

2014 Independent review of the implementation of the RCUK Policy on Open Access

University of Strathclyde RCUK Open Access Report

September 2014

Introduction

1. This report responds to Research Councils UK's (RCUK) call for evidence in support of the 2014 independent review of the RCUK Policy on Open Access (OA)¹. The report reviews the progress that the University of Strathclyde has made in implementing RCUK's policy and provides data on institutional compliance. The review period considered by this report is 01/04/2013 – 31/07/2014.
2. The University of Strathclyde received a grant from RCUK amounting to £200,267 in order to support the implementation of the policy during 2013/2014. Expenditure of this grant during the current reporting period is also summarised.
3. The University of Strathclyde has historically supported Green OA through its repository services, based within the University Library. This, combined with the Library's experience working with publishers, resulted in the Library assuming responsibility for managing the RCUK OA grant. Responsibility for this coordinating role also builds on the Library's expertise in understanding existing journal contracts, checking copyright compliancy, knowledge of subscriber deals with OA benefits, and experience of the OA landscape more generally.
4. The resource required to administer the RCUK grant and associated compliance checking was absorbed into the existing workload of specific repository and acquisitions staff based at the Library. The University of Strathclyde has nevertheless adopted a pro-active approach in its implementation of the RCUK policy on OA. The RCUK policy has been – and continues to be – communicated to research active staff through staff-wide announcements, Strathclyde web pages, and campus-wide leafleting. The policy is also communicated to individual authors via our repository infrastructure and to new PhD students through training and induction programmes. The repository manager at the University of Strathclyde continues to communicate the importance of the policy to research active staff at research committee meetings or similar. RCUK grant holders have also been contacted directly.
5. The institution currently has no policy on OA nor does any institutional preference towards Green or Gold OA exist. Decisions about whether Green or Gold was most appropriate were therefore taken on a case-by-case basis.

¹ 2014 Independent Review of Implementation of the RCUK Policy on Open Access: <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/openaccess/2014-independent-review-of-implementation/>

6. Applications made to Strathclyde’s RCUK OA grant for Gold OA were accepted on a first-come, first-served basis.

Policy compliance

Compliance data

7. Compliance data are set out in Table 1. **238** peer-reviewed research articles were published during the reporting period (01/04/2013-31/07/2014) that were identified as being the direct output of RCUK funding. Of these RCUK articles, **116** were compliant with the RCUK policy on OA. This is equivalent to **49%** of total published output during the reporting period.

8. Of these 116 RCUK compliant articles, **53** achieved compliance via the Green route and **63** via the Gold route to OA.

9. **122** peer-reviewed research articles (51%) were published during the reporting period (01/04/2013-31/07/2014) in a manner inconsistent with the RCUK policy on OA. That is, no compliant Green accepted author manuscript (AAM) had been deposited and no Gold version was available.

Table 1: Data on RCUK OA compliance.

OVERALL COMPLIANCE	No.	%	OA ROUTE COMPLIANCE	No.	%
Total RCUK research outputs	238	100	Green	53	46
Total compliant	116	49	Gold	63	54
Total non-compliant	122	51	Total compliant	116	100

Comment regarding the accuracy of reporting

10. Data used as the basis for compliance reporting were derived using a combination of data hosted within the University of Strathclyde’s current research information system (CRIS). This data were cross-referenced with data extracted from Scopus, thereby enabling the identification of research outputs originating from the University of Strathclyde which may have been the output of RCUK funding but which were not already recorded in the CRIS.

11. Using data from both the institutional CRIS and Scopus has enabled a broader view of institutional compliance, rather than simply relying on internally curated data. However, it should be noted that neither our CRIS nor Scopus can be assumed to be 100% accurate. It is therefore possible that a small number of RCUK funded research articles have gone unreported.

