

March 2014/07  
(Updated July 2015)

## Policy development

### Statement of policy

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Institutions are advised to comply with this policy

This document sets out the details of a requirement that certain research outputs should be made open-access to be eligible for submission to the next Research Excellence Framework (REF). This requirement will apply to journal articles and conference proceedings accepted for publication after 1 April 2016.

# Policy for open access in the post-2014 Research Excellence Framework

Updated July 2015



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# Policy for open access in the post-2014 Research Excellence Framework (Updated July 2015)

To	Heads of HEFCE-funded higher education institutions Heads of HEFCW-funded higher education institutions Heads of SFC-funded institutions Heads of universities in Northern Ireland
Of interest to those responsible for	Research management and administration, Library and information Management
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## Executive summary

### Purpose

1. This document sets out the details of a requirement that certain research outputs should be made open-access to be eligible for submission to the next Research Excellence Framework (REF). This requirement will apply to journal articles and conference proceedings accepted for publication after 1 April 2016.

**This document was updated in July 2015 to include a number of amendments to the policy, following constructive feedback from the sector, as set out in a circular letter to HEIs in July 2015 at [www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2015/CL.202015/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2015/CL.202015/).**

### Key points

2. The policy states that, to be eligible for submission to the post-2014 REF, authors' outputs must have been deposited in an institutional or subject repository. Deposited material should be discoverable, and free to read and download, for anyone with an internet connection. The requirement applies only to journal articles and conference proceedings with an International Standard Serial Number. It will not apply to monographs, book chapters, other long-form publications, working papers, creative or practice-based research outputs, or data. The policy applies to research outputs accepted for publication after 1 April 2016, but we would strongly urge institutions to implement it now.
3. The policy allows repositories to respect embargo periods set by publications. Where a publication specifies an embargo period, authors can comply with the policy by making a 'closed' deposit. Closed deposits must be discoverable to anyone with an Internet connection before the full text becomes available for read and download (which will occur after the embargo period has elapsed). If still under embargo at the submission date of the next REF, closed deposits will be admissible to the REF.
4. There are a number of exceptions to the various requirements that will be allowed by the policy. These exceptions cover circumstances where deposit was not possible, or where open access to deposited material could not be achieved within the policy

requirements. These exceptions will allow institutions to achieve near-total compliance, but the post-2014 REF will also include a mechanism for considering any other exceptional cases where an output could not otherwise meet the requirements.

### **Action required**

5. Higher education institutions are now advised to implement processes and procedures to comply with this policy, which may include using a combination of the 'green' and 'gold' routes to open access. Institutions can achieve full compliance without incurring any additional publication costs through article processing charges.

This document was updated in July 2015 to include a number of amendments to the policy, following constructive feedback from the sector, as set out in a circular letter to HEIs in July 2015 at [www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2015/CL\\_202015/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2015/CL_202015/).

## Introduction

6. The four UK higher education funding bodies believe that research arising from our funding should be as widely and freely accessible as the available channels for dissemination allow. Open access to research enables the prompt and widespread dissemination of research findings. It benefits the efficiency of the research process and allows publicly funded research to drive economic growth. It delivers social benefits through increased public understanding of research.

7. This document sets out the details of an open access policy relating to the successor to the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF). We formulated this policy following an extensive period of consultation with the higher education sector and other stakeholders during 2013. In February 2013, we wrote to all higher education institutions to ask for advice on how we might implement an open access requirement in the post-2014 REF<sup>1</sup>. Following advice received in reply to that letter, the four UK higher education funding bodies formally consulted on an updated set of policy proposals in July 2013<sup>2</sup>. The outcomes of the formal consultation and a summary of responses can be found respectively at Annexes B and C, published at the following link: [www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2014/201407/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2014/201407/).

8. This policy makes a number of assumptions about aspects of the next REF that have not yet been formally decided. This has been necessary to provide due notice to the sector of the policy requirement. The main assumption is that there will be a post-2014 REF that operates on substantially the same basis as the 2014 REF. For example, we assume that there will be four main panels with disciplinary remits broadly similar to those of the REF 2014 main panels.

## Details of the policy

9. To fulfil our aim of increasing substantially the proportion of research that is made available by open access in the UK, the four UK higher education funding bodies are introducing a requirement that outputs submitted to the post-2014 REF be made available in an open-access form<sup>3</sup>. This policy document sets out the details of this requirement.

10. The requirement will apply at the level of the individual research output. Set out below are the **definition** of the outputs within the scope of this policy, the **criteria** that

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<sup>1</sup> The letter is available on request from [openaccess@hefce.ac.uk](mailto:openaccess@hefce.ac.uk)

<sup>2</sup> 'Consultation on open access in the post-2014 Research Excellence Framework' (HEFCE 2013/16), available online at [www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2013/201316/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2013/201316/)

<sup>3</sup> The policy only applies to research submitted to the 'outputs' component of the REF. It does not apply to material forming part of the case studies submitted to the 'impact' component.

these outputs must fulfil to be considered open-access, and a list of **exceptions** to the requirements.

