

Contents

Open Access Publications Policy	1
Summary of policy	1
Summary of significant changes since last version.....	2
Policies superseded by this document.....	2
Scope	2
Who this policy applies to:	2
Related Documentation	2
Introduction.....	3
Policy.....	3
1. Purpose	3
2. Responsibilities.....	4
3. Requirements	4
4. Routes to Open Access	5
5. E-thesis deposition	5
6. Compliance and monitoring	5
Related Policies.....	5
Definitions.....	5
CC licence	5
Embargo.....	6
Open Access	6
ORO	6
Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Statement	6
Further clarification	6
Alternative format	6

Summary of policy

This policy sets out the requirements of the University for publishing Open Access.

Version Number: 4	Approved by: Research Committee
Effective from: 1 st January 2026	Date for review: November 2028

Summary of significant changes since last version

There are no significant changes from the previous version of this policy.

Policies superseded by this document

This document replaces the previous version of The Open University Open Access Publication Policy [version 3, 2021].

Scope

Who this policy applies to:

- Anyone who is using an OU affiliation on a research output in accordance with the [Research Code of Practice](#).

Who this policy does not apply to:

- those undertaking scholarship projects at or on behalf of The Open University unless the scholarship project in question is at the interface between scholarship and research, i.e. corresponds to the [Frascati definition of research](#). If you are undertaking a scholarship project, please refer to the [scholarship guidance](#) (internal link, requires log in) on the Scholarship webpages.
- students studying taught undergraduate modules and qualifications or postgraduate students registered for taught qualifications or studying modules that form part of a taught qualification. If you are undertaking a taught course dissertation module, please refer to your course materials and your tutor for further guidance on good research practice in the context of your project.
- This policy does not apply directly to supervisors of postgraduate research students based at Affiliated Research Centres. Nevertheless, such supervisors are expected to support their students in their understanding of and adherence to this policy.

Related Documentation

Refer to the following documentation in conjunction with this document:

Funder Open Access policies should be read in conjunction with this Policy. Further details of these can be found on the [Library Research Support website](#).

[The Open University Research Code of Practice](#)

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Introduction

In line with its [mission](#), The Open University (OU) believes that the ideas and knowledge from its research should be made available and accessible for public use, interrogation and scrutiny, as widely, rapidly and effectively as possible, and should be preserved and remain accessible for future generations.

Open Access publishing aims to make research publications "free to read" for everyone.

The Open University supports Open Access publishing through the maintenance and development of [Open Research Online](#) (ORO) – the University's repository of research outputs. By ensuring its academics, researchers and postgraduate research students are aware of and complying with external funder and funding bodies open access policies. By the [transitional and transformative journal agreements](#) with publishers that are shifting journals from a pay to read to a pay to publish model and enabling our academics and research students to publish open access (where the output is immediately available to read or download by anyone with an internet connection).

Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to identify the Open University's position with regard to open access publishing and to outline the responsibilities and requirements of the University and its researchers and postgraduate research students.

The objectives of this policy are:

- To set out the University's requirements for open access publishing.
- To inform all OU staff and students, those we work with, and the public of how open access publishing is managed at the OU.
- To provide OU academics, researchers, postgraduate research students and research support staff with guidance on the options to publish open access.

Policy principles

- The Open University is committed to enabling its academics, researchers and postgraduate research students to publish open access
- In keeping with OU principles of openness, it is expected that publications will be open and accessible to everyone, as soon as this is practicably possible.

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2. Responsibilities

OU research-active staff (including postgraduate research students) are required to publish their research outputs in accordance with the [Research Code of Practice](#) at the Open University alongside any applicable research funder or funding bodies policies on Open Access.

3. Requirements

All OU-affiliated research outputs (including monographs, edited books and book chapters), should be deposited in Open Research Online (ORO) upon publication or earlier if possible. This version maybe replaced or augmented, at a later date if appropriate.

The output must be deposited in a form so that it is discoverable to anyone with internet access and by automated tools such as search engines. Where the publisher allows the full-text to be publicly accessible readers should be able to search electronically within the text, read it and download it without charge.

