

Open Access Publishing: Plan S

This paper:

- alerts the Committee to developments in Open Access policy and concerns within the sector; and
- asks for a restatement of current position, pending proposed further exploration with sector bodies on whether a refined approach should be developed.

Recommendations

- Discuss the issues in the paper to inform the work of the Executive
- Agree a restatement of SFC's support for Open Access, making clear that we currently have 'no plans' to mandate Plan S for core-funded publications
- Agree that a fuller discussion of Open Access policy should form a future agenda item for RKEC, informed by
 - Further engagement with UKRI on their Open Access Review implications and Plan S for REF and other research assessment exercises/metrics.
 - Further engagement with HEIs and associated bodies to ensure that the implications of and current responses to Plan S are fully understood.

Financial implications

- No direct financial implications

Remove blank page for web version

Plan S

Purpose

1. This paper alerts the Committee to developments in Open Access policy and concerns within the sector. It asks for a restatement of current position, pending proposed further exploration with sector bodies on whether a refined approach should be developed.

Background

2. At the end of August 2018, a coalition of European research funders¹ (including UKRI and Wellcome) announced “Plan S” – a collective commitment by research funders at national and EU level to make full and immediate Open Access to scholarly publications a reality by 2020.
3. The key target of Plan S is “After 1 January 2020 scientific publications on the results from research funded by public grants provided by national and European research councils and funding bodies, must be published in compliant Open Access Journals or on compliant Open Access Platforms.” Other principles are at Annex A.
4. The initiative aims for the removal of publication paywalls (i.e. journal subscription fees or fees for accessing individual papers), which restrict access to research results and does not favour any specific business or publishing model. Signatories “have joined in a regulatory framework and see it as up to commercial enterprises to find suitable business models within that regulatory framework.”
5. “Plan S specifically makes a provision that if such high quality Open Access journals and platforms do not yet exist, the funders will jointly provide incentives and support to establish these. Funders will also support initiatives that establish robust quality criteria for Open Access publishing”
6. “Where applicable, Open Access publication fees are covered by funders or universities, not by individual researchers ...”
7. The Wellcome Trust is the only funder so far to have published a policy².
8. Coalition S published further [guidance](#) on implementation on 27 November 2018 and are seeking feedback on this.

¹<https://www.scienceeurope.org/coalition-s/>

13 national funding organisations from 12 European countries – including UKRI, also supported by the European Commission. Plus Wellcome Trust and Gates Foundation.

² <https://wellcome.ac.uk/press-release/wellcome-and-bill-melinda-gates-foundation-join-open-access-coalition> <https://wellcome.ac.uk/sites/default/files/wellcome-open-access-policy-2020.pdf>

SFC Policy on Open Access

9. SFC is a signatory to the Scottish Declaration on Open Access (2004). In May 2012, following advice from RKEC, the Board agreed to an early announcement of policy to require freer availability of research outputs submitted to any REF or similar exercise subsequent to 2014. The Board also noted that the executive would continue to work with the other UK funding bodies to determine the detailed implementation of this policy.
10. SFC welcomed the Finch Report³ in July 2012, and announced policy intentions for making publicly-funded research more freely available, including an intention to consult with the sector.
11. Our current statement of [Open Access policy](#) is that relating to publications considered in the UK-wide REF, developed in conjunction with the other UK funding bodies.

UKRI Open Access Review

12. UKRI has announced an [Open Access Review](#) which will consider and develop UKRI's Open Access policies and will report in the second half of 2019. Plan S principles, and UKRI's commitment to them, are to be considered as part of the review.
13. UKRI's objectives in this review are to:
 - enhance the research, societal and economic benefits that can be derived from UKRI-funded research through improving access to research outputs;
 - deliver sustainable support for Open Access and better value for money;
 - ensure policy is joined up across UKRI constituent bodies and that it is clear, unambiguous and as easy as possible to comply with;
 - encourage the development of new models of Open Access publishing;
 - support the adoption of Open Access through collaboration and alignment with national and international partners.
14. The UKRI Open Access Review concerns open access to formal scholarly research articles, peer reviewed conference proceedings and monographs and concerns the policies of the Research Councils, Research England (and where relevant the devolved nations⁴) and Innovate UK. Consultation with SFC,

³ <https://www.acu.ac.uk/research-information-network/finch-report-final>

⁴ The Open Access Review will inform the development of Open Access policy in the REF and so will concern Devolved Nations in this respect. David Sweeney and Research England will act as the main link for this and the UKRI Strategy team will be working closely with Claire Fraser at Research England on the REF aspect of the Open Access Review. The exact mechanics of how the Review will inform the REF policy development and vice versa are currently being considered.

HEFCW and DfENI, particularly relating to the REF, is part of the workplan.

