RCUK policy changes and APCs (Article Processing Charges)

Changes to how Research Councils UK (RCUK) funds open access publishing

In July 2012 RCUK announced a revised policy on Open Access (OA). This was revised further in March 2013. The revisions strengthen the existing requirements for peer-reviewed research papers to be made available on open access and apply to all RCUK grant holders from 1 April 2013. For grants that start after that date, all RCUK-funded research outputs have to be open access. The policy covers all peer-reviewed research and review papers normally published in academic journals or conference proceedings, and which acknowledge Research Council funding. The policy does not cover monographs, books, critical editions, volumes and catalogues, or forms of non-peer-reviewed material. However, RCUK encourages authors of such material to consider making them Open Access where possible.

What are green and gold Open Access Models?

The Government’s response to the Finch Report, the RCUK policies, and the Wellcome Trust all express a preference for Gold open access. Gold open access is normally published in journals, is subject to peer-review and may involve payments of an article processing charge (APC) to the publisher.

Green open access is where authors publish in any journal and then self-archive a free version for public access usually in an institutional repository (like USIR – the University of Salford’s Institutional Repository) or in a central repository like Pubmed Central.

What are Article Process Charges (APCs)?

The APC model is where the full production cost of publication is met up front which means it is open access to everyone across the world without them having to be a subscriber or pay an access charge. Advantages include:

- This publication model leads to increased citation rates because more people can access your papers
- This leads to increased recognition and impact
- Makes research outputs available to a wider community and increases potential for further research
- Greater potential for text and data mining and research on a massive, open scale

Where does the money for APCs come from?

From April 2013 the University of Salford will receive a block grant to cover APCs for publication charges for journal and conference papers resulting from RCUK funded research. You will no longer be able to charge these costs to RCUK research grants.

THE LIBRARY

Application process

The block grant to the University of Salford will not cover all anticipated publication charges in any given year. It is anticipated that applications will be considered on a first come, first served basis. Details of the application process will be available soon. If an application for block grant funding is unsuccessful then either alternative funding will have to be sought or open access publication will need to be via a Green OA route.

Implementation and compliance

There is some flexibility in implementation of RCUK policy, especially regarding the length of embargo periods, during the transition period. Policy implementation will be subject to periodic reviews as the transition progresses.

Where the RCUK Block Grant is used to pay APCs for a paper, the paper must be made OA immediately at the time of on-line publication, using the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) licence.

Where OA publication is via the green route - 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 (such as USIR) other than one run by the publisher within the time deadlines set out by RCUK (see embargo periods below).

Embargo periods

From the 1st April 2013, RCUK has indicated that an embargo of 12 months may be placed on papers published in STEM subject areas and 24 months in Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences subject areas. The exception is the Medical Research Council (MRC) where the embargo period remains 6 months in line with Wellcome, the National Institute for Health Research and Department of Health policies.

This flexibility for embargo periods during the transition is reflected in the following decision tree for publicly funded research.