

RCUK Proposed Policy on Access to Research Outputs

(1) Introduction

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 the 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.

There have been extensive developments in this area since the Research Councils published their initial position statement on Open Access in June 2006¹. The Research Councils are therefore very pleased to be members and sponsors of the National Working Group on Expanding Access to Published Research Findings, chaired by Dame Janet Finch².

This independent 'Access Group' will propose a programme of action and make recommendations to Government, research funders, publishers and other interested parties on how access to research findings and outcomes can be broadened for key audiences such as researchers, policy makers and the general public. As part of this process, and looking forward to the Research Councils UK (RCUK) response to the recommendations from this Access Group, the Research Councils are considering changes to their current Open Access policies.

The draft policy defines what the Research Councils mean by Open Access and how it may be achieved. It states the specific revised policy measures the Research Councils intend to adopt, and explains how these differ from current policies. The Research Councils expect to continue to support a mixed approach to Open Access (for example, both deposit of articles in open access repositories and pay-to-publish). Key differences with the current policy include:

- Specifically stating that Open Access includes unrestricted use of manual and automated text and data mining tools; and unrestricted reuse of content with proper attribution.
- Requiring publication in journals that meet Research Council 'standards' for Open Access.
- No support for publisher embargoes of longer than six months from the date of publication (12 months for research funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)).

¹ RCUK position statement on Open Access, June 2006

<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/Pages/outputs.aspx>

² www.researchinfonet.org/publish/wg-expand-access/

(2) What do the Research Councils mean by Open Access?

Definition

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:

- Read published papers in an electronic format.
- Search for and re-use the content³ of published papers both manually and using automated tools (such as those for text and data mining) provided that any such reuse is subject to proper attribution.

What would be different?

The existing policy will be clarified by specifically stating that Open Access includes unrestricted use of manual and automated text and data mining tools. Also, that it allows unrestricted re-use of content with proper attribution – as defined by the Creative Commons CC-BY licence⁴.

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) How is a Scholarly Research Paper made Open Access?

Definition

The Research Councils recognise that a scholarly research paper can be made Open Access by the following methods:

(a) Open Access to the published paper is provided by the publisher via the journal's own website immediately at the time of publication. This may require payment of an 'Article Processing Charge' to the publisher.

(b) The version of the published 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 upon publication, but 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).

What would be different?

As before, the Research Councils will continue to support a mixed approach to Open Access. Some Research Councils have a requirement that papers must be deposited in

³ 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.

⁴ '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/>.

specific repositories, such as UKPMC⁵. This is detailed in the policies of individual Research Councils.

(4) What do journals need to do to be compliant with Research Council policy on Open Access?

Definition

The Research Councils will recognise a journal as being compliant with their policy on Open Access if:

(a) The journal provides via its own website immediate and unrestricted access to the publisher's final version of the paper (the Article of Record), and allows immediate deposit of the Article of Record in a repository without restriction on re-use. This may require payment of an 'Article Processing Charge' to the publisher.

Or,

(b) The journal allows deposit of the published paper (either the version as accepted for publication or the Article of Record) within subject-based or institutional repositories, and allows unrestricted access to those papers after an embargo period no longer than that mandated by the Research Councils (see section 6). No 'Article Processing Charge' will be payable to the publisher.

What would be different?

The existing RCUK policy on access to research outputs does 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) What Research Outputs will be covered by Research Council Policy on Access to Research Outputs and where should they be published?

Proposed Policy

- *Peer reviewed research papers which result from research that is wholly or partially funded by the Research Councils must be published in journals which are compliant with Research Council policy on Open Access.*

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

What would be different?

The existing policy does not distinguish between early drafts of a paper and the version as accepted for publication. In future, while the Research Councils recognise

⁵ UK PubMed Central – see <http://ukpmc.ac.uk>.

that many researchers derive value from sharing early versions of papers, they will consider only versions ‘as accepted for publication’ when assessing compliance with their policy. Ideally, the version of a paper to be made Open Access should be the publisher’s final version – the ‘Article of Record’.

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.

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.

(6) When should a paper become Open Access?

Proposed Policy

- *Research papers which result from research that is wholly or partially funded by the Research Councils should ideally be made Open Access on publication, and must be made Open Access after no longer than the Research Councils’ maximum acceptable embargo period.*

Ideally, a paper should become Open Access as soon as it is published. 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, except in the case of research papers arising from research funded by the AHRC and the ESRC, the Research Councils will accept a delay of up to six months in the case where no ‘Article Processing Charge’ is paid.

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 by the AHRC and the ESRC. However, this is only a transitional arrangement, and both the AHRC and ESRC are working towards enabling a maximum embargo period of six months for all research papers.

What would be different?

Only the Medical Research Council (MRC) currently has a defined maximum embargo period (six months). Other Research Councils currently accept the embargo period imposed by publishers. In future, Research Councils will no longer be willing to support publisher embargoes of longer than six or twelve months from the date of publication, depending on the Research Council.

(7) How is Open Access paid for?

Open Access immediately at the time of publication of a paper may require the payment of an 'Article Processing Charge', levied by the publisher.

Proposed Policy

- *Research Council grant funding may be used to support payment of Article Processing Charges to publishers.*

Where publishing costs are incurred during the lifetime of the grant, Directly Incurred costs may be used to fund this expenditure. Researchers are recommended, where applicable, to request funding to cover such costs in their grant applications.

Where publishing costs are incurred after the lifetime of the grant, Indirect Costs may be used to fund this expenditure. Research Organisations should ensure that these publishing costs are fully incorporated into their costing models.

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

What would be different?

The Research Councils are aware of the difficulties of the current system and, as part of our longer-term aims, may revisit the model. In the meantime, the Research Councils are actively engaged, with other stakeholders, in the independent 'Finch Access Group' to explore ways of expanding access to the results of publicly funded research, and hope that this will lead to the identification of more efficient and effective mechanisms to support Open Access. In addition, the Research Councils are happy to work with individual institutions on how they might build an institutional Open Access fund drawing from the indirect costs on grants.

(8) Acknowledgement of funding sources and access to the underlying research materials

Proposed Policy

- *Research papers which result from research that is wholly or partially funded by the Research Councils 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.*

What would be different?

The Research Councils' policy already requires funding information to be included within the acknowledgement section of a paper⁶. The need for a statement on how underlying research materials can be accessed is currently in place for some, but not

⁶ 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/acknowledgement-funders-journal-articles>.

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.

(9) Implementation and compliance

The Government's Innovation and Research Strategy for Growth has tasked the Research Councils with ensuring that their current requirements for Open Access are met. This proposed policy will contribute to this activity and the Research Councils are currently considering mechanisms for implementation, and the timing of its introduction. Mechanisms to help ensure compliance are also being developed, so that the Research Councils will be able to monitor ongoing compliance with current and revised policy.

The Research Councils are seeking expert advice from key stakeholders on these proposed changes to policy. It is anticipated that the revised policy will be adopted in summer 2012, depending on feedback received from stakeholders, and the recommendations made by the 'Finch Access Group'.

The revised policy will formally apply to all qualifying publications arising from Research Council grants awarded on, or after <date>. 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.