Open Access: FAQs for Authors

This document provides guidance for authors about Cancer Research UK’s open access policy and the Charity Open Access Fund (COAF), the advantages of the policy and details of how to comply.

What is an Open Access publication?

An open access publication is one that can be viewed by anyone and reused for any reasonable purpose, subject to proper attribution of authorship. A complete version of the publication is deposited in a standard electronic format in a suitable online repository, at the point of publication.

A standard definition, the Bethesda Statement, was agreed by delegates at a meeting on open access publishing convened by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute in July 2003.

What are the benefits of open access to authors?

There is mounting evidence that open access articles receive more citations, page views and downloads than their pay-walled counterparts: they can be read without restriction by anyone who has internet access, thus are given wider dissemination.

Open access makes it easier for the scientific community to re-test and corroborate research findings. It also allows for the data to be analysed in new ways and alongside other data sets; this maximises the use of the data and can lead to new discoveries.

Furthermore, grantees will be able to access more relevant research, rather than only research which is available through their institution’s subscriptions.

What is Europe PubMed Central?

PubMed Central (PMC) is an online archive of biomedical and life sciences literature; access is free and unrestricted. Europe PMC is a European repository, funded by a number of European biomedical research funders including Cancer Research UK. Both repositories contain journal articles as well as supplementary information such as clinical guidelines, biological patents and funding information. Not all articles on PMC and Europe PMC are open access: some can be deposited as “dark deposits” and are listed in search results, but are only accessible in full after an embargo period agreed by the author and publisher. This increases the visibility of research and facilitates easy searching.

What is Cancer Research UK’s open access policy?

Cancer Research UK’s open access policy requires electronic copies of any research papers that have been accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal, and that acknowledge CRUK funding, to be made available through Europe PMC – as soon as possible and no later than 6 months after publication.

Who content is covered by CRUK’s open access policy?

This policy applies to:

- All primary research publications published after 1st October 2014 which acknowledge a Cancer Research UK grant, either published during the award or after the funding period has ended.
- All papers on which at least one author is in receipt of a Cancer Research UK grant, provided the paper in question is directly related to cancer research.

This policy does not apply to:
What is the Charity Open Access Fund (COAF)?

From 1st October 2014, Cancer Research UK grantees at 36 institutions will be able to access additional funding to support the payment of article processing charges, to be used when a publisher has a paid open access option available. We have come together with five other charities to create this fund to make it easier for you to comply with your open access policy.

What institutions will be receiving the Charity Open Access Fund?

Block grants to support APC payments will be given to 36 institutions and will be available from 1st October 2014.

How can I get access to the Charity Open Access Fund?

A joint fund, the Charity Open Access Fund (COAF), will supply block grants to 36 institutions. These grants will be administered by the Wellcome Trust. To access the funds, please contact your institution directly. To check who the appropriate institutional contact is, please contact the Wellcome Trust at openaccess@wellcome.ac.uk.

What do I do if I have a joint appointment at a core-funded institute and an associated university?

If your research has taken place at a CRUK funded institute, and has been solely funded by CRUK then you may not access this fund, even if you have a joint appointment.

If your research has taken place at a CRUK core funded institute but has in whole or in part been funded by The Wellcome Trust, LLR, BHR, ARUK or BCC and you have a joint appointment with a university, then you may apply to your university for access to the fund.

What do I do if I am at an institution not on the list?

Publications resulting from research funded by CRUK and conducted at our five core funded institutes are not eligible for this fund and should source funding from within their Institute.

Cancer Research UK-funded authors in research institutions that are not on the list of 36 institutions have several options available to comply with the open access policy;

- Use any available grant under-spend to pay for the APCs
- Publish in an open access journal that charges low or no fees
- Choose to publish in a journal that allows submission of the author manuscripts to Europe PMC within six months of publication, and then submit that manuscript to Europe PMC
- Choose to publish in a journal that makes all content openly available within six months of publication

If research is in collaboration with overseas partners, will it still have to comply with the policy?

Yes – as long as the above conditions are met, the COAF may be used to cover article processing charges.
What is a CC-BY license?

The Creative Commons Attribution License (CC-BY) permits research to be freely copied and reused (for example for text- and data-mining purposes), provided that the original authors are properly credited. We believe that removing barriers to dissemination and reuse will make our funded publications most accessible to all and will help them reach their full research and economic potential. This license is the most permissive and is the standard license for open access publishing for commercial and non-commercial publishers.

CC-BY extends to all data, text and images in the publication. For example, if a paper is not licensed with CC-BY then figures cannot be included in a blog post or a Wikipedia page: most websites carry advertising, so this would be considered a commercial use.

Cancer Research UK encourages, and where an article processing charge is paid, requires, research papers to be licensed using the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC-BY), so that they may be freely copied and reused (for example for text- and data-mining purposes) providing that the original authors are properly credited.

