

RCUK Policy on Open Access Frequently Asked Questions

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Updates 26 April 2018

FAQ 1.5 “Is it anticipated that additional types of research output might be included in this policy at a later date?” web link to the Research Councils’ Common Principles on Data Policy updated.

FAQ 2.1 “Do researchers have the freedom to choose the green route even if the publisher offers a ‘gold’ route?” corrected so that the embargo periods are in line with those in the RCUK Policy on Open Access and hyperlink to MRC open access policy page updated.

FAQ 2.2 “What happens if there is no money to pay for ‘Gold’ but my preferred journal does not offer a compliant ‘green’ option? web link to MRC open access policy page deleted as included in previous FAQ.

FAQ 3.1 “How is the amount of the block grant calculated?” deleted as information in the answer out-of-date (referred to the 2017-18 block grants).

FAQ 3.5 “When will the block grant be paid to my institution?” deleted as information in the answer out-of-date (referred to the 2016-17 and 2017-18 block grants).

FAQ 3.6 “My organisation has not been awarded any RCUK open access block grant funding in June 2017, will this impact on the ability to receive a RCUK open access block grant in January 2018.” deleted as information in the answer out-of-date.

FAQs 3.1 – 3.9 renumbered following deletion of FAQs 3.1, 3.5 and 3.6.

FAQ 4.1 “What levels of open access does RCUK expect?” corrected so that the compliance targets for 2017/18 are in line with those in the RCUK Policy on Open Access.

FAQ 9.2 “Do I have to archive my publication in a specific repository in order to comply with RCUK policy?” web link to MRC open access policy page updated.

Summary of Questions:

1. What is covered by the policy?

- 1.1 If my project has funding from another funder as well as RCUK, does it also need to comply with the RCUK policy?
- 1.2 My research is funded by a commercial partner as well as RCUK, does it need to comply with the policy?
- 1.3 My research is in collaboration with partners overseas, do I still need to comply with the policy?
- 1.4 I am a student funded by one of the Research Councils. Does the policy apply to the papers that I publish?
- 1.5 Is it anticipated that additional types of research output might be included in this policy at a later date?
- 1.6 The RCUK guidance says that the payment of colour charges and page charges may also be taken from the block grant at the discretion of the managing research organisation; is this the case even when an APC has been paid?
- 1.7 My project has been funded by NC3Rs. Do I have to comply with the RCUK policy and will APCs related to my publication be paid from the block grant?
- 1.8 What types of grants does the RCUK open access policy apply to?

2. Going 'Gold' or 'Green'

- 2.1 Do researchers have the freedom to choose the green route even if the publisher offers a 'gold' route?
- 2.2 What happens if there is no money to pay for 'Gold' but my preferred journal does not offer a compliant 'green' option?
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- 3.2 My grant was awarded before the 1st April 2013 and I had already included publication costs. Should I still apply for costs to be covered by my Institution's Publication fund?
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- 3.5 Can the RCUK open access block grant be used to make a PhD thesis open access?
- 3.6 One of our researchers has recently published in a journal that offers the gold route but the author did not choose that before publication and therefore the article does not comply with RCUK open access policy. Can we use funding from the RCUK open access block grant to make the article open access?
- 3.7 Can a researcher access open access block funding when they have used equipment or data funded by RCUK, but the project they are working on is not in itself funded by RCUK?
- 3.8 Can page/colour charges be paid if the article is not published under a CC-BY licence?
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7.1 Which version of an article is acceptable for deposit?

7.2 Who is responsible for deposit when an article has authors from different research organisations?

8. Reviews of the policy and implementation

8.1 What have the research councils done to review OA policy since its implementation in 2013?

9. Repositories

9.1 The choice of repository is normally at the discretion of the author and their research organisation.

But to comply with the OA policy, what does RCUK consider to be an acceptable repository?

9.2 Do I have to archive my publication in a specific repository in order to comply with RCUK policy?

10. Refunds

10.1 Our research organisation has received a refund from one of the off-setting deals we subscribe to, how should we account for this?