Significant observations about policy compliance

12. It should be noted that initial analyses reported only **46** Gold articles instead of **63**. This is because 17 of the 63 Gold compliant articles were **not** administered for Gold by the University of Strathclyde. Some of these additional articles were only discovered using data from Scopus and then by interrogating the beta service, HowOpenIsIt.org², in order to determine which articles may have been made OA outside of Strathclyde’s Green and Gold activity. HowOpenIsIt.org found **17**

² HowOpenIsIt.org: <http://howopenisit.org/>

articles that were Gold OA. Strathclyde did not pay the APCs for these articles. A number of explanations are possible in these 17 cases:

- Recipient(s) of the same RCUK grant based at a different UK HEI (e.g. collaborating researchers) paid the APC using their own institutional fund;
- Strathclyde RCUK funded researchers paid for Gold OA using a source other than the central fund allocated to the University of Strathclyde by RCUK;
- Strathclyde RCUK funded researchers were collaborating with recipients of non-RCUK grants (e.g. Wellcome), who paid the APC instead of RCUK.

13. Without these additional 17 articles, the University of Strathclyde would be reporting the lower figure of 42% rather than 49% compliance and demonstrating a significantly higher level of compliance via the Green route to OA.

14. HowOpenSt.org is a tool optimised for detecting Gold OA articles only. No equivalent tool exists for Green OA. It is therefore highly probable that a proportion of the institution's 122 non-compliant articles have been deposited in a repository by collaborating authors based at other academic institutions, resulting in the underreporting of Green compliance with the RCUK policy on OA.

15. It should also be noted that in order to improve compliance an attempt was made in early 2014 to retro-convert articles known to be the outcome of RCUK funding to Gold OA. This activity yielded 14 articles for the current reporting period. These are articles which would otherwise have remained inconsistent with the RCUK policy. Again, without the addition of these articles the institution would have failed to meet RCUK's expected compliance threshold of 45% for 2013/2014.

16. It is our expectation that the institution will demonstrate a higher level of compliance via the Green route to OA in reporting year 2014/2015, owing to Strathclyde's decision to implement the HEFCE policy on OA in July 2014.

Financial accountability

17. The University of Strathclyde received a grant amounting to £200,267 in order to support the costs associated with implementing the policy during 2013/2014. 52% of this allocation has been spent and the remaining 48% has been rolled over and combined with Strathclyde's RCUK OA grant allocation for 2014/2015 (£235,609).

18. The average APC cost at Strathclyde for the current reporting period was £1752. Strathclyde has so far not been subject to additional publication costs for pages/colour charges.

19. A brief summary of expenditure from the Strathclyde grant is provided in Table 2 below. **Note** that a more detailed financial summary (using the RCUK data collection template) is provided in [Appendix A](#).

20. Expenditure of the grant was restricted to costs associated with article processing charge (APC) payments and/or the membership of Gold discount schemes with publishers. All costs

associated with administering the RCUK grant, compliance checking, handling of payments, liaising with authors, advocacy of the policy, etc. were absorbed into the existing workload of specific repository and acquisitions staff based at the Library. The implications of staffing is discussed below in “Impact on the University of Strathclyde”.

Table 2: Summary of expenditure from the Strathclyde RCUK OA grant, 2013/2014.

Expenditure from RCUK grant	Credits (£)	Debits (£)	Balance (£)
Grant allocation from RCUK	200,267	-	-
Payment to publisher – APC costs	-	77,894.20	-
Payment to publisher – deposit / Gold publisher discount schemes	-	26,532.34	-
Total expenditure	-	104,426.54	-
Total balance remaining	-	-	95,840.46

Additional written evidence

Impact on the University of Strathclyde

21. As noted in the introduction, the University Library assumed responsibility for administering the RCUK grant. A centrally managed budget code was established for the institution to track expenditure of the grant. Expenditure was monitored by using the acquisitions module of the Library Management System (Voyager). Staff and system development costs have not been charged to the grant as yet, but the additional workload created by the RCUK policy is creating significant challenges within a reduced staffing cohort. This workload is likely to be unsustainable in the longer term.

22. An increased workload has been associated with administering all eligible articles. A principal focus for additional work is compliance verification and APC administration:

- Checking publisher compliancy with the RCUK OA policy - and ensuring authors are compliant - is the most time consuming aspect of the work for staff. Academic authors lack sufficient understanding of the finer detail when reviewing publisher statements. There are no short cuts for compliancy checking, as developing systems such as SHERPA FACT remain incomplete and publishers provide conflicting advice.
- The lack of any standardised APC payment process across publishers has resulted in the proliferation of invoicing procedures and confusion among RCUK funded research staff. Post order stages have also proven to be time consuming, with time between approval–invoicing–publication being surprisingly long in some instances. Staff are therefore reduced to repeatedly checking that articles, paid for as Gold OA, have in fact be published and according to the correct licence, some time after the invoice has been paid.

