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Open Access Publishing: A Guide

In 2012, the UK government and many research funding bodies released new policies mandating the open access publication of UK publicly-funded research. These new policies aim to widen access to research findings on the basis that the traditional model of subscription publication limits access to research findings to a small audience of academics and to those who are able to pay subscriptions to journals. The UK government maintains that publicly-funded research should result in publicly available resources.

The move towards open access journal publishing has implications for Political Studies, but the pace of change has been rapid and PSA members would not be alone in being unsure of its implications. This guide explains the current understanding of open access journal publishing policies and what they may mean for you, your research and your publications, as well as what they mean for the profession.

Q: What is Open Access journal publishing?

In an Open Access (OA) publishing model, anyone can read the journal article for free. Under the current subscriptions model, accessing a journal article requires interested readers to pay a subscription fee, or belong to an institution that has paid a subscription to a journal.

Q: How are publications made Open Access? What are the 'Green' and 'Gold' models?

There are a variety of methods by which authors and publishers can make research publications open access.

The **Gold model** involves an article processing charge (APC) paid to the journal to make the official article of record open access immediately upon publication. APCs can range from £500 to £5000 per article, depending on the journal (anticipated costs of £500-£2,000 per article in the social sciences).

The **Green model** involves the author depositing his/her post-peer review article in an open access repository after a suitable 'embargo period'. The publisher informs authors of the embargo period. The repository for deposit may be an institutional repository or it may be a subject repository – like PubMedCentral. Under this model the article does not require an APC, so the journal makes its revenue through charging subscriptions.

****The editorial and peer review processes are not affected or altered by the model of publication (Green, Gold or subscription)**

What does it mean for me?

Q: Do I have to make my research Open Access?

Based on the current policies, if your research is wholly or partially funded by public funds, you are likely to be subject to an open access mandate from your funding body. Check with your funding body to understand its policy and how it will affect you.

Q: Can I choose either Green or Gold?

The model of open access publishing will depend on the policy of the funding body. At the moment, these policies are not clear. Policies that were published in 2012 have come under intense scrutiny and reviews since they were published. However, at the current time, the general consensus tends towards the Gold model:

A National Working Group on Expanding Access to Published Research Findings, chaired by Professor Dame Janet Finch, was established to explore the best method for widening access to research findings. The report of this working group (commonly referred to as the Finch Report) recommends the 'Gold' model, though it recognises that a mixture of models will be needed during the period of transition to open access publishing.

Subsequent to the publication of the Finch report, RCUK set an open access policy that preferred Gold but allowed Green if Gold was not an option. This policy comes into effect for papers resulting from RCUK funded research submitted for peer-reviewed publication from 1 April 2013 (see RCUK's website). Since the publication of this policy, it has received significant scrutiny. Relevant comments suggest that the RCUK policy will allow the researcher and his/her institution to decide the model of publication (Green or Gold). Greater clarification on this topic is needed and may be forthcoming shortly.

Q: Who will pay the APCs under the Gold model?

In general, the current view is that UK HEIs will be expected to meet the publishing costs of their researchers. RCUK has announced that block grants will be provided to eligible HEIs in the UK, approved independent research organisations and Research Council Institutes. It is also expected that universities and other eligible organisations will establish their own funding pools for publishing research, for example from savings on library subscription charges. Operational details are still being ironed out. However, feedback from some universities suggests that the expected savings from library subscriptions will not be significant and the block grant funding will not cover the anticipated APCs.

Q: Will Open Access affect REF submissions?

Open Access policies will not affect REF 2014 submissions. HEFCE has announced that it will have an open access policy for REF 2020. The details of this policy have not been announced though HEFCE has announced that there will be a consultation in early 2013.

Q: What is the PSA position on Open Access?

The PSA supports the principle of widening access to research findings. Making research results widely available could have many positive outcomes. Widening access to published journal articles broadens the reach and impact of our research beyond the academic community in universities – to charities, businesses, those working in the public sector or outside academia and the wider (global) public.

The current implementation and funding of open access journal publication raises many questions about how such policies will affect research and publishing in the social sciences and the arts and humanities and the PSA is very concerned. We would ask for the following to allow for a thorough

exploration of the consequences, intended and unintended, on research and publishing in the social sciences:

- A delay for the implementation by HEFCE and RCUK.
- Urgent consultation with learned societies, academics and journals in the social sciences and humanities.

In particular, there are potential concerns on a number of points:

- If the Gold route to OA is adopted, UK academics will become part of a **'pay to publish'** model for research publications. It will fall on authors, funding bodies and HEIs to meet costs of publication and dissemination.
- Lack of funding to support Gold OA for *all* published papers may mean **a narrowing of publishing opportunities** for academics if OA policies continue to prefer the Gold over the Green model. UK academics publish approximately 6% of research publications worldwide. A policy that widens access to published results but narrows the ability to participate in publication and restricts the freedom to write seems unwise.
- If HEIs are involved in the decision to award funds to publish, the financial and policy interest of HEIs may be a factor for publication. **Academics and their departments and schools will have to compete for limited publishing funds.**
- RCUK block grant funding for APCs is based on access to RCUK funds and seems **to be moving towards a concentration of research in the top-funded HEIs.**
- If funding plays a role in the decision on whether to publish and in which journal, **inequalities may be created as those who have access to funds will be able to publish and those without will not**, or will not have access to the same publication outlets as those with funds. Currently those without easy access to funds may include PhD students, early career academics, political scientists outside academia and retired academics, among many others.
- Authors maintain the copyright in their articles and publishers support them by managing permission requests and appropriate reuse of research. OA may mean **that research and data can be used in unintended ways with the original author's name associated.** (See Creative Commons' website, for more information.)
- In addition to open access publications, there are requirements for research articles to include a statement on how research materials (i.e., data samples) can be accessed. Open data presents serious concerns regarding the confidentiality and usage of data from participants. (See RCUK policy, available on their website.)
- While the editorial process should remain independent of the publication model (Green, Gold or subscription), **editors may experience financially-driven pressures** if the subscription or APC income of the journal is dropping or at risk.
- Journal income supports the activities of many learned societies, the PSA among them. OA presents a challenge to the income which learned societies currently earn from journal subscriptions. **We are concerned that a rush to implement OA policies may weaken the Association by providing no time for income adjustment.**

The PSA would welcome discussions about mixed Green and Gold OA models, appropriate copyright licenses and suitable embargo periods. We ask for time to adjust to a new publishing model and to understand the impact it will have on the discipline we champion and on the ability of the Association to support the discipline.

Q: What can I do?

The implementation of OA policy is still being determined. The PSA needs its members to be informed and become part of the conversations about how OA publication will become operationalised, so that we can properly represent your interests at national debates on the subject.

Do your own research: ask your department what they are planning to do about funding Gold open access how any funds will be allocated. If you work on a journal, ask your publishers about their policy. If you belong to other learned societies, make your opinions known to them and ask their policies.

- What is the open access policy of your funder? Is the Green or Gold model preferred?
- What publication options are offered by the journal(s) you wish to submit to?
- What arrangements have been made by your department and/or your funder to meet the payment of any article processing charges (APC)?
- What is the embargo period for the deposit of any article you wish to put in a repository?

Express your thoughts/concerns to your HEI, your funding body, your MP and your learned society.

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