

Open Access to research – a GSA briefing paper

What is Open Access to research?

Research Councils UK (RCUK) defines Open Access (OA) as unrestricted, online access to peer-reviewed published research papers. The UK HE funding bodies (including the SFC) now expect research outputs to be as widely accessible as possible, in order to be “eligible for submission to the post-2014 REF”, as outlined in their [Policy for open access in the post-2014 Research Excellence Framework](#) (March 2014); and funders such as the AHRC and ESRC require grant holders to publish through OA channels. OA offers significant social and economic benefits: for individuals, charities, businesses, institutions and society. OA means increased exposure of your own research, and increased access to the research of your peers.

Where has OA come from?

In July 2012, the UK Government accepted the recommendations of the [Finch Report](#) which proposed an accelerated programme of action towards a fully OA environment. In response, RCUK adopted a [Policy on Open Access](#) in April 2013. Similarly, the EU and other countries are developing OA mandates for the research they fund, as seen in the Horizon 2020 EU Research and Innovation programme’s funding requirements and its [guide to open access](#).

What OA models are available?

There are two models of OA: ‘Gold’ and ‘Green’. Green OA involves authors depositing a version of their paper in an institutional repository (such as GSA’s [RADAR](#)). Gold OA involves publishing in an OA journal or website, where the costs of review and editing are recouped through Article Processing Charges (APCs). The GSA’s institutional preference is for researchers to follow a ‘Green’ route to OA. Gold OA was recommended by Finch, and is advocated by RCUK. In both models, papers undergo the same rigorous peer-review processes as in traditional academic publishing, and most academic journals have now developed OA routes for their authors.

How will OA affect me as a researcher at GSA?

Increasingly, OA requirements will form part of your conditions of grant, and different funders will mandate either Gold or Green OA. The [SHERPA Juliet](#) service provides summaries of the grant conditions and OA requirements of funding bodies such as the Wellcome Trust. Most OA mandates currently apply to peer-reviewed research papers or articles only, and not to monographs, but HEFCE’s [Monographs and Open Access Project](#) has recently found that OA could offer both short- and long-term advantages for monographs’ publication and use.

When publishing under Gold OA, payment of an APC will be required, and the funds for this will normally be budgeted for in your original research grant. Most academic publishers will also allow you to deposit in [RADAR](#), but they may stipulate that only certain versions can be submitted, or that an embargo period must first be observed. Both [RCUK guidance](#) (see section 3.6 (iii) *Embargo periods*) and HEFCE currently allow for an embargo period of up to 24 months for the arts. You can use the [SHERPA Romeo](#) service to discover if your publisher’s copyright rules allow you to deposit in the institutional repository. The Heads of Research and Learning Resources have developed an [OA policy for GSA](#), building on our work in establishing RADAR.

What do I need to do now?

When considering publication of your research outputs, think early on about how you can make them openly accessible (i.e. discoverable, and free to read and download), by choosing a publisher that offers a gold OA route, or preferably by uploading your output’s details and any associated files as full text (and accessible to anyone) in GSA’s [RADAR](#) (green OA). In order to be eligible for submission to the post-2014 REF, HEFCE stipulate that journal articles, and conference proceedings with an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN), must have been deposited in a repository (such as [RADAR](#)) on acceptance for publication, as defined in their [FAQs](#) (and no later than three months after the date of acceptance). This particularly applies to outputs accepted for publication after 1st April 2016, but we would strongly encourage you to adopt this practice now.

How can I find out more?

For further information and guidance on OA, and how to make your research openly accessible, contact [Dawn Pike](#) (Research Information Coordinator) or [Nicola Siminson](#) (Institutional Repository & Records Manager). [Julie Ramage](#) (Senior Research Manager) and [Alison Hay](#) (Research Developer) can provide information about the OA requirements of grant funders.

This is a period of great change for researchers, funders and institutions, so watch this space!