Frequently asked questions

This page complements our [policy for open access in the post-2014 Research Excellence Framework](). It will be updated regularly to answer questions commonly asked by institutions. If these FAQs do not provide the information you need, please e-mail [openaccess@hefce.ac.uk]().

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Deposit requirements

[1. Who is responsible for depositing the output?]()
The author is responsible. It is a feature of this policy that it places a responsibility on authors to deposit their work and consider their open access options. We see this as the clearest way to increase awareness and uptake of open access within the research community.

[2. What about for papers with multiple authors?]()
We do not have a strong view on which author should deposit the output, as long as the paper is deposited by one of the authors. We see no substantial drawbacks to more than one author depositing the output. We see it as institutions' responsibility to ensure that the outputs they are submitting to the REF are compliant with this policy.

[3. Why does the policy state that deposit on acceptance is required?]()
The arguments for deposit on acceptance are significantly more convincing. The point of acceptance is a clearly identifiable point in the author's workflow, which happens at the moment the author is most engaged with the publication process and at which they have their final, accepted, peer-reviewed draft to hand. Unlike the date of publication, the date of acceptance is easily identifiable and verifiable – the author is notified of acceptance in every case. For these reasons, deposit rates are higher when open-access policies require mandatory deposit on acceptance. This makes compliance less burdensome for institutions.

[4. What is meant by 'updated peer-reviewed manuscript' (Policy, paragraph 19)?]()
In some cases, authors may make minor changes to the manuscript following acceptance (possibly as a result of copy-editing, as figures become finalised, or as rights to third-party material become secured). The author may choose to deposit the updated manuscript, augmenting or replacing the originally deposited file, and the policy allows this. As long as these changes do not result from peer review, the required date for initial deposit will not change.

[5. How will the policy requirements treat papers which are posted to a subject repository?]()

If the paper is the accepted and final peer-reviewed manuscript, is deposited within three months of acceptance, and the repository otherwise meets the requirements of the policy, then the posting would fulfil the requirements. If the paper is not the accepted and final peer-reviewed manuscript, then it would not.

We expect that the submission process for the post-2014 REF will involve direct harvesting of journal articles and conference papers from institutional repositories. So we ask that institutions keep a record of any outputs posted in subject repositories to ensure they have a complete record of their research output in advance of preparations for the REF.

6. When should conference papers be deposited?
Within three months of the date of acceptance, (that is, when the changes resulting from peer review have been made, and the conference accepts the paper for publication). Conferences that do not undertake peer review of their proceedings are within scope.

Discovery requirements

7. When do outputs need to become discoverable?
We would expect outputs to become discoverable as soon as possible after deposit to allow for maximum use of the deposited work. If authors do not wish for their paper to become discoverable until it is published, the repository record need not become discoverable ('live') until publication. In these circumstances, we would expect the output to be discoverable as soon as possible after the point of first publication (including any early online publication), but we encourage early discoverability.

8. Can you explain why CC BY-NC-ND is mentioned as an acceptable licence?

We have not asked that outputs be made available under a specific licence. The open licensing landscape is complex and shifting rapidly. Publisher rules for self-archiving vary widely and are under continual review. While stable open licences have emerged, some authors, particularly in the humanities, have expressed significant concerns about these.

To provide some clarity now, we have instead set out a number of things that we would expect any reader with internet access to be able to do: to read the output, to download it, and to search electronically within it, all without charge. This level of access is a realistic minimum and is broadly achievable now for most outputs.

To be more specific, we have advised that outputs licensed under CC BY-NC-ND satisfy this minimum, as would outputs licensed under CC BY, and other more permissive open licenses.

It is our long-term expectation that further sorts of reuse beyond this minimum will become increasingly possible, which is why we are offering credit for these (see Policy, paragraph 34).

9. How do these licensing requirements interact with other funders' policies?
They complement each other. Authors that have received funding from the Research Councils, the Wellcome Trust or other funders that demand more permissive licenses can publish under these licenses and still fulfil our minimum requirements.

Text mining and reuse; early compliance

10. The policy states that credit will be given to institutions that have presented outputs in a form that allows re-use, including text-mining. What are the detailed criteria for awarding this extra credit?

We have not yet developed the criteria for awarding credit. We are unlikely to work on this separately from our work to develop the next REF.

This aspect of the open-access agenda is rapidly evolving, and new and innovative solutions are emerging all the time. We want to retain the flexibility to give credit to institutions finding new solutions for providing more liberal open access, without having to make predictions about what these solutions might be.

11. How are the policy's statements on text-mining affected by the recently announced changes to copyright law following the Hargreaves review?

We plan to discuss this with representatives from the Intellectual Property Office (IPO) in due course. It should be noted that the copyright changes apply to UK law only. They cannot replace the benefits of more liberal licensing to text-mining of the global literature.

