

What do you need to know to make sure that your research articles are eligible for the next REF?

HEFCE announced its updated [policy for open access in the post-2014 REF](#) in March 2014; it applies to all peer reviewed journal articles and conference proceedings (not monographs or chapters in edited volumes) accepted for publication from 1 April 2016. The policy of the research councils and some other funders is more stringent.

If you are employed by a UK university, [the minimum requirement to be eligible for submission to the next REF is that the final peer-reviewed version of your manuscript must have been deposited in an institutional or subject repository within three months from when the research output was accepted for publication](#). The final peer-reviewed manuscript is an author created manuscript, not the typeset version created by the publisher.

[HEFCE's policy allows "closed deposits" to enable authors to comply with publisher copyright agreements and embargo periods](#). A closed deposit is where information about the article is discoverable to anyone within an internet connection before the full text becomes freely available to read and download (i.e. after any embargo period has elapsed). Depositing in this way does not make your paper open access in the sense that it can be read and shared widely, however it does make your paper more "discoverable".

Although the HEFCE policy does not take effect until April 2016, [depositing your accepted papers within a repository in this way is good practice as it increases the 'discoverability' of your work](#) i.e. online searches will be able to locate it more easily.

What you need to do:

[At the time when your article has been accepted by a journal you should immediately upload the accepted manuscript to your institution's digital repository. There is a tight three month window after the date of acceptance to do this.](#)

If you are not employed at a university at the time your article is accepted, you do not need to deposit your manuscript anywhere. But if you are subsequently employed it would be wise to deposit any manuscripts accepted since 1 January 2014 (which will be eligible for the next REF).

Your institution will be able to provide you with details about its repository services, advice about depositing your work and guidance about whether the journal you are submitting to is compliant with HEFCE policy.

When depositing your work, you will most likely be asked:

1. [Does the journal you are publishing with permit open access?](#)

Most UK-based journals do permit open access and are compliant with RCUK and other funder open access requirements. However, some international journals are not compliant. Do ask the journal to confirm if you are unsure. Note HEFCE policy does allow for some exceptions and for you to publish in non-compliant journals if they are the 'most appropriate' place to publish. Check with your institution.

2. [Does your journal stipulate an embargo' period where the deposit must remain 'closed'?](#)

Check your copyright agreement and contact the journal if you are unsure. Most UK journals stipulate an embargo period that complies with HEFCE's 24 month embargo for humanities and social science subjects and 12 months for natural sciences.

3. [What terms do you want your work to be made available, once your paper is made open access?](#)

Your choice of copyright is important as it determines what rights you retain and the terms under which your work is shared and reused. You should be asked to specify which license you want to use. There are a range of [Creative Commons licenses](#) to choose from.

The most accommodating license - CC BY- enables others to share, edit and build upon your work, even commercially, as long as the user credits your original work. Whereas CC BY NC ND, the most restrictive creative commons license, allows others to download and share your work but prohibits others from editing or using your work for commercial purposes.

HEFCE have not stipulated that research outputs should be made available under a specific license. It has advised that outputs published under CC BY NC ND would be eligible for submission to the next REF, as would work published under CC BY and other more permissive Creative Commons licenses.

What do you need to do if you have published 'gold' open access?

If you have published through a 'gold' open access route, where published outputs are made immediately available to anyone with an internet connection (gold open access typically requires the author - or the author's institution or funder - to pay an Article Publication Charge), **you still need to deposit your manuscript.**

The minimum requirement is that the final peer reviewed accepted version of your paper is deposited within three months of the date of acceptance.

However, if the gold version of record of your article is published within three months of acceptance, you can deposit this instead of the final peer-reviewed draft. The policy also allows the gold version of record to replace an earlier deposit if gold access is provided later. Alternatively, you can leave the deposit closed and provide a hyperlink to the externally hosted version of record.

When publishing through the gold open access route be aware that some journals offer a range of creative commons licenses, others offer just the CC BY option. Funding bodies often stipulate the copyright agreement under which you should publish your funded research. For example, researchers who use RCUK funds for an APC to publish via a gold open access route must choose the CC BY Creative Commons license. Funder requirements tend to complement HEFCE policy but you should contact your institution's library, or your funder, to check your funder's requirements if you are in doubt or have any questions.

Useful resources

- The full HEFCE post-2014 REF policy is available online at: http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/hefce/content/pubs/2014/201407/HEFCE2014_07.pdf (PDF)
- FAQs are available online at: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/rsrch/rinfrastruct/oa/faq/> (PDF)
- RCUK's Open Access policy is available online at: <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/openaccess/>
- The Wellcome Trust's policy is available online at: <http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/About-us/Policy/Policy-and-position-statements/WTD002766.htm>
- HEFCE have recently announced that it will fund the development of a new shared service that will enable authors and universities to check whether a given publication is compliant with open access policy. Details available online at: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/news/newsarchive/2015/news99817.html>
- RCUK's Open Access policy is available online at: <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/openaccess/>
- The Wellcome Trust's policy is available online at: <http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/About-us/Policy/Policy-and-position-statements/WTD002766.htm>

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