Embargoed publications will remain closed so that they are discoverable but the full-text will not be immediately downloadable until the end of the embargo period when it will become publicly accessible.

Researchers should ensure that they apply the appropriate [Creative Commons](#) (CC) licence to their publications. Applying a CC licence to an open access publication enables the author to allow the public sharing and use of their work, while retaining and protecting their copyright of the material. There are a range of licences available and the particular licence required varies by funder and funding body, therefore researchers should ensure that they check their funder's and/or funding bodies policy. Where possible this should be a CC BY license as this enables the maximum re-use.

Researchers must ensure that the source of funding for the research is acknowledged in all publications, with the funding agency written out in full, followed by the grant number in square brackets, e.g. *This work was supported by the Medical Research Council [grant number xxxx]* or following funders' specific requirements.

Researchers are responsible for ensuring their publications adhere to the above requirements as applicable, including checking journal and publishers' open access policies are compliant with funders and funding bodies policy (including allowable embargo periods) and requesting open access publication charges on external research bids and/or retrospectively from funders where permitted. The [Library Research Support team](#) is available to provide advice and support.

Where external funding is available to meet the costs of open access article processing charges (APCs) (e.g. UKRI Open Access Publishing block grant), researchers are encouraged to publish their work open access on the publisher's website or platform upon publication.

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4. Routes to Open Access

The decision on open access publication route for externally funded outputs will be a matter for Faculty or Unit judgment but will also be dependent on the funders or funding bodies policy and the availability of funding to pay article processing charges if required to publish immediate open access.

Researchers and postgraduate research students are encouraged to access the transitional and transformative journal agreements that are available through the Library. Further details can be found on the [Library Research Support website](#).

5. E-thesis deposition

All postgraduate research students are expected to submit an electronic copy of their thesis before the degree may be awarded. The electronic copy will be stored in ORO and the full text (either the full or a redacted version for thesis where copyright clearance could not be obtained) will be made available by open access after deposition. Under the Research Degrees Regulations postgraduate research students can request an embargo on the full-text of their thesis and the full-text of the thesis will be made available after the embargo has expired. Retrospective embargoes will not be granted once a thesis has been made open access on ORO.

6. Compliance and monitoring

Compliance with the Open University Open Access Policy and open access requirements of external funders and funding bodies will be monitored and reported to Research Committee, the Vice Chancellors' Executive and external bodies as required.

Related Policies

Documentation from The Open University:

- [Open Research Online \(ORO\) Policies](#)
- [Research Code of Practice](#)
- Research Publications Policy – from 1 March 2026

Definitions

Creative Commons licence

[Creative Commons \(CC\) licences](#) offer a standardised set of permissions for reuse of a copyrighted work. Most funders require a CC BY licence on Open Access outputs. This means that all types of use and reuse are permitted, as long as the author is attributed.

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Embargo

An embargo is a delay to the public availability of the Author Accepted Manuscript. Embargo periods can vary in length but are usually between 6 and 24 months from either acceptance or publication. In this policy, no embargo means no delay to the public availability of the Author Accepted Manuscript from the point of publication of the Published Version.

Open Access

Open Access (OA) is a term used to describe any type of publication activity which results in a scholarly output that is free-to-read online and always will be.

There is a belief that the outcomes of publicly funded research ought to be made freely available to the public who funded it. Therefore, funders increasingly expect outputs to be made Open Access.

Open Research Online

[Open Research Online \(ORO\)](#) is The Open University's publications repository.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Statement

Policies are inclusive of all Open University staff and Open University postgraduate research students, regardless of age, care experience, caring status or dependency, civil status, disability, family status, gender, gender expression, gender identity, gender reassignment, marital status, marriage and civil partnership, membership of the Traveller community, political opinion, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic background or trades union membership status.

Further clarification

If you have any queries around the content provided within this document and how to interpret it, please contact the [Library Research Support team](#).

Alternative format

If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact the [Library Research Support team](#).

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