23. Publishers are keen to promote pre-payment models for OA publishing. This puts the burden on OA administrators to predict how much an institution is likely to publish with a particular publisher within a given time frame. The danger is that large sums of the grant money may be locked with one publisher, with the subsequent loss of flexibility to spend the grant as needs change. The University of Strathclyde has cautiously subscribed to such schemes.

24. Many authors lack an appreciation that Green publishing would often meet the requirements without the need to pay an APC to publishers for Gold OA. It is therefore recommended that RCUK continue to make the acceptability of Green OA clearer in future communications.

Difficulties with embargoes and Green compliance

25. The RCUK policy on OA has opted for a rigorous 6 month and 12 month embargo requirement for STEM and AHSS disciplines respectively, where the desire is to pursue the Green route to OA. RCUK's preferred embargo lengths are currently disjoint with those typically offered by progressive publishers, usually 12 months and 24 months for STEM and AHSS respectively. This can make compliance problematic in instances where authors would prefer to pursue a Green route and can also make RCUK compliance very difficult where non-compliant Gold options are unavailable.

26. Meeting the policy's 6 month embargo has therefore, in general, been unachievable. In our experience it is more common to encounter a publication operating no embargoes than it is to encounter one operating an embargo of just 6 months.

27. HEFCE's recently announced policy on OA for REF2020 is tolerant of 12 months for STEM and 24 months for AHSS. With such a broad ranging OA policy in operation with the UK HE sector, it is our view that publishers will be unlikely to further reduce embargoes to 6 months and 12 months respectively, as per the RCUK policy of OA.

Impact of CC-BY on specific disciplines

28. The need to publish under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) licence created issues, particularly in the early months of policy implementation, during which time many publishers failed to provide compliant licencing options if Gold was the preferred route. This situation appears – at least anecdotally – to have improved during 2014.

29. Licencing nevertheless remains an issue within some discipline areas. By way of example, the University of Strathclyde demonstrates a high level of research activity within the related areas of photonics and optics. RCUK funded researchers frequently seek to disseminate in a number of journals published by the Optical Society of America (OSA). However, OSA does not offer CC-BY licences or any other type of CC licence, and instead prefers its own more restrictive licence. This has resulted in a not insignificant number of applications to our RCUK APC fund (circa 16) at Strathclyde failing RCUK compliance checks. Researchers within the following Strathclyde departments have been particularly affected in this regard: Institute of Photonics, Department of Electronic & Electrical Engineering, Department of Physics, and the Department of Mathematics & Statistics.

30. Whilst OSA fails to provide any RCUK compliant Gold options, it does provide progressive Green archiving alternatives and permits the deposit of publisher PDF files in institutional repositories without embargo. It was therefore possible in all cases to make all RCUK funded outputs Green OA; but the licencing issues surrounding publishers like the OSA continue to demonstrate the difficulties of going Gold in some disciplines.

Inconsistent or non-existent CC-BY labelling of OA content by publishers

31. Publishers continue to demonstrate inconsistent approaches to making the licence terms under which Gold RCUK funded articles are made available. It is not uncommon for publishers to accept the payment of APCs and to agree to publish under a CC-BY licence but then to publish the article without, a) clearly labelling it as OA, and b) clearly denoting the licence terms under which the article is available. In fact, in many cases, a CC-BY article will resemble a standard toll-based article, thereby obfuscating the licence terms associated with the article and in turn creating uncertainty in the reader. This has been found to be a particular issue with Elsevier and Wiley, and although in some cases the publisher rectified this when pursued, it was not possible in all cases.

32. Clear and unambiguous licence terms are the principal attraction of the Gold OA model. It is also a key motivation behind RCUK's preference for Gold OA. Poor practices by publishers therefore appear to be undermining an important aspect of the Gold OA model.

Policy communication and researcher engagement

33. While the University of Strathclyde has adopted a pro-active approach in its implementation of the RCUK policy on OA, and despite the high-profile afforded to the policy within the institution, it is still not uncommon to encounter research active staff who have only a limited knowledge of RCUK's policy. It would therefore be productive for research staff to receive a renewed series of communications from RCUK about the nature of the policy and its importance. Communications that are stronger in tone would also be welcomed, thereby supporting the behavioural change that is necessary to ensure higher levels of policy compliance in future years.