Questions with Answers:

1. What is covered by the policy?

1.1 If my project has funding from another funder as well as RCUK, does it also need to comply with the RCUK policy?

Yes, the RCUK policy covers all relevant publications which acknowledge funding from the UK's Research Councils. If more than one funder is acknowledged, and one (or more) of them is a Research Council, then the RCUK policy applies.

1.2 My research is funded by a commercial partner as well as RCUK, does it need to comply with the policy?

Yes, the RCUK policy covers all relevant publications which acknowledge funding from the UK's Research Councils. If more than one funder is acknowledged, and one (or more) of them is a Research Council, then the RCUK policy applies.

As peer-reviewed publications are considered to be in the public domain, albeit often requiring a subscription to access, there is no limitation to making the text available in open access due to commercial sensitivity.

1.3 My research is in collaboration with partners overseas, do I still need to comply with the policy?

Yes, the RCUK policy covers all relevant publications which result from research partly or completely funded by RCUK and acknowledges funding from the UK's Research Councils. If more than one funder is acknowledged, and one (or more) of them is a Research Council, then the RCUK policy applies.

RCUK funded researchers should ensure that collaborators are aware of all the terms and conditions of the project funding as soon as possible, and that the obligation to publish results in Open Access is included in collaboration agreements.

The Research Councils funded authors are expected to take the lead in ensuring that the paper is made immediately available on publication or self-archived in an appropriate repository.

The Research Councils are also actively engaging with funders internationally; as more and more funders implement policies in support of open access publishing it is likely that this issue will only occur in exceptional circumstances.

1.4 I am a student funded by one of the Research Councils. Does the policy apply to the papers that I publish?

Yes, the RCUK Open Access Policy applies to student awards, and therefore relevant publications must be made available in open access.

1.5 Is it anticipated that additional types of research output might be included in this policy at a later date?

The Research Councils take very seriously their responsibilities in making the outputs from publicly funded research freely available – not just to other researchers, but also to potential users in business, charitable and public sectors, and to the general tax-paying public.

Whilst peer-reviewed research papers, reviews and conference proceedings cover a large part of publicly funded research outputs, it does not include all forms of publications. The Research Councils will therefore consider, as part of the planned policy reviews, whether it is appropriate to extend the policy to include other forms of publications. There are no plans to do so at this current time.

The Research Councils also have a common position on data sharing, summarised in the RCUK Common Principles on Data Policy (see <https://www.ukri.org/funding/information-for-award-holders/data-policy/common-principles-on-data-policy/>), as well as individual policies on data sharing.

1.6 The RCUK guidance says that the payment of colour charges and page charges may also be taken from the block grant at the discretion of the managing research organisation; is this the case even when an APC has been paid?

Yes. However, it is unclear why such charges are sometimes levied in addition to the APC, especially as such costs apply mainly to printed journals. RCUK (and others) will be monitoring this practice and the cost of paper colour charges.

1.7 My project has been funded by NC3Rs. Do I have to comply with the RCUK policy and will APCs related to my publication be paid from the block grant?

Yes. The National Centre for the Replacement Refinement and Reduction of animals in research (NC3Rs) has adopted the RCUK's policy on open access of publications and the policy applies to all relevant publications covered by the policy which acknowledge NC3Rs funding. Any publication arising from NC3Rs-funded research should be deposited into Europe PubMed Central at the point of publication or within six months at the latest. The NC3Rs contribution to Article Processing Charges (APCs) is paid for via the MRC contribution to the RCUK block grant (<https://www.nc3rs.org.uk/grant-holder-information>).

1.8 What types of grants does the RCUK Open Access policy apply to?

The RCUK open access policy applies to articles (and other applicable publications) resulting from any research that is either partially or entirely funded by RCUK. This includes grants awarded by boards and panels, awards covering core programmes at research institutes and grants awarded as part of special initiatives.

