

UKRI Open Access Policy – Equality Impact Assessment

Question	Response
1. Name of policy	UKRI Open Access (OA) Policy
2. Summary of the aims and objectives of the policy	<p>UKRI supports the principle that the published outputs of publicly funded research should be widely and freely accessible to all, under conditions that allow for maximum reuse. Open access is central to UKRI's ambitions as a key foundation for a research culture and environment that fosters excellent research and innovation.</p> <p>Open access can benefit researchers, students, research organisations, industry, policy makers, practitioners, citizens, scientists and many others who undertake and use research. Open access can help to maximise the academic, social and economic impact of research by making research findings more easily accessible and reusable for a wider range of audiences. It can enhance the integrity and rigour of research through greater openness, transparency and increased opportunity for findings to be scrutinised. Open access can also improve the efficiency of research and scholarly communication by reducing duplication and enabling easier access to research and past findings.</p> <p>The UK has some of the highest levels of open access in the world, and the policies of the Research Councils and REF 2021 have made important contributions to this progress. However, although progress has been made, the transition to open access has been slower than expected and there are challenges for research organisations to achieve this in a financially sustainable way.</p> <p>The UKRI open access policy, due to be launched in 2021, aims to deliver UKRI's ambition, with the key objectives of affordability, sustainability of open access and ease of author compliance. For research articles the policy builds on existing policies to require full and immediate open access. The policy also introduces a requirement for open access monographs for the first time but considers that open access dissemination of monographs is less mature than for articles.</p> <p>Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is integral to excellence in research and innovation, and UKRI seeks to embed it into everything it does. Open access has the potential to act as a driver in addressing and advancing challenges around EDI. For example, open access offers the potential for research outputs to reach a global audience; it allows for free sharing and downloading of knowledge (which may be directly or indirectly related to topics pertaining to EDI); open access allows research to be considered in public policy; and it allows research to reach groups and individuals from different socio-economic backgrounds.</p>

	<p>UKRI operates in compliance with the Equality Act 2010¹ and as set out in section 149, has a public sector equality duty to have due regard to EDI in exercising its functions. In particular section 149 requires that UKRI must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act; • foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and • advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; which involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to (a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by those who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic; (b) take steps to meet the needs of those who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of those who do not share it; and (c) encourage those who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low. <p>UKRI aims to ensure that its open access policy supports the wider research and innovation environment, including ensuring that the policy does not unintentionally cause or contribute to disadvantages or inequalities, and having regard to the above considerations.</p> <p>As set out in this document, UKRI has undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) of its draft open access policy, which includes actions to mitigate any negative impacts identified. This EIA currently considers the impact of the UKRI open access policy only, and UKRI will continue to consider impacts on equality as further details around policy implementation are developed, including funding mechanisms.</p>
<p>3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy?</p>	<p>This policy is the output of the UKRI Open Access Review, which was initiated in late 2018 and followed Government best practice for Departmental consultation. The review has followed an evidence-based approach including engagement and consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including universities and other research performing organisations, publishers, learned societies, researchers and other UK and European funders.</p> <p>Between February and May 2020 UKRI held a formal consultation on a draft policy, and received 350 responses from a diverse range of organisations and individuals. The consultation asked specific questions on challenges and inequalities. The deadline of the consultation was extended due to the Covid-19 pandemic to support an inclusive consultation process.</p>
<p>4. Who is affected by the policy?</p>	<p>The policy will impact UKRI funded researchers and students, Higher Education Institutions, Research Institutes, Publishers, Learned</p>

¹ [Equality Act 2010 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

	<p>Societies, Libraries and other providers of scholarly communication infrastructure or services.</p> <p>More widely, greater open access can benefit researchers, students, research organisations, industry, policy makers, practitioners, citizen scientists and many others who undertake and use research.</p>
5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy	<p>UKRI will monitor the policy through its implementation, and there will a formal evaluation and review points, including for unintended EDI consequences. See further details on our website at Shaping our open access policy.</p>