15. The review will be undertaken via three phases of work, starting now and running to the end of 2019.
 - Phase 1 (Oct-Dec 2018): Review initiation, establish governance, establish review resource across UKRI, initial stakeholder engagement, analysis and synthesis, Plan S engagement. Initial meetings with representatives from university, research and publishing sectors to listen to issues and needs and to identify how we might work together to deliver an effective policy.
 - Phase 2 (Jan-Jun 2019): Evidence gathering and analysis, and development of policy options, with further stakeholder engagement (e.g. workshops). Consultation via workshops to explore policy options and scenarios.
 - Phase 3 (Jul-Dec 2019): Policy refinement and implementation planning with internal and external partners, final policy and implementation plan for Board approval (and ministerial as appropriate). The option of further consultation on policy options and clarity.
16. Working internationally is important to help achieve Open Access and Coalition S/Plan S forms part of this. The Plan S principles, which broadly align with existing policy, will form part of UKRI's approach to Open Access and will be taken into account as part of the Open Access Review.

Sector activity

17. UK academic institutions and sector agencies, working alongside Jisc Collections, have established 5 requirements⁵ for open access agreements, which aim to ensure that journal agreements offer the maximum benefit with the minimum burden, on public finances, to researchers and for institutions.
18. Institutions, support agencies and professional bodies have begun work to adapt to the new requirements arising from Plan S.

Summary of key issues and options

19. Scottish sector representatives have sought clarification of SFC's position on Plan S. As noted above, universities are making adjustments to process to deal with publications deriving from projects funded by Research Councils and Wellcome. These research funders make support available for the additional costs involved in Open Access.
20. The significant numbers of research papers generated with no specified funder

More generally, UKRI would like to engage with devolved nation funders, including SFC, over the course of the Review. Appropriate avenues for this are under discussion.

⁵ <https://www.jisc-collections.ac.uk/Transformative-OA-Regs/>

could be treated as SFC-funded. There is concern for the impact on institutional resources if SFC mandated Plan S requirements for these, without making additional “funders” support available.

21. There are also potential issues for SFC if Research England, as a partner in UKRI, adopts Plan S for its activity and seeks to bring the UK REF Open Access policy into line with that. SFC needs to be clear on whether this is likely or desirable, and what impacts this would have in the Scottish sector.

Proposed actions

22. At the moment, a restatement of SFC’s support for Open Access, but making clear that we currently have ‘no plans’ to mandate Plan S for core-funded publications would be welcomed by HEIs. This would allow them to focus on the (supported) requirements of other funders. And it is likely that benefits would arise for the orphan publications.
23. Debate at this stage over whether these orphan publications are HEI or SFC supported may not be helpful. The impact of SFC’s funding should be recognised, but RKEC may wish eventually to consider whether it could be more appropriate to devolve Open Access policy on these to HEIs. This should be considered in co-ordination with the other UK funding bodies and the UKRI review.
24. SFC should engage further with UKRI on their Open Access Review implications and Plan S for REF and other research assessment exercises/metrics.
25. We also need to engage further with HEIs and associated bodies to ensure that the implications of and current responses to Plan S are fully understood.

Equality and diversity assessment

26. Equality and diversity implications of any adjustments to policy will be explored.

Financial implications

27. No immediate financial implications.

Recommendations

28. The Committee is invited to:
 - Discuss the issues in the paper to inform the work of the Executive
 - Agree a restatement of SFC’s support for Open Access, making clear that we currently have ‘no plans’ to mandate Plan S for core-funded publications
 - Agree that a fuller discussion of Open Access policy should form a future agenda item for RKEC, informed by

- further engagement with UKRI on their Open Access Review implications and Plan S for REF and other research assessment exercises/metrics.
- Further engagement with HEIs and associated bodies to ensure that the implications of and current responses to Plan S are fully understood.

Publication

29. This paper will be published on the Council website.

Further information

30. Contact: Morag Campbell, Assistant Director, Research and Innovation (0131 313 6530, mcampbell@sfc.ac.uk).

Annex A: Principles of Plan S

Key principle:

After 1 January 2020 scientific publications on the results from research funded by public grants provided by national and European research councils and funding bodies, must be published in compliant Open Access Journals or on compliant Open Access Platforms

Other principles:

- Authors retain copyright of their publication with no restrictions. All publications must be published under an open license, preferably the Creative Commons Attribution Licence CC BY. In all cases, the license applied should fulfil the requirements defined by the Berlin Declaration;
- The Funders will ensure jointly the establishment of robust criteria and requirements for the services that compliant high quality Open Access journals and Open Access platforms must provide;
- In case such high quality Open Access journals or platforms do not yet exist, the Funders will, in a coordinated way, provide incentives to establish and support them when appropriate; support will also be provided for Open Access infrastructures where necessary;
- Where applicable, Open Access publication fees are covered by the Funders or universities, not by individual researchers; it is acknowledged that all scientists should be able to publish their work Open Access even if their institutions have limited means;
- When Open Access publication fees are applied, their funding is standardised and capped (across Europe);
- The Funders will ask universities, research organisations, and libraries to align their policies and strategies, notably to ensure transparency;
- The above principles shall apply to all types of scholarly publications, but it is understood that the timeline to achieve Open Access for monographs and books may be longer than 1 January 2020;
- The importance of open archives and repositories for hosting research outputs is acknowledged because of their long-term archiving function and their potential for editorial innovation;
- The 'hybrid' model of publishing is not compliant with the above principles;
- The Funders will monitor compliance and sanction non-compliance.

Within these principles, It is proposed that SFC as core funder should be taken as 'the universities'.