, this is only a transitional arrangement, for a period of five years, and both the AHRC and ESRC are working towards enabling a maximum embargo period of six months for all research papers.

Under the previous policy, only the Medical Research Council (MRC) had a defined maximum embargo period (six months). In future, where the publisher does not offer a ‘pay-to-publish’ option for Open Access, the Research Councils will no longer be willing to support publisher embargoes of longer than six or twelve months from the date of on-line publication, depending on the Research Council.

3.3 Acknowledgement of funding sources and access to the underlying research materials

The Research Councils’ policy already requires funding information to be included within the acknowledgement section of a paper3. The need for a statement on how underlying research materials can be accessed is currently in place for some, but not all of the Research Councils. As part of supporting the drive for openness and transparency in the research funded by the Research Councils, we are extending this policy to all Research Councils.

The underlying research materials do not necessarily have to be made Open Access, however details of relevant access policies must be included.

4. Guidance for section 4 - Compliance of journals

The former RCUK policy on access to research outputs did not state specific criteria to be satisfied for a journal to be recognised by the Research Councils as ‘Open Access Policy Compliant’. The revised policy therefore introduces such criteria.

5. Guidance for section 5 - Article Processing Charges

Open Access immediately at the time of on-line publication of a paper may require the payment of an ‘Article Processing Charge’, levied by the publisher.

Where Research Council funds are used to pay Open Access fees for a paper, the paper must be made Open

3 Guidance on how to acknowledge funding information is provided by the Research Information Network, see: http://www.rin.ac.uk/our-work/research-funding-policy-and-guidance/acknowledgementfunders-journal-articles.
Access immediately at the time of on-line publication, notwithstanding that this may take place before the date of publication of the same paper in a print/hard copy edition.

RCUK have in the past provided support for APCs through both direct and indirect costs as part of grant funding. Going forward, from 1 April 2013 and until further notice, RCUK will solely pay for APCs through block grants to UK Higher Education Institutions, approved independent research organisations and Research Council Institutes. Research grant applications will, therefore, no longer include provision for Open Access publication or other publication charges.

In all cases universities and research organisations upon receipt of funding should transfer these charges to their institutional publication fund. A university or research organisation can then use these funds to pay for APCs for any article resulting from research council funding.

### 6. Guidance for section 6 - Implementation and compliance

The policy applies to all qualifying publications being submitted for publication from 1 April 2013 until further notice. However, researchers are strongly encouraged to publish their work in compliance with the policy as soon as possible.

The Research Councils will be amending their conditions of award to reflect these new requirements and will be extending existing mechanisms which capture research grants outputs (such as the Research Outputs System) to include compliance monitoring on this policy. Research Councils will also monitor the block grants provided to institutions, to ensure appropriate spent as well as examining the shift to open access and associated costs within the wider community.