



RESEARCH COMMITTEE

ALLOCATING THE RCUK OPEN ACCESS BLOCK GRANT

(a) Scope Note

This paper sets out key issues considered by the Research Committee and summarises the policy (see esp. paras 15-20) on the allocation of the RCUK Open Access (OA) Block Grant to Oxford, approved by the Committee in March 2013. This Policy will be kept under review, and is subject to change on the basis of recommendations to the Committee.

(b) Key Issues

The Context

1. The UK Research Councils (RCUK) used the proceedings in 2011-12 of the National Working Group on Expanding Access to Published Research Findings (the 'Finch Group')¹ to review and develop further their 2005 position statement on 'Open Access to research Outputs.'² RCUK's July 2012 Policy³ sought to harmonise, wherever possible, the policies of individual research councils and provoke a step change in public access to research literature.
2. RCUK requires all peer reviewed journal articles (including review articles) and peer reviewed papers in conference proceedings submitted for publication from 1 April 2013 which result from research that is wholly or partially funded by the Research Councils to
 - (a) Be available on-line, free, not only to personal or institutional subscribers to the journal in which papers are published but to all readers through
 - immediate 'Gold' Access' with rights to unrestricted re-use of content with proper attribution upon payment of Article Processing Charges (APC) or
 - a 'Green' option which allows, at a minimum, the accepted manuscript with all changes resulting from peer-review, to be deposited in a repository without restrictions on non-commercial re-use and with a maximum embargo period of 6 months (or 12 months in the case of humanities and the social sciences); with rights to unrestricted re-use of content with proper attribution;

RCUK accepts that during the 2013-2017 'transition period' this may not be a feasible option in all cases, especially in non-STEM disciplines. In such a case RCUK would expect the paper to be published in a journal with the embargo of 12 months, or 24 months in the arts, humanities and social sciences
 - (b) Include 'details of the funding that supported the research', and
 - (c) Include 'a statement on how the underlying research materials – such as data, samples or models – can be accessed.'
3. The University, both directly and through the Russell Group, has continued to emphasise to decision-makers, including RCUK, BIS and Government ministers, that whilst we are supportive

¹ <http://www.researchinfonet.org/publish/finch/>

² <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/documents/2005statement.pdf>

³ <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/Pages/outputs.aspx>

of a gradual move towards open access, we have real concerns about many aspects of the current RCUK policy and the funding model.

4. The RCUK policy applies to all researchers holding grants from the Research Councils and to postgraduate research students funded by the Research Councils.
5. RCUK's policy has no implication for the REF 2014. HEFCE has launched a call for advice (due 25 March) 'on developing the four UK funding bodies' joint policy on open access in the post-2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF)' prior to a formal Consultation later in 2013.⁴
6. Where researchers used to be able to apply on specific research grants for funds to cover Article Processing Charges (APCs), these costs can no longer be included in grant proposals - instead RCUK has allocated a Block Grant to universities (like Oxford), who have a threshold level of RCUK funding, for use from 1 April 2013. RCUK states that 'It remains permissible for grant proposals to request publication costs associated with the production of *other types of research outputs* that are not covered currently by the RCUK OA policy' (e.g. publication costs for outputs such as monographs, books, critical editions, volumes and catalogues).
7. Whilst RCUK has stated a preference for 'Gold OA' this is not mandatory.
8. RCUK has indicated that it expects in the first year about 25% of items to be available via the Gold route. RCUK has described the implementation of its OA policy 'as a journey over at least five years' rather than being a 'day one requirement', and will review the situation in 2014.

Oxford's Open Access Policy Framework

9. The 'Statement on Open Access at the University of Oxford' approved by the University Council notes that
 - The University of Oxford academic community is strongly committed to ensuring the widest possible access to its research. The value and utility of research outputs increases the more broadly they are available to be considered and used by others.
 - The University believes that the UK should adopt an approach to Open Access that supports and is credible to researchers, sustainable and makes the best use of resources. The University recognises the current complexity and challenges in achieving this across all disciplines.
 - Our academics, researchers, staff and students must be free to publish in the form of their choice, whether in a named journal, or in other forms such as monographs and scholarly editions.
 - The major research funders in the UK encourage or mandate Open Access, as do most international funding bodies. In complying with these mandates, we favour, now and for the foreseeable future, open access by means of the Green Route. This enables authors to publish in any journal and to self-archive a version of the article for free public use. Thus the Green approach provides most of the benefits for a much smaller additional cost than Gold Open Access (which involves paying Article Processing Charges) (APCs). We will utilise special allocations from our funders in those cases where their policy requires that APCs be paid.⁵

⁴ <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/news/newsarchive/2013/name,78750,en.html>

⁵ For the full text, see <http://openaccess.ox.ac.uk/university-council-approves-statement-on-open-access/>

