

UK Open Access Policy Launches

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Abstract

The process of making all UK government-funded publications open access has begun in UK by the UK Research Councils RCUK. This will be watched as a pioneering effort to bring Open Access to all public research.

Key Words: UK, open access.

The UK Research Councils RCUK has begun the process of making all UK government-funded publications open access. Details of the scheme can be found [here](#).

Some other countries are looking at similar initiatives or have already implemented them in some subjects (e.g. medicine in the US) but the UK scheme will be watched as a pioneering effort to bring Open Access to all public research.



In fact the system will be phased in over a period of five years with 45% of publications to be open access this year. Both gold and green open access standards are approved. In the case of the gold standard publishers will be paid up front to make papers open access from the publisher's website immediately from publication. The budget for this has been set at about £1650 per paper but there is considerable variability depending on the journal. It will be interesting to see if market forces can keep these prices down. Money will be allocated to research institutions who will distribute it around their departments. The figures are set out [here](#).

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The system will also accept the option of green open access where a journal simply allows the author to put their own copy of the paper online. Here there is a big catch: The RCUK will accept that the journal can embargo public access for six months or maybe even a year. To my mind this is not real open access at all. Publications should be open access from the moment they are accepted if not before. And there is another catch with this option. I don't see anything in the RCUK guidelines to ensure that the document is put online by the author or that it will be kept online. For both open access standards it is not clear that there can be any guarantee that papers will be kept online forever. What if a gold standard journal disappears? What if a repository disappears? Under what circumstances can an author withdraw a paper? Perhaps there are answers to these questions somewhere but I don't see them.

Another set of questions might be asked about how Article Processing Charges will affect the impartiality and standards of journals. You might also want to know if paying for open access up front will eventually reduce the cost to libraries of paying for subscriptions, or will they still always have to pay for access to papers published under the old system, and for papers that are privately funded?

I hope that the answer is that none of this will matter for long because another system of open access will evolve with a new way to do non-profit peer-review without the old journal system at all, but perhaps that's just a pipe dream.

References

1. <http://blog.vixra.org/2013/04/01/uk-open-access-policy-launches-today/>