Protected characteristic group and other groups	Is there a potential for positive or negative impact	Please explain and give examples of any evidence used	Action to address negative impact (e.g. adjustment to the policy) or explanation of why the negative impact is proportionate and justified
PROTECTED CHARACTERSTIC GROUPS			
Disability	<p>Likely positive impacts for those with certain illnesses and/or physical disabilities.</p> <p>Those who are on long term sick/absence may be negatively affected</p>	<p>The policy enhances the transition to open access and widens the range of in-scope articles, this will likely improve access for those with certain illnesses and/or physical disabilities by removing the need to attend a physical location to access materials.</p> <p>Authors may be on long term sick / absence at critical points in the workflow that may affect their ability to comply within expected timescales (immediately available for research articles and within 12 months for longform outputs). Note that compliance with the UKRI open access policy is set at the organisational rather than the individual level.</p>	<p>The policy will include an exception of a pro-rated extension in such circumstances, alongside clear guidance. Further detail will be developed as part of policy implementation. UKRI will provide a contact so those experiencing difficulties in operationalising the policy can get in touch to discuss.</p>
Gender reassignment	It is not expected this policy will have an impact		
Marriage or civil partnership	It is not expected this policy will have an impact		
Pregnancy and maternity	Potential negative impact	Individuals may be on parental leave at critical points in the workflow that may affect their ability to comply with expected timescales (immediately available for research articles and within 12 months for longform outputs). Note that compliance with the UKRI open	The policy will include an exception of a pro-rated extension in such circumstances, alongside clear guidance. Further detail will be developed as part of policy

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		access policy is set at the organisational rather than the individual level.	implementation. UKRI will provide a contact so those experiencing difficulties in operationalising the policy can get in touch to discuss.
Race	<p>Potential negative impact on those facing language barriers which may disproportionately impact race.</p> <p>Potential negative impact on those in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) which may disproportionately impact race.</p>	<p>Whilst the policy has an overarching requirement / preference for liberal licensing to maximise reuse of research outputs, there is an option for authors to choose more restrictive licenses under certain conditions. A more restrictive licence adds a barrier for those who wish to reuse the content – they must seek permission from the copyright holder, who could be the author or their institution, or the publisher. This includes those who wish to translate the publication into other languages.</p> <p>However, there are existing barriers around language; Most online literature is in English, or another single language, and machine translation is still not widely developed. The UKRI open access policy is not anticipated to create additional disadvantage compared to the status quo.</p> <p>Evidence² gathered as part of the UKRI open access review shows that researchers, and those responsible for research policy and management (at institutional and national levels), in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) generally believe they will benefit from open access. Stakeholders noted that open access has the potential to significantly increase the</p>	<p>Translation into other languages will still be possible, however, in some limited cases there will be an additional barrier to do this. As set out in the policy, more restrictive licenses under certain conditions are justified and necessary to meet the open access policy objectives.</p> <p>There will be supporting information alongside the policy to promote understanding of licensing e.g. when a more restrictive licence might be appropriate and what the implications are.</p>

² [Open Access: challenges and opportunities for Low- and Middle-Income Countries and the potential impact of UK policy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/open-access-challenges-and-opportunities-for-low-and-middle-income-countries-and-the-potential-impact-of-uk-policy)

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		<p>availability of research globally, as well as increasing the visibility of their work.</p> <p>However, the policy may contribute to existing disadvantages for those in LMICs, specifically:</p> <p>1. It may contribute to a continued reliance on global northern approaches to open access:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally, the open access policy environment in LMICs is more limited than developed countries and there is less investment in infrastructure, services and capacity building. • There is a risk that publishing behaviours may respond more to external forces (e.g. UK policy) than national priorities and needs. • “Author pays” publishing models do not work for LMIC economies, and there is also a concern about ownership where LMIC outputs are hosted on non-LMIC repositories. <p>2. The policy may exacerbate challenges around publishing in journals that charge article processing fees, with a disproportionate impact on women and wider ethical issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication in global northern journals remains important for most LMIC researchers, because it supports international visibility, and also such journals carry specific prestige. 	<p>To address the potential for the policy to contribute to existing disadvantages for those in LMICs, UKRI will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include an option for researchers / research organisations to get in touch to discuss issues in complying with the policy due to LMIC-related reasons. UKRI will consider policy exceptions due to LMIC-related issues. • Continue to provide funding for UKRI-funded LMIC authors via ODA project grants to allow them to publish in journals with article processing charges, meaning no requirement to seek waivers. • Work in partnership with others to support LMIC-specific guidance and support e.g. to identify best decisions including local open access options; building costs into grants; open licensing and IP. • In the longer term, explore capacity building for open access with other partners to support LMIC-based solutions and how ODA funding can be most effectively used to support this.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some publishers offer fee waivers or discounts for LMIC researchers, however, currently they do not always work well (e.g. female researchers are significantly less likely to apply for one) and there is a feeling of stigma and ethical issues attached to requesting one. <p>3. The policy may perpetuate extractive behaviour by technologically or economically more advanced countries (or perception of it):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Globally, there is not a common understanding of open access and this can perpetuate concerns in LMICs about extractive behaviour. • However, there is also a need to protect the rights of communities and nations to preserve the use and development of their knowledge and traditions in a proportionate way (e.g. indigenous knowledge) - this is a wider IP issue but often becomes conflated with open access, and is not exclusively an issue for LMICs. 	
Religion or belief	It is not expected this policy will have an impact		
Sexual orientation	It is not expected this policy will have an impact		
Sex (gender)	Potential negative impact on those who take career breaks,	Those who take career breaks may be absent at critical points in the workflow that may affect ability to comply with expected timescale (immediately available for	The policy will include an exception of a pro-rated extension in such circumstances, alongside clear

