

RCUK Open Access block grant allocation policy

Approved by Research Committee 3rd August 2017

Background

The RCUK OA block grant will not be sufficient to cover all requests for APCs (Article Processing Charges) (and related publication charges) if requests by Oxford researchers continue at the current trend. The projected shortfall is estimated to be around £750K – equivalent to ca. 350 APCs.

RCUK has formally advised that

- No additional funds will be made available above and beyond the awarded 2017/18 allocation.
- RCUK does not expect 100% compliance with its policy, neither does it provide funds enabling 100% compliance with its own policy (See [RCUK OA policy FAQs para 4.1](#))
- RCUK has a preference for immediate, unrestricted OA (Gold) and has an expectation that the majority of the OA block grant funding it provides will be used to support the payment of APCs for Gold. However, RCUK also expects research organisations to stay within the cash limits of the grant, so where demand is high, this may require research organisations to balance out what is published via the Gold and Green Routes.

Policy

This policy does not offer a first-come-first-served approach as some other universities have, not least because this would mean that authors seeking to publish in fully Gold (pay to publish, OA journals) would later in the year not be able to access the funds to do so.

This policy (see Box 1 below) sets out how the RCUK block grant will be allocated during the period to 31st March 2018 when the current block grant ends. The model is designed to:

- Comply with the requirements of the RCUK policy as far as possible within the constraints of limited funds
- Enable authors to publish in the journal of their choice
- Enable, as far as possible, publication in fully OA journals
- Promote value for money
- Support the University's OA Publications Policy

RCUK funds will **not** be used to pay for APCs retrospectively, in accordance with RCUK policy.

BOX 1: Whilst RCUK funds are available, the block grant will be used to pay for:

1. Existing commitments for APC payments
2. APCs of articles published in fully gold OA journals (i.e. all articles are published OA as listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals DOAJ <https://doaj.org>)
3. Non-APC Publication charges as described in the separate policy (see Appendix)
4. APCs of articles in hybrid journals (i.e. one with an OA option) where the University of Oxford (via the Bodleian Libraries) participates in an offsetting deal (apc@bodleian.ox.ac.uk will advise)

In the light of timing policy clauses 1 – 4 above will be adopted **with immediate effect** (in addition to 'Act on Acceptance' deposit in ORA for REF compliance)

The Oxford OA Project Group has checked MRC and BBSRC OA preferences related to embargo periods, the patterns of scholarly communications in biomedicine, and the OA requirements of other major biomedical research funders, especially the Wellcome Trust. Research Committee will be asked to consider the following additional recommendation for use of any residual RCUK funds at its first meeting in Michaelmas Term 2017

5. The OA Project Group recommends that any residual funds be used in exceptional cases to pay APCs in a hybrid journal to enable early career researchers in the biomedical sciences to make their article immediately OA so it can be accessed and cited by, for example, academics whose universities cannot afford subscriptions to as wide range of journals as at Oxford, businesses and charities, non-academic researchers, and the general public.

*** Researchers should first check with apc@bodleian.ox.ac.uk that sufficient funds are available before committing to payment ***

Progress will be monitored, and the policy may be revised at any point during the year, in consultation with the Oxford OA Project Group and with the approval of Research Committee, as a result of: the pattern of requests and spend; the amount of the block grant second instalment (expected to be confirmed around October 2017).

Additional Information

RCUK funded authors, including PGRs ('authors') are asked

1. **To deposit a copy of their article in ORA** (Act on Acceptance)
2. **To be mindful of the University's preference for sustainably cost-effective OA dissemination using the 'green route' to OA** via deposit of the accepted manuscript in ORA (as above), and only request an APC for a 'hybrid' journal if the authors regard it as **absolutely essential** for the work to be OA immediately on publication.
3. **To contact the APC team** to check if funds are available **before submitting an article to a journal** and certainly **before** committing to payment of an APC (apc@bodleian.ox.ac.uk).
4. **If funded by MRC or BBSRC and using the 'green' route to OA**, the author should also self-deposit a copy of the article in Europe PubMed Central via Europe PMC Plus (<http://plus.europepmc.org>) in compliance with publisher's embargo permissions (in addition to 'Act on Acceptance' deposit in ORA for REF compliance)
5. **If their award was granted before 1st April 2013 and is still active**, to use grant money (i.e. not apply for funds from the block grant) to pay APCs.
6. **Abide by the Oxford non-APC Publication charges policy** (see Appendix)