### **Definition of outputs within the scope of this policy**

11. The requirement to comply with the open access policy applies only to particular outputs, as defined below.

- a. The type of output is a journal article **or** the type of output is a conference proceeding with an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN).
- b. The output is accepted for publication after 1 April 2016.

Any output that fits **both aspects** of this definition will need to meet the open access criteria outlined in paragraphs 16 to 36, unless an exception applies.

12. Conference proceedings published with an International Standard Book Number (ISBN) or as part of a book series with an ISSN do not meet this definition.

13. The criteria will apply to outputs that are accepted for publication after 1 April 2016. We strongly encourage institutions to work towards full compliance by the start date.

### **Outputs not meeting the definition**

14. Outputs that sit outside the above definition will still be eligible for submission to the post-2014 REF without needing to meet the open access criteria. Specifically, this policy does not apply to monographs and other long-form publications, or to non-text outputs, or to the data which underpin some research. Further, this policy does not apply to those particular output types that are delivered confidentially for security or commercial reasons.

15. Where a higher education institution (HEI) can demonstrate that it has taken steps towards enabling open access for outputs outside the scope of this definition, credit will be given in the research environment component of the post-2014 REF. It is reasonable for institutions to take a proportionate view of the costs and benefits of making other types of outputs (including monographs) available as open access.

### **Criteria for open access**

16. Outputs that meet the definition at paragraphs 11 to 13, and thus fall within the scope of this policy, must fulfil all of the following criteria to be treated as open-access, except where there is an allowable exception. The criteria consist of deposit requirements, discovery requirements and access requirements.

### **Deposit requirements**

17. The output must have been deposited in an institutional repository, a repository service shared between multiple institutions, or a subject repository<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Individuals depositing their outputs in a subject repository are advised to ensure that their chosen repository meets the requirements set out in this policy.

18. The output must have been deposited as soon after the point of acceptance as possible, and no later than three months after this date (as given in the acceptance letter or e-mail from the publication to the author).

19. To take account of the need for systems to be developed to support deposit-on-acceptance, during the first year of the policy (1 April 2016 – 1 April 2017), outputs can be deposited up to three months after the date of publication<sup>5</sup>. This additional flexibility will be reviewed in 2016.

20. The output must have been deposited as the author's accepted and final peer-reviewed text (which may otherwise be known as the 'author manuscript' or 'final author version' or 'post-print'), though this may be replaced or augmented with an updated peer-reviewed manuscript or the final published version of record at a later date<sup>6</sup>.

21. Outputs that are published by a journal or conference that does not require peer review are within the scope of this policy; in this instance, we would require the author's final accepted version.

22. Outputs that have been provisionally accepted for publication, under the condition that the author makes revisions to the manuscript that result from peer review, are not considered as the final text.

### **Discovery requirements**

23. The output must be presented in a way that allows it to be discovered by readers and by automated tools such as search engines.

24. The discovery requirements should typically be fulfilled through the storage and open presentation of a bibliographic or metadata record in the repository.

25. Once discoverable, the output should remain so.

26. Where a deposited output is later replaced or augmented with an updated peer-reviewed manuscript or the version of record, this must also meet the discovery requirements.

### **Access requirements**

27. The output must be presented in a form that allows anyone with internet access to search electronically within the text, read it and download it without charge, while respecting any constraints on timing (as detailed in paragraphs 29 to 35)<sup>7</sup>. While we do not request that outputs are made available under any particular licence, we advise that outputs licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial Non-Derivative (CC BY-NC-ND) licence would meet this requirement.

28. Once accessible, the output should remain so.

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<sup>5</sup> 'Date of publication' means the earliest date that the final version-of-record is made available on the publisher's web-site. This generally means that the 'early online' date, rather than the print publication date, should be taken as the date of publication.

<sup>7</sup> Outputs whose text is encoded only as a scanned image do not meet the requirement that the text be searchable electronically.

29. The required timing of compliance with the access requirements depends on whether an embargo is specified. Two routes are given below.

Route 1: For outputs deposited with no embargo

30. The output must meet the access requirements as soon as possible and no later than one month after deposit.

Route 2: For outputs deposited under embargo

31. The output must meet the access requirements as soon as possible and no later than one month after the end of the embargo period. The embargo period typically begins at the point of first publication (including online publication).

32. Embargo periods should not exceed the following maxima:

- 12 months for REF Main Panel A and REF Main Panel B
- 24 months for REF Main Panel C and REF Main Panel D<sup>8</sup>.