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	<p>which may be taken disproportionately more by women.</p> <p>Potential negative impact on women in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs)</p>	<p>research articles and within 12 months for longform outputs). Note that compliance with the UKRI open access policy is set at the organisational rather than the individual level.</p> <p>The policy may exacerbate challenges around publishing in journals that charge article processing fees, with a disproportionate impact on women:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication in global northern journals remains important for most LMIC researchers, because it supports international visibility, and also such journals carry specific prestige. • Some publishers offer fee waivers or discounts for LMIC researchers, however, currently they do not work well, for example, female researchers are significantly less likely to apply for one. 	<p>guidance. Further detail will be developed as part of policy implementation. UKRI will provide a contact so those experiencing difficulties in operationalising the policy can get in touch to discuss.</p> <p>UKRI will continue to provide funding for UKRI-funded LMIC authors via ODA project grants to allow them to publish in journals with article processing charges, meaning no requirement to seek waivers.</p> <p>UKRI will also include an option for researchers / research organisations to get in touch to discuss issues in complying with the policy due to LMIC-related reasons. UKRI will consider policy exceptions due to LMIC-related issues.</p>
Age	Potential negative impact on those earlier in their career, which is disproportionately earlier age categories.	There is a risk the policy will impact author choice of publishing venue; whilst all subscription journals are compliant with the policy, research organisations will not be able to use UKRI funds for hybrid open access publishing in subscription journals unless part of a transitional agreement. The connection between publications and career progression is currently strong, therefore the risk of restricting author choice of	In order to support the policy UKRI will support Jisc, the body who negotiate on behalf of the higher education and research sector, to scale up open access / transitional agreements with the whole range of publishers and types of research organisation.

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		<p>publishing venue is likely to disproportionately impact early career researchers (ECRs).</p> <p>Were the policy to be applied today, at least 57% of articles from UKRI-funded research in 2017 to 2020 would be policy and funding compliant. On the basis of transitional negotiations that are presently underway, it is estimated that journals containing some 80% of UKRI-funded publications will be compliant by the end of 2021. Of the remainder it is likely that some will offer a zero-embargo green policy for UKRI authors. Nonetheless, in the shorter term at least, it is likely that there will be a residual population of journals, particularly in the long tail of small publishers and societies that publish a small number of UKRI-funded articles, that will neither seek transitional agreements nor provide for zero-embargo 'green'.</p> <p>Consultation responses also suggested that ECRs are more likely to have a lack of awareness and low knowledge of open access practices and associated benefits making it difficult to navigate policy changes and complex areas such as licensing.</p>	<p>The policy will be supported by guidance and training, as well as advocacy and engagement with researchers, including a focus on ECRs.</p> <p>Outside of the open access policy, efforts to reform research assessment is a priority and a multi-stakeholder issue. This includes a move away from the inappropriate use of metrics such as journal impact factor and to recognise a diversity of research outputs, not just publications. Initiatives such as the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) seek to address such issues, however, given they will not be implemented by the time the policy becomes active, UKRI will monitor unintended consequences on publishing behaviour and problems encountered by researchers.</p>
OTHER GROUPS			
Early career researchers (ECRs)	Potential negative impacts	There is a risk the policy will impact author choice of publishing venue; whilst all subscription journals are compliant with the policy, research organisations will not be able to use UKRI funds for hybrid open access	In order to support the policy UKRI will support Jisc, the body who negotiate on behalf of the higher education /research sector, to scale up open access /

