



Open access policy 2021 – Frequently Asked Questions

Policy review and key changes

Why have you reviewed your open access policy?

There have been significant changes in the open access (OA) landscape since we reviewed our policy in 2012.

These include:

- new publishing models
- increased use of preprints
- new publisher business models
- changes in other funders' policies.

The cost of delivering our OA policy has also increased significantly. Because of these factors, it seemed timely to review it.

What are the changes to the policy?

- All Wellcome-funded articles must be made freely available through PMC and Europe PMC at the time of publication. We previously allowed a six-month embargo period.
- All articles must be published under a Creative Commons attribution licence (CC-BY), unless we have agreed, as an exception, to allow publication under a CC-BY-ND licence. We previously only required a CC-BY licence when an APC was paid.
- Wellcome-funded authors or their institutions must retain copyright for their research articles and hold the rights necessary to make a version of the article immediately available under a compliant open licence.
- We will no longer fund OA publication costs in subscription journals ('hybrid OA'), outside of a transformative arrangement. We previously supported the hybrid OA model.
- Where there is a significant public health benefit to preprints being shared widely and rapidly, such as a disease outbreak, these preprints must be published:
 - before peer review
 - on an approved platform that supports **immediate** publication of the complete manuscript
 - under a CC-BY licence.This is a new requirement.
- Wellcome-funded organisation must sign or publicly commit to the principles of the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment](#) (or an equivalent). We may ask organisations to show that they're complying with this as part of our organisation audits. This is a new requirement.

We aren't changing our policy for monographs and book chapters – but we are keeping it under review.

Read our [updated OA policy](#).

Why have you changed the policy?

As an organisation dedicated to improving health for everyone, we're committed to making sure that the outputs of the research we support can be accessed and used in ways that maximise their benefit to health.

These changes will help to make sure that 100% of Wellcome-funded research is:

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- freely available at the time of publication
- licensed in a way that allows it to be reused.

Making research articles free to read and use will increase their reach and likely impact. The data on whether OA leads to an increased number of citations is mixed (see studies published in [PLOS One](#), [Nature Communications](#) and [The FASEB Journal](#)), but in any event it means that research is accessible to anyone with internet access, and not just to journal subscribers.

To what extent does the new policy align with Plan S?

The new policy is fully aligned with [Plan S](#). Wellcome is a member of [cOAlition S](#). We hope that working in partnership with other funders – through this coalition and other initiatives – will encourage more people to make their articles open access.

How does the policy align with other funders' OA policies?

As of May 2019, 19 funders from a number of countries have endorsed [Plan S](#). These include UK Research and Innovation, the European Commission and the European Research Council. We are committed to working in partnership with these other funders to make all research papers open access.

Did you consult with the research community about the policy review?

Yes, the review was informed by:

- a survey of Wellcome grantholders
- an open consultation to allow others to share their views
- an evidence session to hear from representatives at key publishers, organisations and funders.

Read the [survey results and outputs from the evidence gathering session](#).

We decided what the final details of the policy would be and how they would help us deliver our mission.

Why has the implementation date for our new OA policy changed?

We changed the implementation date to be able to align our OA policy to the [updated Plan S guidance](#) published in May 2019. We've also extended the transition period to give publishers enough time to put arrangements in place so they can be compliant with the policy.

Complying with the policy

How do I know if my article is subject to the new OA policy?

An article is covered by our new policy if it:

- is submitted on or after 1 January 2021, and
- includes original peer-reviewed research.

How do I comply with the policy?

There are two ways to comply.

1. Publish the research article in a fully OA journal or platform. For example, this could be in [eLife](#) or journals published by [PLOS](#), [Hindawi](#) as well as our own publishing platform, [Wellcome Open Research](#).

These journals or platforms will deposit the final, peer reviewed [version of record](#) directly into PubMed Central and publish all articles under a CC-BY licence.

We will cover any reasonable publication costs charged by fully OA journals and platforms that provide these services (see 'Article Processing Charges' section below).

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2. Publish the research article in any subscription journal that allows researchers to:

- self-archive the Accepted Author Manuscript (AAM) in Europe PMC at the time of publication (no embargo is permitted), and
- specify that this work is available under the CC-BY licence.

An example of a publisher that supports this model is the [Royal Society](#). Under this model, no fee can be charged to Wellcome.

If a subscription publisher does not allow the researcher to carry out the actions above, the researcher cannot publish with that journal and remain compliant with our policy.

Which journals are compliant with the policy?

Before the policy comes into effect on 1 January 2021, we will provide:

- further guidance
- information on how to check if specific journals are compliant with our policy.

Can I publish my paper under a different licence to CC-BY?

CC-BY is the default licence required for all research papers. However, in exceptional cases you can ask for an article to be published under a CC-BY-ND licence. Your request must:

- explain the reasons for the exception
- be sent to us before your paper is accepted for publication.

We consider requests on a case-by-case basis.

What happens if researchers don't comply with the policy?

Researchers who don't comply with the policy will be subject to appropriate sanctions.

We will review end-of-grant reports and/or submissions via [Researchfish](#). Where articles have **not** been made available in line with our policy we will not accept new grant applications from the researcher if they're applying as the lead applicant.

What happens if my organisation doesn't comply with the policy?

We expect the organisations we fund to help us implement the policy.

If a number of researchers from an organisation fail to comply with our OA policy, we will work with the organisation to better understand and resolve the issues. If an organisation doesn't work with us on this, we reserve the right to suspend grant payments to that organisation.

Article Processing Charges

Will you continue to fund Article Processing Charges (APCs)?