When does research have to be given a CC-BY license?

Where an article processing charge (APC) is paid, works must be made available immediately and must be given a CC-BY license. This is in line with the Wellcome Trust and RCUK policies.

In cases where compliance is achieved through deposition in a repository and an embargo period, Cancer Research UK still strongly encourages licensing the research with CC-BY. However, compliance can also be achieved by use of a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial licence (CC-BY-NC).

What happens if papers are not compliant with the policy?

Cancer Research UK encourages authors to make their papers compliant with the policy in all cases. We will be monitoring compliance over the COAF’s two-year pilot. At this stage we are not implementing sanctions for non-compliant publications, but after the pilot we will reconsider this position. Other funders (such as the Wellcome Trust) already have sanctions in place; therefore, authors are advised to check the policies of each funder acknowledged in the publication. Authors are also reminded that to be eligible for submission into the post-2014 REF, research must be made open access. For more information on the HEFCE policy, see this document.

How can authors comply with this policy?

1. Check that this policy applies to the type of paper they plan to publish.
2. Check that their journal of choice has a publishing policy compliant with Cancer Research UK’s policy.

Authors can comply with the open access policies of the partner funders by self-archiving a final author manuscript version of your paper in Europe PMC, as long as it is freely available no longer than six months of the date of publication. When an author self-archives, no APC is charged.

The SHERPA-FACT database can be used to check whether journals are compliant with the policy. This will soon be updated to include Cancer Research UK’s updated policy, but in the meantime please check the Wellcome Trust box as a funder, as their open access policy is consistent.

Please also ensure that Cancer Research UK funding, including the grant reference number, is acknowledged on the paper.

What should authors do if the journal does not have an open access option and does not allow self-archiving in PMC or Europe PMC?
If the journal does not have an open access option and does not allow self-archiving in Europe PMC within six months of publication, this is unlikely to comply with conditions of your grant. Though the vast majority of journals do have compliant policies, some do not; most notably Blood. If this is the case, there are two options:

i) Agree to a journal’s normal arrangements, but specify an additional agreement that deposition in Europe PubMed Central can take place. This deposition must happen within six months of publication. The agreement could be as follows:

“Notwithstanding any of the other provisions of this agreement, the journal acknowledges that the researcher will be entitled to deposit an electronic copy of the final, peer-reviewed manuscript for inclusion in PubMed Central (PMC), and for this manuscript to be mirrored to all PMC international sites, such as Europe PMC. Manuscripts deposited with PMC (and Europe PMC) may be made freely available to the public, via the internet, within six months of the official date of final publication in the journal.”

ii) Reconsider where to publish. This should hopefully be an exceptional circumstance, since the vast majority of journals will be compliant with this policy. For a list of compliant journals, please see this spreadsheet published by the Wellcome Trust.

How do authors self-archive in Europe PMC?

Where no other open access option is available, with the agreement of the publisher, authors can deposit a copy of the final, peer-reviewed manuscript in Europe PMC through Europe PMC plus. An embargo period of up to six months can be agreed if necessary. The copy submitted should be the author’s own accepted version, not the publisher’s PDF. A quick guide is available here.

Manuscripts may be submitted by the author, or by anyone given access to the author’s files – for example administrative personnel, graduate student and librarians. If the author is the PI, Submissions should be made by the Europe PMC plus log-in which has been automatically supplied to the PI. If the author is not the PI, a user-created log-in can be created on the Europe PMC plus site. If you are a PI and have not received or have mislaid this log-in, please contact the British Library helpdesk on 01937 546669 or by email on helpdesk@europepmc.org.

Submissions must always be approved; either by the PI or by someone else who the PI has authorised to do so. Processing of the submitted papers will happen once approval is given.

Can this fund be used to contribute towards pre-payment schemes offered by publishers?

In principle, institutions may enter into pre-payment schemes and use the COAF block grant to reimburse the APC costs. However, this is on the strict condition that:

- Institutions must always ensure that authors are able to publish in their journal of choice (providing that it is compliant with our policy).
- Institutions must not enter into a deal that would compromise their ability to report transparently on the actual APC cost of each research paper.
- Only actual incurred APCs may be claimed back from the COAF; funds held in a pre-payment account but not yet used to publish a funded research paper cannot be claimed for.

Evaluation of the COAF’s pilot period will inform this policy and we will be monitoring how the area progresses.

Who can I contact for more information?
For any queries relating to Cancer Research UK’s open access policy, please contact policies@cancer.org.uk.

For further information on the COAF, for grantees and institutions, please visit the Wellcome Trust’s website.

For guidance about how to access the fund, please contact your host institution. If you are unsure who is the appropriate contact, or for any other queries relating to the COAF, please contact the Wellcome Trust at openaccess@cancer.org.uk.