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		<p>publishing in subscription journals unless part of a transitional agreement. The connection between publications and career progression is currently strong, therefore the risk of restricting author choice of publishing venue is likely to disproportionately impact early career researchers.</p> <p>Were the policy to be applied today, at least 57% of articles from UKRI-funded research in 2017 to 2020 would be policy and funding compliant. On the basis of transitional negotiations that are presently underway, it is estimated that journals containing some 80% of UKRI-funded publications will be compliant by the end of 2021. Of the remainder it is likely that some will offer a zero-embargo green policy for UKRI authors. Nonetheless, in the shorter term at least, it is likely that there will be a residual population of journals, particularly in the long tail of small publishers and societies that publish a small number of UKRI-funded articles, that will neither seek transitional agreements nor provide for zero-embargo 'green'.</p> <p>Consultation responses also suggested that ECRs are more likely to have a lack of awareness and low knowledge of open access practices and associated benefits making it difficult to navigate policy changes and complex areas such as licensing.</p>	<p>transitional agreements with the whole range of publishers and types of research organisation.</p> <p>The policy will be supported by guidance and training, as well as advocacy and engagement with researchers, including a focus on ECRs.</p> <p>Outside of the open access policy, efforts to reform research assessment is a priority and a multi-stakeholder issue. This includes a move away from the inappropriate use of metrics such as journal impact factor and to recognise a diversity of research outputs, not just publications. Initiatives such as DORA seek to address such issues, however, given they will not be implemented by the time the policy becomes active, UKRI will monitor unintended consequences on publishing behaviour and problems encountered by researchers.</p>
Those in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs)	Likely positive impact and potential negative impacts	Evidence ² gathered as part of the UKRI open access review shows that researchers, and those responsible for research policy and management (at institutional	To address the potential for the policy to contribute to existing disadvantages for those in LMICs, UKRI will:

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		<p>and national levels), in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) generally believe they will benefit from open access. Stakeholders noted that open access has the potential to significantly increase the availability of research globally, as well as increasing the visibility of their work.</p> <p>However, the policy may also contribute to existing disadvantages for those in LMICs, specifically:</p> <p>1. It may contribute to a continued reliance on global northern approaches to open access:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally, the open access policy environment in LMICs is more limited than developed countries and there is less investment in infrastructure, services and capacity building. • There is a risk that publishing behaviours may respond more to external forces (e.g. UK policy) than national priorities and needs. • “Author pays” publishing models do not work for LMIC economies, and there is also a concern about ownership where LMIC outputs are hosted on non-LMIC repositories. <p>2. The policy may exacerbate challenges around publishing in journals that charge article processing fees, with a disproportionate impact on women and wider ethical issues:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include an option for researchers / research organisations to get in touch to discuss issues in complying with the policy due to LMIC-related reasons. UKRI will consider policy exceptions due to LMIC-related issues. • Continue to provide funding for UKRI-funded LMIC authors via Official Development Assistance (ODA) project grants to allow them to publish in journals with article processing charges, meaning no requirement to seek waivers. • Work in partnership with others to support LMIC-specific guidance and support e.g. to identify best decisions including local open access options; building costs into grants; open licensing and IP. • In the longer term, explore capacity building for open access with other partners to support LMIC-based solutions and how ODA funding can be most effectively used to support this.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication in global northern journals remains important for most LMIC researchers, because it supports international visibility, and also such journals carry specific prestige. • Some publishers offer fee waivers or discounts for LMIC researchers, however, currently they do not work well (e.g. female researchers are significantly less likely to apply for one) and there is a feeling of stigma and ethical issues attached to requesting one. <p>3. The policy may perpetuate extractive behaviour by technologically or economically more advanced countries (or perception of it):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Globally, there is not a common understanding of open access and this can perpetuate concerns in LMICs about extractive behaviour. • However, there is also a need to protect the rights of communities and nations to preserve the use and development of their knowledge and traditions in a proportionate way (e.g. indigenous knowledge) - this is a wider IP issue but often becomes conflated with open access, and is not exclusively an issue for LMICs. 	
Those with career breaks/alternative career paths	Potential negative impacts	Those who take career breaks and/or pursue alternative career paths into and out of academia may be absent at critical points in the workflow that may affect ability to comply with expected timescale (immediately available for research articles and within 12 months for longform outputs). Note that compliance	The policy will include an exception of a pro-rated extension in such circumstances, alongside clear guidance. Further detail will be developed as part of policy implementation. UKRI will provide a

