



Consultation on open access in the post-2014 Research Excellence Framework

Printable summary of your responses

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Your responses

1a

Do you agree that the criteria for open access are appropriate (subject to clarification on whether accessibility should follow immediately on acceptance or on publication)?

Strongly agree

1b

Do you have any comments on this proposal?

We agree that the proposed criteria are appropriate. We approve the formulation that states that outputs should be 'accessible through a UK HEI repository' as it emphasises the importance of providing metadata for outputs even if the full-text is temporarily unavailable (due to embargo). Also, by allowing the access to be 'through' an institutional repository, it permits other more appropriate repositories to be the hosts of the output – eg subject repositories or other alternatives (such as the Open Mirror repository proposal, currently the subject of a Jisc feasibility study) - thereby widening the scope of open access Green publication. Finally, it implies that the metadata for all open access content – whether Green or Gold – should be discoverable within an open access repository. This will assign responsibility for the version of record of research publications to the academy-owned environment of repositories. We see this as a very welcome step in the direction of sensible stewardship of research publications, which should not be left in the hands of a range of publishers, many of which are first and foremost commercial operations. Libraries in HEIs have been ensuring the availability of research publications since their inception and can provide open and guaranteed stewardship into the future. Hence should see HE repositories as reliable, long-term guarantors of their OA policy.

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Ideally, we would approve of aiming for the maximum re-use possible, subject to proper attribution under appropriate licensing. However, we are aware that fear of re-use – though often unwarranted - affects both publishers and academic authors in some disciplines, and so we would not wish to be prescriptive. However, HEI libraries are sensitive to concerns within the academy about re-use, even with proper attribution, and so we would wish to see an ongoing sensitivity to the issue.

2a

Do you agree with the role outlined for institutional repositories, subject to further work on technical feasibility?

Strongly agree

2b

Should the criteria require outputs to be made accessible through institutional repositories at the point of acceptance or the point of publication?

Not Answered

2c

Do you have any comments on these proposals?

We would wish institutions be given the ability to select, for each output, either date of acceptance or date of publication for it to be made accessible through the institutional repository. This provides a range from earliest to latest acceptable date. The date of acceptance will allow outputs to become open access sooner, and is also a more definitive point for use in a deposit workflow. Publication dates are not always obvious, and research staff may move on to other institutions in the interim, thereby increasing the risk that the item is not deposited. However, not all institutions are involved at that stage of the workflow, and so some will find date of publication easier to administer.

We welcome the review of technical development requirements to ensure that institutional repositories are fit for purpose. We would urge the Funding Councils to include other acceptable repositories in this review. There is a concern about the cost of supporting open access from those of our members who have not been in receipt of RCUK funding. Will there be any additional funding to help them with compliance?

3a

Do you agree that the proposed embargo periods should apply by REF main panel?

Strongly agree

3b

Do you agree with the proposed requirements for appropriate licences?

Strongly agree

3c

Do you have any comments on these proposals?

We agree that the proposed embargo periods should apply by REF main panel, and be aligned with the Research Councils' open access policy. This is particularly important as we hear increasingly of publishers setting longer embargo periods than those stated by RCUK (eg 36 months). Open access publishing loses much of its force if embargo periods are long, and in some disciplines it becomes almost useless. We would encourage the Funding Councils to monitor this area very closely, in order to prevent embargoes being used – either by publishers or authors – as a means of paying only lip service to the ideal of open access.

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We are concerned both at the workload implied by the need to monitor embargo compliance across hundreds of publishers, and at the legal implications of non-compliance. We agree with Universities Scotland, whose draft response to this consultation urges the Funding Councils to ensure that a clear and consistent agreement be reached on embargoes, covering all publishers – but allowing for periods to vary by discipline as described above. This must ensure that institutions do not face an unnecessary compliance burden, or be left to negotiate embargo arrangements on their own. There needs therefore also to be attention to standardisation of terminology over compliance, and so we would also urge the Funding Councils to support the standardisation work of bodies such as the Vocabularies for Open Access (V4OA) project.

Most of our members would also wish to encourage Hefce to inform academic authors about the potential use of Copyright Transfer or Licence-to-Publish Agreements in promoting Green open access. Advice to authors from the University of Bristol Library website, for example, states:

‘Most publishers are willing to discuss copyright agreements with authors. Some may simply refuse to publish a paper if an author is unwilling to sign a copyright agreement as it stands, but many are willing to accept a licence that you have amended. They may also be willing to accept an alternative agreement.

A number of publishers are now starting to offer "licence to publish" agreements as an alternative to "copyright transfer" agreements, and often these are more liberal and may permit authors to deposit their papers in institutional repositories.’

This view considers that authors should be encouraged to use copyright transfer or licence-to-publish agreements to obtain maximum open access advantage – by requesting the right to deposit in an appropriate open access repository, and requesting that the publisher agrees to the policy embargo lengths.

We agree that a particular form of licence should not be specified in relation to re-use, as this could be counter-productive.

4a

Do you agree that the criteria for open access should apply only to journal articles and conference proceedings for the post-2014 REF?

Agree

4b

Do you have any comments on this proposal?

No.

5a

Do you agree that a notice period of two years from the date of the policy announcement is appropriate to allow for the publication cycle of journal articles and conference proceedings?

Agree

5b

Do you have any comments on this proposal?

No.

6a

Do you agree that criteria for open access should apply only to those outputs listing a UK HEI in the output’s ‘address’ field for the post-2014 REF?

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Agree

6b

Do you have any comments on this proposal?

We agree that this definition may be the simplest approach, since authorial conventions vary by discipline, and distinguishing principal, lead, corresponding etc authors could be problematic. We would encourage Hefce to support standardisation efforts in the area of persistent author identification (including affiliation) – notably the ORCID (Open Researcher Contributor Identification Initiative) standard.

7a

Which approach to allowing exceptions is preferable?

a) full compliance, case-by-case exceptions

7b

If selecting option b: Do you agree that the percentage targets are appropriate?

Not Answered

7c

If selecting option b: Do you believe the percentage target should apply consistently or vary by REF main panel?

Not Answered

7d

Do you have any comments on these proposals?

Our preference on allowing exceptions is for option a – Full compliance with an option for exceptions on a case-by-case basis, in exceptional circumstances. This approach seems to us to have the virtue of making ‘game-playing’ less likely, and of increasing the total quantity of open access outputs generated as a result of the policy. It should further the culture of open access by excluding only genuinely merited cases. However, it should only be used if a list of allowable exceptions can be drawn up by the Funding Councils before the commencement of the policy. We would not wish to have to make exceptions claims which could later be rejected, or for this element of submission decisions to be burdensome and time-consuming. If such a list cannot be produced before implementation, we would prefer percentage targets, which should vary by REF panel.

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