33. Outputs deposited under embargo must fulfil all of the deposit and discovery requirements above.

34. Outputs still under embargo will be admissible to the post-2014 REF, provided that the date of their first publication is within the REF publication period.

35. Where a deposited output is later replaced or augmented with an updated peer-reviewed manuscript or the version of record, this must also meet the access requirements. Embargo periods may not re-start with subsequent deposits: they are always linked to the date of first publication.

### **Text-mining**

36. Outputs do not need to allow automated tools to perform in-text search and download (those activities commonly known as text-mining) to meet the access requirement. However, where an HEI can demonstrate that outputs are presented in a form that allows re-use of the work, including via text-mining, credit will be given in the research environment component of the post-2014 REF. We further recommend that institutions fully consider the extent to which they currently retain or transfer the copyright of works published by their researchers, as part of creating a healthy research environment. For further information on text-mining, see Annex A.

### **Exceptions**

37. All outputs that meet the definition in paragraphs 11 to 13 must fulfil the open access criteria in paragraphs 16 to 36, except where the following exceptions apply. Where one of the following exceptions applies to an output, this exception should be indicated in the submission to the REF.

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<sup>8</sup> Interdisciplinary research being submitted to Main Panel A or B that would be also admissible to Main Panel C or D may respect the longer of the two embargo periods.

## **Deposit exceptions**

38. The following exceptions deal with cases where the output is unable to meet the deposit requirements, or where the output is being made open access via another route. In the following cases, the output will not be required to meet any of the open access criteria, and should be considered beyond the scope of this policy, though we recognise that in some cases open access to the output may be achievable at a later date or by another route.

- a. The individual whose output is being submitted to the REF was unable to secure the use of a repository at the point of acceptance.
- b. The individual whose output is being submitted to the REF experienced a delay in securing the final peer-reviewed text (for instance, where a paper has multiple authors).
- c. The individual whose output is being submitted to the REF was not employed by a UK HEI at the time of submission for publication.
- d. It would be unlawful to deposit, or request the deposit of, the output.
- e. Depositing the output would present a security risk.
- f. The output was published as 'gold' open access (for example, RCUK-funded projects where an open access article processing charge has been paid)<sup>9</sup>.

## **Access exceptions**

39. The following exceptions deal with cases where deposit of the output is possible, but there are issues to do with meeting the access requirements. In the following cases, the output will still be required to meet the deposit and discovery requirements, but not the access requirements. A closed-access deposit will be required, and the open access requirements should be met as soon as possible.

- a. The output depends on the reproduction of third party content for which open access rights could not be granted (either within the specified timescales, or at all).
- b. The publication concerned requires an embargo period that exceeds the stated maxima, and was the most appropriate publication for the output.
- c. The publication concerned actively disallows open-access deposit in a repository, and was the most appropriate publication for the output.

## **Technical exceptions**

40. The following exceptions deal with cases where an output is unable to meet the criteria due to a technical issue. In the following cases, the output will not be required to meet the open access criteria. We would strongly urge HEIs to ensure the criteria are met retroactively, as soon as possible and no later than the REF submission point.

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<sup>9</sup> We would strongly encourage these outputs to be deposited in a repository to facilitate preservation, aggregation and text-mining.



- a. At the point of acceptance, the individual whose output is being submitted to the REF was at a different UK HEI which failed to comply with the criteria.
- b. The repository experienced a short-term or transient technical failure that prevented compliance with the criteria (this should not apply to systemic issues).
- c. An external service provider failure prevented compliance (for instance, a subject repository did not enable open access at the end of the embargo period, or a subject repository ceased to operate).

### **Other exceptions**

41. In very exceptional cases, it may not be possible for an output to meet the open access requirements set out by this policy for a reason not covered by the exceptions listed above. We will require a short written explanation for why the output could not meet the open access requirements at the point of submission to the REF. We expect that such cases should be extremely rare. We will establish the process for considering them as part of our more detailed work to develop the post-2014 REF.

### **Compliance with these requirements**

42. Evidence for outputs meeting the criteria, the definition, or any of the allowed exceptions will not be required to be submitted to the post-2014 REF.
43. We will establish the detailed verification and audit process as part of the implementation of the next REF, but we initially intend that compliance will be measured by verifying the data provided in the REF submission. Any audit will require institutions to provide assurance about their processes and systems for recording open-access information, as well as taking a light-touch approach to verifying supporting information. Further details of the information and audit requirements are given on our web-site<sup>10</sup>.
44. Any output submitted to the next REF that falls within the scope of this policy but does not meet its requirements or exceptions will be treated as non-compliant. Non-compliant outputs will be given an unclassified score and will not be assessed in the REF. However, we will be tolerant of occasional failures where institutions have made best endeavours towards achieving full compliance. Audits by the REF will allow for legitimate human error or oversight, and will take account of how the varied mix of disciplines across institutions can affect progress. The number of exceptions claimed within a submission will not affect the REF results.