2. Going 'Gold' or 'Green'

2.1 Do researchers have the freedom to choose the green route even if the publisher offers a 'gold' route?

Yes: although the Research Councils' preference is for immediate unrestricted open access ('Gold'), they support a mixed approach to Open Access, and the decision on which route to follow remains at the discretion of the researchers and their research organisations.

Where publishers offer a Gold Route, but the researcher chooses green, papers should be published in a journal with a maximum embargo of 6 months for STEM funded disciplines, or 12 months in the arts, humanities and social sciences funded research.

Research papers in biomedicine should be published with an embargo of no longer than six months, as has been the [MRC's mandated policy since 2006](#).

2.2 What happens if there is no money to pay for 'Gold' but my preferred journal does not offer a compliant 'green' option?

In circumstances where block grant money for APCs is unavailable, a longer embargo period is permitted, papers should be published in a journal with a maximum embargo of 12 months for STEM funded disciplines, or 24 months in the arts, humanities and social sciences funded research.

Research papers in biomedicine should be published with an embargo of no longer than six months, as has been the MRC's mandated policy since 2006. Institutions will need to manage their RCUK OA funding to be able to support this requirement.

If the preferred journal does not offer such embargo period, then either an alternative journal will need to be chosen, or the research paper will not count towards their institution's compliance target for OA.

2.3 I am a biomedical researcher, and funding is not available from my research organisation to pay for the APC in my chosen journal. Can I self-archive my article instead?

In order to be compliant with the RCUK Open Access policy, all research papers in biomedicine must be made available in open access in Europe PMC with an embargo of no longer than 6 months, as has been the MRC's mandated policy since 2006. This applies in all circumstances.

If funding is not available to pay APCs, and the journal in which the researcher is planning to submit does not allow self-archiving in Europe PMC with a 6 months embargo, then another journal must be chosen, or the research paper will not count towards their institution's compliance target for OA.

If the research is funded by MRC, in order to be compliant, the paper must be archived in Europe PubMed Central (<http://europepmc.org/>). This is often done automatically by the publishers whenever an APC is paid, but can also be done by the author via Europe PMC Plus (<http://plus.europepmc.org>)

3. RCUK OA Block Grant

3.1 Is the block grant paid at 80% Full Economic Costs (fEC)?

No, following discussions with the community, RCUK will not be expecting research organisations to provide the additional 20%.

3.2 My grant was awarded before the 1st April 2013 and I had already included publication costs. Should I still apply for costs to be covered by my Institution's Publication fund?

Research Councils recognise that a significant amount of funding has already been awarded as part of existing grant to cover publication costs.

Any funds specified for APCs within already awarded grants should be used before using the RCUK OA Block Grant.

3.3 Will RCUK make a grant to cover APCs to Research Organisations below the cut-off?

No; RCUK has considered this at some length and concluded that it will not be cost effective to administer grants at this level.

3.4 How long are research organisations required to fund APCs for researchers? Does this change if the researcher is no longer at the organisation at which they carried out their research?

The duration of support that research organisations are required to provide for APCs resulting from research council funded research is a decision for the research organisation to make. Institutions may use the block grant in the manner they consider will best deliver the RCUK Policy on Open Access in a transparent way that allocates funds fairly across the disciplines and across researchers at different stages in their careers. The same principles apply to researchers who are no longer at the organisation, but would have been eligible to apply for APCs resulting from their research at the organisation should they still have been employed by the organisation.

3.5 Can the RCUK open access block grant be used to make a PhD thesis open access?

The primary purpose of the OA block grant is to pay for APCs, however, research organisations have the flexibility to use the grant as they see fit, provided this helps deliver the RCUK Policy on Open Access. The payment of licence fees for images to enable the thesis to be made OA is one of those areas where you have flexibility to decide if it is a good use of the block grant.

3.6 One of our researchers has recently published in a journal that offers the gold route but the author did not choose that before publication and therefore the article does not comply with RCUK open access policy. Can we use funding from the RCUK open access block grant to make the article open access?