The University, via the Bodleian Libraries will, for RCUK funded authors:

1. **Support the academic freedom** of researchers to publish in their choice of publication, having regard to quality, dissemination channels and impact, and value for money (University of Oxford OA Publications Policy (in preparation))
2. **Provide an APC administration service** to respond to authors' queries about the availability and requests for payment of APC funds, and completion of publishers' forms.
3. **Administer and allocate the RCUK block grant as described in this policy**, monitor use of the funds, and, if necessary, engage with OA Project Group and Research Committee to revise the policy.
4. **Whilst funds remain available, pay APCs as described above in this policy.**

5. **Pay page and other non-APC charges** as described in the appended University of Oxford non-APC publication charges policy
6. **Liase with RCUK about compliance rates** resulting from scarcity of funds and adoption of this policy.
7. **Ensure RCUK funded researchers** across the Collegiate University are provided with the information and training they require, including clear and timely instructions to authors and administrators, and an open access team to advise authors on different OA options for their publication.
8. **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 as described above in this policy, 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 (as described in this policy above) upon request from the Oxford co-author.

Information and advice is available on the Open Access Oxford website at

<http://openaccess.ox.ac.uk/>

APPENDIX: Use of RCUK OA block grant for non-APC publication fees

To ensure as many APCs as possible can be covered by the block grant, Oxford adopts the following policy guidelines below for RCUK-funded authors.

- 1 It is strongly recommended that authors check whether their charges will be covered **before** committing to payment by contacting the APC team at apc@bodleian.ox.ac.uk.
- 2 Where charges are not covered by the block grant or research fund, authors will need to find an alternative source of funds or, if relevant, ask the journal about other solutions such as opting to have charts and graphics published in colour in the online version only and B&W in the print version.
- 3 Non-APC publication charges currently equate to about 4% of payments made to publishers from the block grant.

	Charge	Rationale
Charge where non-payment can prevent publication, and/or that have some bearing on OA, and that WILL be paid from the block grant	Page charges (for all RCUK compliant journals whether green or gold route to OA)	Paid if non-payment would prevent publication
	PNAS publishing fees (but not PNAS APC)	Paid because non-payment would prevent publication. This model for handling PNAS and other publishing fees where the APC is non-compliant is common practice in other UK universities
	Publication charge or publishing fees other than those listed above	Paid if non-payment would prevent publication
	Colour charges	Paid if non-payment would significantly affect intelligibility of content
Charges where non-payment does not prevent publication, and/or have no bearing on OA, and WILL NOT be paid from block grant	Colour charges (unless exception above)	Relevant only to print format, not online format (irrespective of format eg PDF or HTML). If relevant, ask the journal about solutions such as opting to have charts and graphics published in colour in the online version only and B&W in the print version
	Personal membership fees	Irrelevant to OA and non-payment will not prevent publication
	Reprints	Irrelevant to OA and non-payment will not prevent publication
	Cover images	Irrelevant to OA and non-payment will not prevent publication
	Submission charges	Irrelevant to OA plus the article might not be accepted and we have therefore paid for nothing
	Supplemental data publication fees (eg <i>Blood</i>)	Irrelevant to OA and non-payment will not prevent publication
	Third party copyright charges	"Costs related to image copyright can be included in the application if it is directly linked to the project and the costs are justified."
	APCs where the licence or other element is non-compliant with RCUK policy	Non-compliant publication