Contact

34. Further enquiries concerning the University of Strathclyde's administration of the RCUK OA block grant, or queries regarding the content of this report, can be directed to openaccesspublications@strath.ac.uk in the first instance.

Declaration of interests

35. The authors of this report have no interests to declare in relation to the data and/or textual content presented.

Appendix A: University of Strathclyde RCUK block grant expenditure 2013/2014

Publisher	Journal	Cost	
ACS	Journal of the American Chemical Society	£1,166.89	
ACS	Journal of Physical Chemistry B	£2,224.07	
ACS	Journal of Physical Chemistry B	£2,900.94	
ACS	Journal of Organic Chemistry	£1,455.48	
ACS	Inorganic Chemistry	£2,895.00	
		£10,642.38	5 articles
American Institute of Physics	Journal of Chemical Physics	£1,592.42	
American Institute of Physics	Applied Physics Letters	£1,621.48	
American Institute of Physics	Physics of Plasmas	£1,588.15	
American Institute of Physics	Physics of Plasmas	£1,588.15	
American Institute of Physics	Physics of Plasmas	£1,588.15	
American Institute of Physics	Journal of Mathematical Physics	£1,588.15	
American Institute of Physics	Review of Scientific Instruments	£1,588.15	
American Institute of Physics	Journal of Chemical Physics	£1,588.15	
		£12,742.80	8 articles
American Physical Society	Physical Review Letters	£2,049.80	
American Physical Society	Physical Review Letters	£1,973.18	
American Physical Society	Physical Review E	£1,243.30	
		£5,266.28	3 articles
CUP	Journal of Fluid Mechanics	£2,039.00	
CUP	Laser and Particle Beams	£1,949.10	
CUP	Journal of Fluid Mechanics	£2,039.00	
		£6,027.10	3 articles
Elsevier	Journal of Arthroplasty	£2,032.07	
Elsevier	Biosensors and Bioelectronics	£2,545.76	
Elsevier	International Journal of Heat and Fluid Flow	£1,784.74	
Elsevier	Mathematical Biosciences	£1,158.24	
		£7,520.81	4 articles
IET	Micro and Nano Letters	£830.17	1 article
Institute of Physics	Nanotechnology	£2,040.00	
Institute of Physics	Journal of Physics D	£2,040.00	
		£4,080.00	2 articles
Nature Publishing	Scientific Reports	£1,068.00	1 article
OUP	ICES Journal of Marine Science	£2,100.00	
OUP	Mathematical Medicine and Biology	£2,100.00	
		£4,200.00	2 articles
Public Library of Science	PLoS One	£987.15	1 article

Royal Society	Biology Letters	£1,260.00	
Royal Society	<i>RS Open Access Membership</i>	£1,260.00	
		£2,520.00	1 article
RSC	Chemical Science	£1,632.00	
RSC	Dalton Transactions	£1,632.00	
RSC	Analyst	£1,632.00	
RSC	Dalton Transactions	£1,632.00	
RSC	Green Chemistry	£1,020.00	
RSC	Dalton Transactions	£1,632.00	
RSC	Physical Chemistry Chemical Physics	£1,632.00	
		£10,812.00	7 articles
Sage	Prosthetics and Orthotics International	£240.00	1 article
Springer	Water Resources Management	£2,225.74	
Springer	Water Resources Management	£2,190.64	
Springer	Water Resources Management	£2,140.55	
		£6,556.93	3 articles
T&F	Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies	£1,823.76	1 article
Wiley	Angewandte Chemie	£3,022.80	
	<i>Wiley Online Open discount deposit</i>	£15,360.00	7 articles
IEEE	<i>IEEE Open discount deposit</i>	£9,912.34	
IEEE	IEEE Transactions on Aerospace and Electronic Systems	£814.02*	1 article
Sub-total – publisher APC costs		£77,894.20	
Sub-total – deposit / Gold publisher discount schemes		£26,532.34	
Total paid to publishers		£104,426.54	
Balance of block grant remaining		£95,840.46	

* Estimated APC. Exact payment amount remains outstanding at time of writing, owing to internal foreign payments transaction delay.