We will provide our grantholders with funding to cover reasonable article processing charges (APCs) for articles published in fully OA journals or platforms that:

- are indexed by the [Directory of Open Access Journals](#) (DOAJ) and comply with the technical guidance and requirements set out in the [cOAlition S implementation document](#)
- have an [agreement](#) with the National Library of Medicine (NLM) to deposit the [version of record](#) in PMC and allow that content to be shared with Europe PMC.

What are 'reasonable' APCs?

We are working with cOAlition S funding partners to agree a consistent approach towards defining what a 'reasonable' APC amount is.

We recognise that different journals and publishers provide different, or additional value-added services, which means they can have different APCs (for example creating infographics).

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Publishers for which Plan S requirements apply must publish a full price transparency based on the various services provided (for example triaging and peer review) before our OA policy comes into effect.

We expect our grantholders to:

- be aware of the costs of publishing in different journals
- only use journals that they consider represent value for money.

Preprints

What is a preprint?

A preprint is a complete and public draft of a manuscript, yet to be certified by peer review.

Are preprints included in the policy?

When there is a significant public health benefit to preprints being shared widely and rapidly, such as a disease outbreak, these preprints must be published:

- before peer review
- on an approved platform that supports **immediate** publication of the complete manuscript
- under a CC-BY licence.

We will publish a list of compliant preprint platforms before 1 January 2021.

We also strongly encourage all Wellcome-funded researchers to:

- post [preprints](#) of their completed manuscripts
- publish them under a CC-BY licence.

This is the fastest way to get their work to a wider audience.

How will I know if my research falls into the public health emergency category?

We will publish details on our website of current outbreaks and emergencies where this requirement applies. We will also contact researchers whose research is affected.

We encourage all funded researchers to publish their preprints if they think their research could be relevant to a current disease outbreak or other health emergency.

Does posting a preprint make my article compliant with the policy?

No. We believe that the peer review process adds significant value to research articles. To comply with the policy, researchers must make sure that the article, after peer review – either publisher version of record or the Author Accepted Manuscript – is made freely available in PMC and Europe PMC at the time of publication, and with a CC-BY licence.

Publishing in subscription-based journals

Can I publish in a subscription-based journal that offers an OA option?

We will no longer cover the costs of OA publishing in subscription-based journals (for example 'hybrid OA'). Grant applicants cannot ask for these costs in their application, and grantholders won't be allowed to use their grant funds to pay for these costs.

However, from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2024, organisations can use Wellcome OA funds for publication costs associated with [transformative arrangements](#).

We will publish a list of approved transformative arrangements before 1 January 2021.

Why are you stopping funding for hybrid OA?

Our support for hybrid OA was based on it being a transitional model to full open access. After

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more than a decade of supporting these costs, we have seen little evidence of this transition occurring. Our funding for this model will therefore stop on 1 January 2021.

However, from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2024 we will continue to support OA costs for publishers who are:

- committed to transitioning to full open access, and
- offer transformative arrangements that align with this goal.

How will Wellcome's contribution to a transformative arrangement be calculated?

The costs must be in proportion to the number of OA articles published by Wellcome-funded researchers in the 12 months before the agreement is concluded.

Some journals (such as the [BMJ](#)) publish all research articles open access, but charge for access to other content such as editorials and commentaries. Are these journals considered hybrid journals?

No. Wellcome doesn't consider these journals to be hybrid and we will cover the APCs for research articles published in line with this policy.

As these journals won't typically be included in DOAJ, we will keep a list of them and make it clear to our researchers that they are fully compliant publishing venues.

Publishers who think their journals should be classified in this way should send an email to openaccess@wellcome.ac.uk. This should include a link to a page on the publisher site which confirms that 100% of all research articles are:

- made OA at the time of publication
- made available in PMC and Europe PMC
- licensed CC-BY.

Some open access journals have a mirror/sister subscription journal. Will Wellcome fund the cost of publishing in these OA journals?

No. In line with the Plan S implementation guidance, we consider these journals to be 'hybrid' because the business model charges for both access and publication. Wellcome funds cannot be used to meet the APCs for research articles published in these journals.

Page, colour and image charges

Will Wellcome cover the costs of page and colour charges?

No. We no longer provide funds for non-OA publication costs, for example colour, page charges etc.

Open access and funding competitiveness

Will publishing in open access journals or platforms effect my competitiveness for Wellcome funding?

No. We are committed to making sure that when we assess research outputs during funding decisions we will consider the intrinsic merit of the work, not the title of the journal or publisher. This is in line with the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#).

An increasing number of research funders have also signed DORA. This includes the UK Research Councils, Cancer Research UK, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Some of the other organisations that have signed up to DORA have published their policies to show how they're implementing the principles, for example [University College London](#) and [Imperial College London](#).

Although not all funders have signed DORA (for example National Institutes for Health), many of them have made it [clear](#) that research assessment is based on the researcher's contribution, not the journal name or its impact factor.

Sharing data and software

What must I do to share data and software underpinning research articles?

Our policy on [data, software and materials management and sharing](#) requires that the data and software underpinning research articles be made available to other researchers at the time of publication. Wherever possible, data and software should be deposited in recognised community repositories with a persistent identifier. We recognise that not all data can be made available openly and controls or limits on access will be appropriate in some cases. In these situations, there must be a clear, fair and proportionate process through which users can request access to the data.

All articles associated with Wellcome funding must include a clear statement detailing how other researchers can access the underlying data and software upon which the findings in the paper are based.

An increasing number of journals now ask for data availability statements as an integral part of their article. If your chosen journal doesn't allow for data availability statements, you should include a similar statement in the most appropriate place in the article.

To support our researchers in the sharing datasets underpinning publications, we are currently running a pilot with Springer-Nature to provide a Data Support Service that can help you prepare and deposit data in areas where recognised subject repositories are not available. Find out more about the service.

Contact us

If you have any questions, email openaccess@wellcome.ac.uk.

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