The decision as to when this is a good use of the RCUK open access block grant lies with the research organisation. It should always be the priority to make new articles open access, but where a research organisation has funds remaining, they may decide to make a recently published article compliant with the RCUK policy. However, where the article concerned has not been recently published, then the research organisation should consider the allowable embargo periods for the 'Green' route (6 months for STEM funded disciplines and 12 months for arts, humanities and social sciences funded research), and if the length of time from when the article was first published, to when it is being made publicly accessible exceeds the embargo period, then the article would not be compliant with the RCUK open access policy and open access block funding must not be used to make such outputs open access.

3.7 Can a researcher access open access block funding when they have used equipment or data funded by RCUK, but the project they are working on is not in itself funded by RCUK?

Research organisations would not normally be expected to use RCUK open access block funding to fund open access costs for articles that fall into this scenario. However, research organisations should use their discretion, so if the use of the equipment or data has formed a significant part of the research, they could decide to fund any resulting open access costs from the block grant.

3.8 Can page/colour charges be paid if the article is not published under a CC-BY licence?

Where an article is not made Gold open access (for example because the publisher does not offer a compliant Gold open access option), research organisations can choose to pay for page and/or colour charges if these are clearly indicated and of a reasonable amount. Where the publisher's charge is for open access or for any other publication charge other than page/colour charges, then the article must be made available under a CC-BY licence.

3.9 Can the block grant be used to pay for APCs etc resulting from research funded by Innovate UK or the UK Space Agency?

Innovate UK and the UK Space Agency are not part of RCUK, so unless the research is also funded by one of the research councils, the block grant cannot be used for this purpose.

4. Compliance rates

4.1 What levels of Open Access does RCUK expect?

In 2013/14 institutions were expected to make a minimum of 45% of their papers available via Open Access (Gold or Green). This increased to 53% in 2014/15. At the end of the transition period (2017/18) we expect researchers and institutions to be fully compliant with the policy, and for 100% of research papers arising from the research we fund to be published in journals that are compliant with our policy on Open Access. This could be via either Gold or Green routes, but we also expect that by 2017/18, 75% of Open Access papers from the research we fund will be available via Gold open access.

RCUK has a preference for immediate, unrestricted OA (Gold) and has an expectation that the majority of the OA block grant funding it provides will be used to support the payment of APCs for Gold. However, RCUK also expect research organisations to stay within the cash limits of the grant, so where demand is high, this may require research organisations to balance out what is published via the Gold and Green Routes.

5. Embargo periods

5.1 If an article is based on work funded by MRC, AHRC and ESRC, what embargo period applies?

In circumstances where research is funded by more than one funder, including multiple Research Councils, the shortest embargo period will apply, as otherwise Terms and Conditions attached to part of the funding would be breached.

RCUK funded researchers should ensure that collaborators are aware of all the terms and conditions of their funders as early as possible, and that relevant wording stating the obligation to publish results in Open Access is included in collaboration agreements.

As part of future review of the policy, the Research Councils will consider how maximum embargo periods can be further harmonised.

6. Licences

6.1 My preferred journal's publisher refuses to allow me to use a CC-BY licence, what should I do?

If your preferred journal refuses to allow a CC-BY licence then you should not opt to pay an APC as the journal does not comply with the RCUK policy through that route. The journal may however still comply if it allows deposit and full non-commercial re-use of the article after not more than 6 months (12 months in the case of Arts and Humanities research papers).

6.2 What licenses are compliant with the RCUK OA policy?

- i) **Gold - (immediate open access):** Where an APC is paid, it is a requirement that the licence applied is CC-BY
- ii) **Green - (deposit of the final accepted manuscript in a repository, usually with an embargo):** The RCUK preference is for CC-BY, however, the formal requirement is that the licence places no restriction on non-commercial reuse, including non-commercial text- and data-mining. The licence should also allow

for the sharing of adaptations of the material. This means a CC-BY-NC licence, or equivalent is acceptable. A CC-BY-NC-ND licence is not compliant.