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		with the UKRI open access policy is set at the organisational rather than the individual level.	contact so those experiencing difficulties in operationalising the policy can get in touch to discuss.
Those experiencing language barriers	Potential negative impacts	<p>Whilst the policy has an overarching requirement / preference for liberal licensing to maximise reuse of research outputs, there is an option for authors to choose more restrictive licenses under certain conditions. A more restrictive licence adds a barrier for those who wish to reuse the content – they must seek permission from the copyright holder, who could be the author or their institution, or the publisher. This includes those who wish to translate the publication into other languages.</p> <p>However, there are existing barriers around language; Most online literature is in English, or another single language, and machine translation is still not widely developed. Therefore, the UKRI Open Access Policy is not anticipated to create additional disadvantage compared to the status quo.</p>	<p>Translation into other languages will still be possible, however, there will be an additional barrier to do this. As set out in the policy, more restrictive licenses under certain conditions are justified and necessary to meet the open access policy objectives.</p> <p>There will be supporting information alongside the policy to promote understanding of licensing e.g. when a more restrictive licence might be appropriate and what the implications are.</p>

Further Considerations

Evidence shows that protected characteristic groups are underrepresented in the research community and may be marginalised within the research environment. It is also important to consider intersectionality i.e. the interconnected nature of different protected groups, which can create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

Such existing inequalities may potentially reduce access to support, training or funding available and result in low awareness of open access and ability to navigate policy changes due to barriers to engagement and belonging. This may be further impacted by the effect of Covid-19 on the capacity of staff at research organisations to provide support. In addition, given there are inequalities in access to UKRI funding³ and the policy applies to UKRI funded activity only, there is potential for open access to contribute to research outputs from certain groups being more widely accessible compared to other groups.

It is unlikely that amendments to the open access policy will remove the existing inequalities described above. However, UKRI will provide a contact so those experiencing difficulties in operationalising the policy can get in touch to discuss. In addition, UKRI will monitor the policy through its implementation, and there will be formal evaluation and review points, including for unintended EDI consequences.

In considering existing biases in the wider research system, it is important to understand the implications for funding for open access. UKRI will provide funding to research organisations to support its open access policy, however, it is aware of the risk that the existing inequalities referred to above may potentially reduce access to funding for certain groups. UKRI aims to ensure fair and transparent decision making, both for its funding mechanisms, as well as funded organisations that delegate their funding. UKRI will undertake an equality impact assessment as part of developing its approach for policy implementation, including funding.

More widely, UKRI has an ongoing programme to develop and deliver interventions and policy changes to create a research and innovation system that is for everyone, by everyone. Examples include work to address under representation and participation, including through targeted funding opportunities; reviewing and examining our own policies and processes and taking action to address shortcomings that contribute to inequalities; increasing diversity in our own recruitment pipelines and ensuring that we bring diverse voices into our governance structures; engaging with and listening to our communities in different ways; and working in partnership to support systems level change across the research and innovation sector

³ [Diversity data collection – UKRI](#)

Evaluation:

Question	Explanation/justification
Is it possible the proposed policy or activity or change in policy or activity could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people	<p>As set out in the table above, potential negative impacts were identified and actions put in place to mitigate these, to ensure the policy is inclusive and reduce the need to seek clarity.</p> <p>However, for ECRs, although some mitigations can be put in place, the policy has potential for negative impacts due to the potential impact on author choice of publication venue. This may impact those in earlier age categories as ECRs are disproportionately younger.</p> <p>Whilst all subscription journals are compliant with the policy, research organisations will not be able to use UKRI funds for hybrid open access publishing in subscription journals unless part of a transitional agreement, possibly impacting author choice of publishing venue.</p> <p>Author choice of publication venue was an important consideration for UKRI's review, and evidence suggests that a significant majority of venues that publish UKRI-funded articles will offer open access options to UKRI-funded authors by April 2022.</p> <p>The policy decision to restrict the use of UKRI funding is justified and necessary to meet the objectives of the open access policy. However, it is not possible today to know with certainty the precise degree to which author choice may be affected. UKRI will monitor the policy through its implementation, and there will a formal evaluation and review points, including for unintended EDI consequences.</p>

Final decision:	Tick the relevant box	Include any explanation
1. No barriers identified; therefore activity will proceed		
2. You can decide to stop the policy or practice at some point because the data shows bias towards one or more groups		
3. You can adapt or change the policy in a way which you think will eliminate the bias		
4. Barriers and impact identified, however having considered all available options carefully, there appear to be no other proportionate ways to achieve the aim of the policy or practice. Therefore you are going to proceed with caution with this policy or practice knowing it	X	There is a small risk that the policy may disadvantage early career researchers (and therefore those in earlier age categories) due to the potential impact of the

may favour some people less than others providing justification for this decision		policy on author choice of publishing venue.
Will this EIA be published	Yes	
Date completed	July 2021	
Review date (if applicable)	2023	

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change