12. The policy states that credit will be given to institutions which provide open access to a wider range of outputs than those specified by the policy. Does this include journal articles and conference papers accepted for publication before 1 April 2016?

We have not yet developed the criteria for awarding credit. We are unlikely to work on this separately from our work to develop the next REF.

We strongly encourage early compliance with this policy. But we cannot offer any firm guarantees that it will lead to additional credit being given in the post-2014 REF.

Repositories

13. What work is being done to allow repository systems to adapt to these changes?
With Jisc, we are developing formal technical requirements for repositories that wish to comply with the policy. We expect that this will include the adoption of the RIOXX metadata application profile, supplemented by a number of REF-specific metadata fields that may be implemented in repositories or CRIS systems. Further announcements will follow in due course.

14. Which subject repositories meet the requirements of the policy?

At this stage, we do not intend to certify repositories as compliant with the policy – the range and diversity of repositories worldwide makes this unfeasible.

We recognise that institutions will want some assurance that external repositories are retaining information on deposits that might be required for a future REF submission or audit. The information requirements for repositories and the expected audit requirements for the post-2014 REF are being developed in a concerted way and with the full involvement of repository platform vendors.

15. Our CRIS automatically harvests metadata from SCOPUS and other sources, which saves us from having to enter metadata for publications into our CRIS or repository manually. If records are also being created by authors at an earlier point, how can we avoid creating duplicate records, or creating lots of manual work to link metadata to deposits?

It may be desirable for deposited manuscripts to have a complete metadata record that matches the publication's metadata exactly, but this is not necessary for open access. The journal title, paper title and author names should be enough to allow discovery, to prevent duplicates, and to allow the CRIS to feed metadata across.

The author can complete these fields easily when they deposit the paper, and we are advised that the most commonly used repository software does not allow the paper to be uploaded unless these fields are completed. We are also advised that repository software can detect and prevent duplicates.

However, we recognise that universal solutions in this area are still in development. Discussions with all stakeholders have identified a number of possible solutions, including the use of unique researcher identifiers, publisher provision of digital object identifiers (DOIs) at acceptance, and the direct updating of records by publisher systems, all of which can help streamline this process. Discussions with all stakeholders will continue, with further announcements to follow in due course.

16. Under what circumstances would we need to move outputs from one institutional repository to another?

Where an individual being submitted to the REF has published outputs while working at a previous UK higher education institution (HEI), the submitting institution will want to assure itself that it has gathered enough information about these outputs to satisfy the requirements of this policy. Most of this information will be available from publicly available metadata, but some information about the initial deposit may not be publicly available.

We recognise that some institutions may not wish to inquire about particular outputs held within another institutional repository during the REF submission phase. Therefore, we will not require that the new institution demonstrate compliance with the **deposit** requirements for these outputs, including in any audit.

We also recognise that institutions may wish to deal with this issue in advance by holding copies of the repository records and full text of all research in their own repository. We will therefore permit institutions to undertake a bulk transfer of repository records and files on employment of new staff, as long as there is no interruption in access. We recognise that unique researcher identifiers such as ORCID can facilitate this process.

Exceptions

18. In the Policy, paragraphs 37b and 37c, what is meant by 'most appropriate publication for the output', and how will this be checked?

We see this as a matter for the individual researcher and institution to judge. We have yet to develop detailed submission and audit requirements for the post-2014 REF. But we expect we would ask institutions to show that a process was in place to allow the author or the institution to examine and consider the range of venues that allowed deposit within the rules.

It is important that authors are aware of the rules and give serious consideration to their choice of publication venue in light of them. We therefore want to see limited uptake of these two exceptions. (It should also be noted that the outputs to which these exceptions apply must still have fulfilled the deposit requirements.)

19. Don't the exceptions open up the policy to abuse by authors and publishers?

A sample of outputs submitted to the 2014 REF showed that 96 per cent of outputs could have complied with the access requirements had they been in place sooner (and 100 per cent of outputs

could have complied with the deposit requirements). We therefore believe that the risk of abuse is small.

If we see evidence that publishers and authors are seeking to circumvent these rules by taking disproportionate advantage of the policy's exceptions, we will revisit these provisions with the intention of removing them.

20. Could you give some more information about this 96 per cent figure?
Further information, including a breakdown of the figures by REF main panel, is provided in the analysis of REF 2014 submission (see below).

21. How will the REF panels be judging exceptions submitted as 'other'?
This has not yet been decided. A full process will be developed in the run-up to the next REF.

Audit and compliance

22. What supporting information and evidence of meeting the deposit, discovery, access and exceptions should institutions retain?

We are developing a list of information that we expect institutions to retain. Our general approach is that institutions will declare the compliance, or otherwise, of outputs in their REF submission, and will not submit evidence.

This declaration will be verified through a light-touch audit, and a further announcement about the details of these requirements will follow in due course.