### **Further provisions**

#### Researchers moving between higher education institutions

45. When a researcher moves between two HEIs, it will be acceptable for their deposited outputs to move to the new institution's repository, as long as there is no interruption to discovery or access during the transition. We recognise that the use of unique researcher identifiers, such as Open Research and Contributor ID (ORCID), can facilitate this process.

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<sup>10</sup> The information and audit requirements document can be found under 'Technical resources' at [www.hefce.ac.uk/rsrch/oa/Policy/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/rsrch/oa/Policy/)

46. We will not require the submitting institution to seek and retain evidence of the previous HEI's compliance with the deposit requirements, but it is our aim that the submitting institution provides information on accessibility levels for these outputs where information is readily available. Further information about this will follow in due course.

#### Repositories and research information systems

47. Institutions' research information management systems that can support the open access requirements through repository-like functionality can be thought of as institutional repositories for the purposes of this policy.

#### SHERPA services and publisher policies

48. We recognise that information on deposit permissions, licences and embargoes can sometimes be unclear, complex, or hard to find. Until significant progress has been made to address this issue (including developing machine-readable licences and permissions), it is reasonable for the sector to rely on shared services, including those offered by SHERPA. Authors and institutions should feel comfortable acting on the information provided by SHERPA in meeting our open access requirements, and should not undertake additional work to verify this information.

#### **Further information**

49. Frequently asked questions (FAQ) on the HEFCE web-site have been updated to reflect the adjusted policy and can be accessed at [www.hefce.ac.uk/rsrch/oa/faqs](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/rsrch/oa/faqs)

50. For further information, please contact Ben Johnson (tel 0117 931 7038) or [openaccess@hefce.ac.uk](mailto:openaccess@hefce.ac.uk)

## List of abbreviations

APC	Article processing charge: a payment to a publisher in return for providing open access to an article.
CC	Creative Commons (further information below).
DoA	Deposit on acceptance: research outputs are uploaded to a repository at the point the article is accepted for publication.
DoP	Deposit on publication: research outputs are uploaded to a repository at the point the article is published.
HEI	Higher education institution
ISBN	International Standard Book Number
ISSN	International Standard Serial Number
ORCID	Open Researcher and Contributor ID, a registry of unique researcher identifiers and a method of linking research activities and outputs to these identifiers.
RCUK	Research Councils UK
REF	Research Excellence Framework

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## **Annex A: Text-mining**

1. Text-mining refers to a range of activities to interact with and analyse electronic documents using software. A commonly understood form of text-mining is the bulk electronic analysis of a large number of documents. Often, this means moving beyond simple search queries and into text analytics, semantic searches, pattern learning, opinion mining, concept extraction, and other types of electronic usage.
2. Text-mining is a rapidly evolving practice. It is not yet possible to predict its full potential; many of the technologies that enable text-mining are in the early stages of development. However, it is clear that text-mining presents a sizeable opportunity for the research base to interact with the corpus of knowledge more effectively and efficiently, helping to overcome what some commentators refer to as 'information overload' created by the publishing trends of the last several decades.
3. Text-mining is currently limited in its uptake for a number of reasons. Some of the biggest limitations are connected with licensing and copyright. We note with interest that the Government is planning changes to copyright law in response to the findings of the Hargreaves Review of Intellectual Property and Growth, including legislating for a copyright exception for text- and data-mining. We will continue to monitor developments in this area as the changes are implemented. Debates are still under way about the extent to which some of the Creative Commons licences allow for text-mining; bound up with this is the question of whether the process of text-mining constitutes the creation of derivative works. Arguments that text-mining requires more permissive Creative Commons licences (such as Attribution, CC BY) must be seen alongside the increased charges that some journals levy for publishing under a more permissive licence. In short, the licensing question is yet to be fully resolved.
4. There are technical challenges. Text-mining activity requires documents to be presented in a particular way, and for the Internet infrastructure to handle the high volume of requests typically made by text-mining software. Commonly used document formats, such as some variants of PDF, are not easily comprehensible to text-mining software. File servers, particularly those run by subject repository services, may elect to restrict bulk access and download by software on grounds of cost.
5. We have received advice that research outputs deposited in the institutional repository as full text, and with a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial (CC BY-NC) licence, would be enough to guarantee text-mining. However, we are continuing to listen to advice in this area, and are watching the debates and developments as they unfold. We believe that efforts made by institutions to solve the technical and other challenges associated with text-mining and increase its uptake should be rewarded, and we intend to do this through the environment component of the next REF.

### **Further reading**

6. For more information, see 'Value and benefits of text-mining' at [www.jisc.ac.uk/reports/value-and-benefits-of-text-mining](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/reports/value-and-benefits-of-text-mining), and 'Changes to copyright law' at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-copyright-law>.