(c) Allocating the RCUK Block OA Grant

10. RCUK has pledged £1.1 million to Oxford from 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014, followed by a further £1.3 million for 2014-2015.⁶ OA funding after that will be subject to a review.
11. RCUK's revised Guidance issued on 6 March states that 'Institutions have the flexibility to 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. RCUK expects that the primary use of the block grant will be for payment of APCs.'
12. The University will in year one set aside 80% of the Block Grant for payment of APCs and other article-related charges. The balance of the fund will be used to provide University support for the Open Access Oxford Project run under the auspices of the Research Committee, and in particular to support the Green route and the ongoing development of ORA.
13. A preliminary review of the major publishers' policies on open access indicates that *the Green route is viable in many fields* - most journals will allow the final draft post-refereeing, or in some cases the publisher's version/PDF, to be made available in a recognised repository, such as ORA, or a subject repository, for no charge, within the RCUK-preferred embargo periods by discipline.⁷
14. The University's best estimates to date indicate that the RCUK OA Block Grant would meet the costs of APCs for only one-third to one-half of articles by Oxford authors. It is therefore necessary to set priorities in the allocation of the Block Grant.
15. **Consistent with the 'Statement on Open Access at the University of Oxford', the University will allocate the RCUK Block Grant - to RCUK-funded researchers (grant holders, researchers employed on RCUK grants and RCUK-supported students at Oxford) - as below:**

The Block Grant fund will initially be

- pro-rated against the relative proportions of funding to Oxford from each Research Council (see Appendix 1) (as a proxy for the costs of the meeting Research Council-specific OA conditions) and allocated upon the receipt of applications; and
 - apportioned equally in three-month blocks (four quarters).
- a) To support an Oxford author (RCUK-funded academic, researcher or student) (hereafter Oxford author) who wishes to publish in an OA journal whereby unless the author pays a fee (an APC), the article will not be published
 - b) To support an Oxford author who wishes to publish in a journal where the embargo period for Green Open Access is
 - i. In biomedicine, longer than six (6) months
 - ii. In the sciences, longer than six (6) months
 - iii. In the social sciences and humanities, longer than 12 months

and where there is a Gold (APC) option to make the paper available to all readers immediately.

⁶ Grants to HEIs are in proportion to the amount of direct labour costs awarded on grants that they have received over the three years from April 2009 to March 2012. Direct labour costs have been used as a proxy of research effort leading to the generation of publications

⁷ The major exception is in the biomedical field, where in most cases authors an APC would have to be paid to meet the MRC's requirement – for applications submitted from 1 October 2006 the MRC has required that requires that electronic copies of any research papers accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal, which are supported in whole or in part by MRC funding, are deposited at the earliest opportunity - and certainly within six months - in Europe PubMed Central (Europe PMC).

- c) To support an Oxford author who wishes to make a special case that it is vital their paper be available to readers who do not hold or have access via a subscription to the journal and thus an APC should be paid (such applications will need a supporting statement from the author's head of department, including in relation to the fit with the department's Impact strategy, and must include a clear indication of the intended audience and the expected benefits of the wider readership)
- d) To support the payment of other article charges, such as the costs of illustrations, colour figures or excess pages, for RCUK grants that start after 1 April 2013
16. Those Oxford researchers who applied for APCs or other article charges, such as the costs of illustrations, colour figures or excess pages, etc in their research grant proposals to the Research Councils and who were awarded a grant can use their research grant funds to pay those costs. Those researchers do not need to apply to (indeed *should not apply and are ineligible*) for funds from RCUK Block Grant; they should spend from their grants as normal.
17. In cases consistent with 15(a) – 15(d)
- Where a paper has been written in collaboration with authors from other UK universities in receipt of RCUK OA Funding, Oxford will pay the whole APC where the Oxford author is the corresponding author (or equivalent). It is anticipated that UK universities will take a similar approach but where this is not the case and an Oxford co-author (who is not the corresponding author or equivalent) is approached to contribute to the cost of an APC, the University will pay a proportion of the cost relative to the number of UK authors supported by Research Council funding
 - Where a paper has been written in collaboration with authors from other countries, Oxford will pay the whole APC upon request from the Oxford co-author.
18. Should the fund be fully expended prior to the RCUK grant year (31 March 2014), then the University will report to RCUK those cases where it was unable to meet demand for APCs due to the Block Grant not being sufficient.
19. APCs and other article-related charges will be paid by the specialist unit in the Bodleian Libraries upon receipt of a completed application which addresses the criteria in this policy. There will be no further review or level of approval.

General

20. Subject Librarians in the Bodleian Libraries will provide advice to Oxford authors on the implications of the RCUK Policy and in particular on journal-specific Green or Gold routes (incl. embargo periods as per 14 and 15(b) above).
21. Summary reports on funds requested and allocated will be prepared by the Bodleian Libraries and reported, through the Pro Vice-Chancellor, on a quarterly basis to the Research Committee.
22. This Policy summary, the application form and related advice will be available via the Open Access Oxford web site - <http://openaccess.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/home-2/open-access-at-oxford/>

Appendix 1

Proportion of Oxford research income from Research Councils UK, 2008/9 – 2011/12