- iii) **Open Government Licence (OGL)** - Crown Body employees eg from the National Archives, The Met Office etc (see <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/re-using-public-sector-information/uk-government-licensing-framework/crown-copyright/uk-crown-bodies/> for a full list) are subject to Crown Copyright under section 163 of the Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988. However, in order to facilitate the re-use of a wide range of public sector information free of charge in accordance with the 2015 Regulations on the Re-use of Public Sector Information (PSI), the OGL has been introduced. When Crown bodies are involved in publically-funded research collaborations with HEIs the research output should be made available using the OGL which allows a re-user, free of charge, to copy, publish, distribute, transmit, adapt and exploit information both commercially and non-commercial for the life of the work, providing the source of the information is acknowledged by including or linking to an attribution statement. (See <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/> for further information.)

7. Accepted Manuscripts

7.1 Which version of an article is acceptable for deposit?

Peer-review is a crucial part of the quality assurance process for research, and RCUK wants to ensure that all users have access to research papers that have been peer-reviewed.

RCUK will consider only versions 'as accepted for publication' when assessing compliance with its policy.

The Accepted Manuscript is the version of a journal article submitted by an author that has been accepted for publication in a journal, and that has been through a peer-review process.

The Accepted Manuscript is also known as the Author's Manuscript or Postprint.

7.2 Who is responsible for deposit when an article has authors from different research organisations?

Each researcher is responsible to ensure they comply with the requirement of their funder and/or institutions in regards to Open Access and should ensure that all relevant acknowledgements are included.

When there is a requirement for the paper to be archived in a specific repository, such as Europe PubMed Central, usually the corresponding author will do so on behalf of all the authors.

8. Reviews of the policy and implementation

8.1 What have research councils done to review OA policy since its implementation in 2013?

The research councils commissioned a review of the first 16 months of the policy's implementation (the Burgess review), which reported in early 2015. In response to the recommendations in this review the research councils have set up an open access practitioners' group consisting of representatives from HEIs and other open access practitioners. The first meeting took place in October 2016 and part of the remit of the group will be to advise on further improvements to the policy and its implementation.

9. Repositories

9.1 The choice of repository is normally at the discretion of the author and their research organisation. But to comply with the OA policy, what does RCUK consider to be an acceptable repository?

RCUK supports the definition of a repository developed by Jisc, ie: a repository is a set of services that a research organisation offers to the members of its community for the management and dissemination of digital materials created by its community members.

For a full definition see <https://scholarlycommunications.jiscinvolve.org/wp/2016/10/14/in-the-context-of-open-access-policies-in-the-uk-what-is-a-repository/>

9.2 Do I have to archive my publication in a specific repository in order to comply with RCUK policy?

The choice of repository is normally at the discretion of the author and their research organisation. However, some Research Councils have a requirement that papers must be deposited in specific repositories. This is detailed in the terms and conditions of grants from individual Research Councils.

To comply with the RCUK Policy on Open Access, the MRC requires all publications to be deposited at the earliest opportunity, and certainly within six months of publication, in Europe PubMed Central. This applies both during and after the period of funding. The condition is subject to compliance with publishers' copyright and licensing policies. Whenever possible, the article deposited should be the published version (<https://mrc.ukri.org/research/policies-and-guidance-for-researchers/open-access-policy/>).

Although Europe PMC was developed primarily for papers in the biomedical field, all scientists funded by BBSRC should consider submitting papers; Europe PMC may be appropriate for papers from BBSRC funded research, please see annex 2 of <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/documents/safeguarding-good-scientific-practice/>

10. Refunds

10.1 Our research organisation has received a refund from one of the off-setting deals we subscribe to, how should we account for this?

Any refunds/credits should be allocated back to the budget they were paid from. Therefore if the initial cost was paid from the RCUK open access block grant, any refunds should be accredited back to this grant.