Case study scenario outlining the steps taken by a RCUK-funded Professor wishing to publish a paper Open Access at the University of Oxford

Background
Professor Smith, from the Department of Education at the University of Oxford, is leading on a journal article co-authored with colleagues from two other institutions: the University College London and Birkbeck University of London. The paper presents research results from a project funded jointly by ESRC and EPSRC to support interdisciplinary research between social sciences and MPLS.

The team wishes to publish their article in the Educational Researcher, a journal of high impact factor in the area of educational research, published by Sage.

Professor Smith has already heard about the new RCUK policy on Open Access and is aware that the policy has been in force since 1 April 2013. He also knows that there are two routes to achieve Open Access, ‘Green’ and ‘Gold’, and that the University favours ‘Green’, whenever possible. Now, however, he needs to check what is possible in his particular case.

Steps taken
1. Professor Smith goes to the Open Access at Oxford website and consults the Researcher Decision Tree – ‘Green’ or ‘Gold’ for the steps he needs to take.

2. He uses SHEPRA FACT tool to check if the journal, Educational Researcher, complies with the funders’ requirements for open access to research. He selects the funders (EPSRC and ESRC) and types in the journal’s name.

3. Professor Smith is instantly provided with information he has been looking for. He learns that in the case of this particular journal they can’t achieve compliance via the ‘Green’ route: „the publisher does not allow you to archive the Publisher’s version/PDF of your article until 12 months after publication. This exceeds your funder’s acceptable maximum of 6 months.” Although the last sentence is true for the EPSRC (max 6 months embargo) but not for the ESRC (max 12 months embargo), the RCUK policy states clearly that in case of multi-funders, the shorter embargo period applies.

The publisher offers, however, the Gold route to Open Access against an Article Processing Charge (APC) of £800 – £1600.
4. Professor Smith consults the Researcher Decision Tree – ‘Green’ or ‘Gold’ one more time. He notices that where a publisher charges the author for an immediate open access to the publication, RCUK requires that the paper is published under a Creative Commons Attributions licence (CC-BY). Professor Smith checks the publisher’s website and finds that Sage offers a possibility to publish a paper under CC-BY licence.

5. The final step now involves applying for the APC funds. Professor Smiths knows that the University was given an Open Access Block Grant to cover APCs that he can easily apply for, but he is not sure whether the amount should not be split among the remaining institutions. To be sure, he checks the University’s Policy on the Allocation of the RCUK Open Access Block Grant where he reads: where a paper has been written in collaboration with authors from other UK universities Oxford will pay the whole APC where the Oxford author is the corresponding author.

6. Professor Smith downloads and fills in the APC application form. He also archives a copy of the paper in the Oxford Research Archive for preservation and increased visibility.