UHI Open Access Policy (Publications)

Guidelines for UHI Employees

UHI Open Access Policy, approved at Academic Board 19th June 2014
Introduction

The concept of Open Access publication for research outputs from publicly funded research is not new, but it has been growing in significance in recent years and, as a result of the publication in June 2012 of the report from the National Working Group on Expanding Access to Published Research Findings (the ‘Finch Group’)- Accessibility, sustainability, excellence: how to expand access to research publications, and the Government’s subsequent acceptance of the report’s recommendations, the matter has reached the point where a clear UHI level policy is now required.

In more traditional forms of publication in the past (typically in the form of printed/hard-copy material, but increasingly today in electronic form), access to published research outputs has been limited by the need for payment directly by the reader or by an institution on behalf of a group of readers. This is normally in the form of a one-off charge per article or an annual subscription in order to purchase a license for access to a relevant journal.

In contrast to this, Open Access publication, is the move to ensure that outputs derived from research activity (mainly, but not exclusively, in the form of research journals) are presented to the reading public (individuals, groups, government-related, businesses and so on) in on-line/electronic publications that are free for them to access and use.

In this way it is intended to ensure that the public – who advocates of OA stress pay for a significant portion of research work that is undertaken – have unhindered and free access to the results of that investment as soon as possible once the output has been published and is ready to enter the public domain. This access will in turn, it is argued, encourage greater understanding of research activity, ensure broader dissemination of research findings, and secure significantly increased public engagement with research at all levels.
‘Green’ Open Access versus ‘Gold’ Open Access

There are currently 2 main approaches available to institutions with respect to meeting the Government’s target of a move towards full (or near to full) Open Access publication by 2016. These are known as the ‘Green’ Open Access route, and the ‘Gold’ Open Access route. These are described briefly as follows:

i. **Green Open Access:**
Green Open Access permits a version of the final research-based article produced by a member of academic staff to be placed by the author in a suitable Open Access repository. In the case of UHI, the intended repository for such deposits is associated with the PURE Research Information Management System. In most cases, the article/output becomes available for unhindered and free access by the general public after an embargo period has past, which is set by the original publisher. This embargo period is typically 6 – 24 months following publication, currently.

ii. **Gold Open Access:**
Gold Open Access allows an individual article to be made directly available to any reader as a result of the up-front payment to the publisher of the relevant Article Processing Charge (APC). The article may then be accessed freely and without hindrance immediately by any reader, and the output may also be deposited in a suitable form in an Institutional Repository (such as PURE) without any embargo period.

Recent information from HEFCE indicates a preference for institutions to adopt a ‘Gold Open Access’ approach, and this is being supported by many of the publishing houses and research funding bodies that are engaged in the Open Access debate.

However, the cost to institutions of ‘Gold’ Open Access is likely to be substantial, and the Finch report estimated the average cost of each published journal article to be £1,750. However, this figure has already been challenged by Oxford University, which has indicated that the average APC for that institution is closer to £2,100 at present rates. Furthermore, even when using the Finch report APC cost, the University of Oxford has calculated that this would equate to an ‘additional’ burden on Oxford University of c. £21,357,596 per annum, if it were to follow the ‘all-gold’ route for Open Access publication.

In the light of the above, it is of relevance to UHI that an institution the scale and significance of Oxford University is currently promoting a policy that favours following the ‘Green’ Open Access route wherever possible over the ‘Gold route’, on the grounds of cost and affordability. However, it is also to be noted that universities receiving block grant funding from the Research Councils will receive, as part of their block grants, a sum specifically to enable Gold Open Access publication of outputs. This applies to 84 UK-wide institutions, but does not include UHI.
Issues to take into account at UHI

It is apparent that every institution is now being faced with the need to decide formally its own policy in respect of the Open Access agenda. In doing so at UHI, the following factors must be taken into account:

i. **Government, Funding Councils and Research Councils Policy** – The government has adopted the findings and recommendations of the Finch Report, and both the Funding Councils and the Research Councils have followed suit. It is now important for UHI to adopt a formal Open Access policy of its own, that will support its research (and scholarship) development plans.

ii. **REF 2019/20** – it is virtually certain that there will be another REF exercise in 2019/2020. In gearing up for the next REF, it has been announced that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) will be required to ensure that journal-based outputs for use in their submissions are in form of Open Access publications (with modest exceptions being permitted for some discipline areas, and (currently) excluding monographs). The Funding Council is therefore seeking to ensure that all higher education institutions have a policy in place in favour of Open Access publication, and that these policies are fully operational and embedded by 2016.

iii. **Uncertain future** – there is a sense in which the issues around Open Access are still being formed, and it is not absolutely clear how this matter will be progressed. Part of the consideration is that higher education operates in a world market, and there is real concern that the drive towards Open Access might put UK-based research at a disadvantage, not least in terms of intellectual property rights and commercialisation.

iv. **APC Costs** – it is evident that current APC costs will not remain static. However, it is unclear what measures can be taken to ensure that the cost of publication does not spiral upwards, particularly for the premium brand publications. Indeed, there is believed to be an increased potential for exaggeration of the APC cost for securing publication in the ‘top’ journals in each discipline area.

v. **Embargo periods** – the current embargo period for Green Open Access ranges from 6 – 24 months, and the Funding Councils (and the Government) are working to try to ensure that there is a maximum of 12 months in the future. However, if the sector decides primarily to go down the ‘Green’ route, there is a chance that the publishing houses will react to this by extending rather than contracting the embargo period.

