



NTU library

Open access and the REF

REF policy on open access

Research England has introduced an open access requirement for the latest Research Excellence Framework (REF2021) exercise. The [policy](#) applies to certain outputs **accepted** for publication after 1 April 2016 stating that they must be available in an open-access form to be eligible for submission to REF2021. The policy covers:

- journal articles published in scholarly journals with an ISSN
- full length conference papers/proceedings published with an ISSN.

Key points

The minimum of the final peer-reviewed manuscript for all journal articles and conference proceedings with an ISSN must be deposited in an appropriate open access subject or institutional repository within **three months** of acceptance.

- Journal articles and conference proceedings must have been deposited as the author's accepted and final peer-reviewed text (which may otherwise be known as the 'accepted author manuscript' or 'final author version' or 'post-print').
- Publishers often impose a delay before repositories can make manuscripts openly available. The maximum permitted embargo is
 - 12 months (Panels A & B)
 - 24 months (Panels C & D)

Articles still under embargo are eligible for REF submission, provided they meet the requirements of the policy.

- These outputs should be discoverable, and free to read, download and search within, by anyone with an internet connection. Outputs must be updated and augmented as necessary upon publication to ensure embargo periods can be set.
- Non-compliant outputs (i.e. a journal article or conference proceeding submitted to REF2021 that is not compliant with all of the criteria and without a valid exception recorded) will receive an unclassified score.
- The following outputs are not included within the policy:
 - Monographs and other long-form publications
 - Conference proceedings that form part of a book
 - Non-text, creative and practice-based research
 - Research data

However, where an institution can demonstrate that it has taken steps towards enabling open access for outputs outside the scope of the policy, credit will be given in the research environment component of the REF2021.

What is meant by accepted for publication?

REF2021 regards the date of acceptance as the point at which the author is notified that:

- their output has been reviewed by the journal or conference (normally via peer review)
- all academically necessary changes have been made in response to that review
- the article is ready to be taken through the final steps toward publication (normally copy-editing and typesetting)

By this point, the paper should have been updated to include all changes resulting from peer review as well as any changes of an academic nature requested by the journal editor or conference organiser. At this stage, the journal editor or conference organiser normally notifies the author that their paper has been 'firmly' accepted (as opposed to any earlier point of 'provisional acceptance') and the paper is ready for copy-editing or typesetting; it is the date of this notification that should be taken to mean the date of acceptance.



The author's final accepted manuscript is the one that has been agreed with the editor at that point. The accepted manuscript is not the same as the copy-edited, typeset or published paper – these versions are known as 'proofs' or 'versions of record' and publishers do not normally allow authors to make these open access.

What is meant by date of publication?

REF2021 advise that the 'date of publication' means the earliest date that the final version-of-record is made available on the publisher's website. This generally means that the 'early online' date, rather than the print publication date, should be taken as the date of publication.

Complying with the REF policy

When your publication is accepted, choose Gold or Green open access, then follow the instructions below to comply with the REF open access policy. See our '[Open access: the basics](#)' guide for a comparison of Gold and Green.

- Green open access - free open access publishing, often with a publisher-imposed embargo period.
 - On acceptance, deposit your final accepted manuscript into the university institutional repository [IRep](#) via [Worktribe](#). [Full guidance on depositing outputs can be found in the [Worktribe learning room](#)]. Ensure you identify any embargo on deposit (details of publisher embargoes are available via [Sherpa/Romeo](#)). The record will appear in IRep and the full text will be visible but unavailable until any publisher embargo expires.
 - On publication you must update the record with the full citation information, including the 'date of publication'. This is done via [IRep](#) by selecting 'Amend your publication' (if off-campus please ensure you are using Pulse Secure on your computer). This is imperative to trigger the embargo start date or to release a publication that is not subject to embargo and **must be completed within one month of the first date of publication.**
- Gold open access - allows immediate access of the final publisher's version of your research output; an Article Processing Charge (APC) is usually charged.

- If you are confident that you or a co-author has secured gold open access you can wait until publication to deposit the output in IRep via [Worktribe](#). If not, follow the green route above and when confirming the publication date provide the final version of record (published version) to replace the accepted manuscript.

Exceptions to the policy

In certain circumstances, a paper can be submitted to the REF even though it does not comply with the REF Open Access Policy. Exceptions to the policy include:

Deposit exceptions (these outputs are considered out of scope of the policy)	Access exceptions (these outputs must still be deposited)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual was not employed on category A eligible contract by a UK HEI at the time of submission for publication • Individual was unable to secure the use of a repository • Individual experienced a delay securing the final peer-reviewed text (e.g. for multi-authored papers) • It would be unlawful, or present a security risk, to deposit the output 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Output depends on third party content for which open access rights could not be granted • The publication concerned requires an embargo period that exceeds the stated maxima, and was the most appropriate for the output • The publication concerned actively disallows open-access deposit, and was the most appropriate for the output
Technical exceptions (these outputs are considered out of scope of the policy)	Further/other exceptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At acceptance, the individual was at a different UK HEI and it has not been possible to determine compliance with the criteria. • A short-term technical failure within the repository prevented compliance • An external service provider failure prevented compliance (e.g. a subject repository ceased to operate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Other exception' should be used where an output is unable to meet the criteria due to circumstances beyond the control of the HEI, including extenuating personal circumstances of the author (such as periods of extended leave), industrial action, closure days, and software problems beyond those listed in the technical exceptions • If 'other' exception is selected, the output will not need to meet the open access criteria (deposit, discovery or access requirements)

Further information

Research England provides some [FAQs](#) to complement the open access policy for REF2021. It will be updated regularly to answer questions commonly asked by institutions.

For further advice and support please contact the [Library Research Team](#).