vi. **UHI, rDAP and Research Culture** – UHI is at a critical juncture in its development as a university, noting that the development and embedding of a strong research culture (i.e. one that is appropriate to the scale and context of UHI’s academic ambitions) is essential if we are to be fully recognised by our peers in Scotland as a ‘real university’. Indeed, this understanding is one of the driving forces behind UHI’s progression towards securing its own research degree awarding powers (rDAP). Therefore, it is very important that UHI’s Open Access policy facilitates the ability of its staff both to undertake an appropriate amount and standard of research, and also to be able to publish the results of that research in relevant discipline-based journals, where required.
vii. **Strategic Application** – In view of the above considerations, it is clear that UHI will need to apply appropriate strategic management of publications, in order to facilitate the longer-term aims and objectives of the University, which includes building-up its world class level research activity in several discrete areas. This will be done in part by staff in those areas engaging fully in the preparations for the 2019/20 REF, but also ensuring that other areas of research that have good potential for the future, but which are not yet ready for engagement with the REF, are also nurtured and grown in appropriate ways. Beyond this, an approach to publication for early career researchers will need to be devised. This will require clear and deliberate research development planning, which will involve detailed processes of mentoring, coaching and annual (research-related) performance review.

viii. **Intellectual Property (IP)** – IP considerations require to be taken into account fully and appropriately, in order to secure for UHI potential income streams from research discoveries that we might wish to be able to exploit fully as a University.

ix. **Affordability** – A key consideration for UHI to take in to account is that of affordability. It is clear that there will be a need to set aside some resource in order to facilitate progress towards UHI’s research ambitions, but this will need to be carefully managed and applied, so as to keep costs in check and remain affordable.

**UHI Policy**

In view of the foregoing information, UHI have adopted a policy that facilitates a hybrid approach to Open Access at this stage, which does the following:

1. Confirms the use of the Green Open Access publication route as UHI’s default preferred approach to publication of journal-based research outputs; but which

2. Makes provision to enable/facilitate Gold Open Access publication where either of the following apply:
   a. Gold Open Access publication is a stated requirement of the research grant funding body, or
   b. The preferred academic journal for publication of particularly (strategically) important output is available only through the Gold Open Access route, and where the output is intended for inclusion in UHI’s submission to the next REF.

In agreeing the above, it is acknowledged it is important for UHI to retain a close watching brief on developments across the sector in regards to Open Access and to be prepared to adjust this policy position accordingly, as well as to engage in the sector-wide debate on Open Access.

It should also be noted that the above policy relates to research publications. However, in the case of publications that are understood to be derived from scholarship and advanced scholarship, it is proposed that ‘only’ the Green Open Access route for publication should be supported.
Practicalities

Staff across the UHI Academic Partnership may proceed to secure publication arrangements for their research outputs through the Green Open Access publication route without further reference in advance to the UHI Research Office (albeit, all research publications should be discussed and agreed with relevant line managers and mentors in APs and discipline area aggregations, as appropriate). This will cover the vast majority of the work we undertake, both for general research publication purposes and also for the major part of our next REF submission. It will be crucial, though, for all ‘green route’ publications to be deposited in an appropriate form into the institutional repository, which is embedded in the PURE Research Information Management System, at the earliest possible stage.

Note: A publisher will always advise the author direct which version is allowed to be made public and any embargo periods. There is a validation step within the PURE process where a local editor will check the output metadata and links for integrity but embargo periods or special instructions from the publisher will not be known by the editor. Therefore, it must be the responsibility of each researcher to ensure embargo periods or any special instructions for every output are adhered to when uploading outputs to the Institutional Repository. Any output with an embargo period must be marked as ‘Campus - Restricted view’ within PURE for the entirety of any embargo period and only updated to ‘Public – no restriction’ once the embargo has ended.

However, in cases where Gold Publication is required or preferred for strategic reasons (principally allied to UHI’s preparations for the next REF), and where the cost of Gold Open Access publication is not covered within the underpinning grant funding, the following will need to take place:

1. If the employing Academic Partner wishes to cover the cost of Gold Open Access publication from its own resources, no further reference to the UHI Research Office needs to be made; but,

2. If the employing Academic Partner does not agree to cover the cost of Gold Open Access publication from its own resources, but it is felt by the author to be strategically important (primarily for REF-related purposes) for Gold Open Access publication in a particular high quality journal (that is not covered by Green Open Access provisions), then the case for the cost of Gold Open Access publication will need to be considered in advance by a small sub group of RPG and Research Committee, chaired by the Vice Principal (Research). If approved, the cost of Gold Open Access publication will either be covered in full by a central UHI resource, or through sharing the cost in an appropriate way with the employing AP.

In view of ‘2’ immediately above, UHI will need to make the following provision:

An annual budget will need to be established, with the Vice Principal (Research) as budget-holder, to cover the cost of relevant Gold Open Access publications in
relevant cases. A budget request for £25,200 in 2014/15 has therefore been made, and that spending from the budget in the first year will enable the budget provision to be finessed in future years.

(It should be noted that Research Councils require publication in an Open Access form in respect of any research work they fund, and they prefer Gold Open Access. However, currently, institutions that bid for responsive mode funding from the Research Councils may not include the cost for Gold Open Access in their bids.)
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University of the Highlands and Islands,
Ness Walk, Inverness, Scotland, IV3 5SQ.
Tel: (01463) 279000
Email: RO@uhi.ac.uk
www.uhi.ac.uk/research

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