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FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENT

# Open Access Publishing and Article Processing Charges FAQ

1. **What are open access (OA) papers and article processing charges (APC)?**

Generally a journal will accept a manuscript for publication free of charge (though possibly with charges for colour prints etc.) or they will require publication fees to process your manuscript. The publishers will then charge individuals or institutions to view the formatted document through one-off payments or prolonged subscriptions.

In Open Access (OA) publishing, there is no charge for reading/downloading a journal article from the publisher. For a viable business model for scientific publishing the publishers therefore charge the author an OA Article Processing Charge (APC) (typically $1000-3000) to cover the costs of getting the manuscript reviewed and published (and perhaps archiving data) and making the manuscript available to readers.

OA is becoming an increasingly popular model for publishing, since many researchers around the world won’t have access to a particular journal and many governments see open access to publicly funded research as a return on their investment. Even university libraries in the UK are under mounting pressure to cut their expenses by reducing the number of subscriptions that they take out. It’s therefore a really good idea to publish your work OA if you can. It will get more widely read (and cited!) and it’s much more valuable to the global research community.

However, many unscrupulous journals are appearing to exploit the willingness of authors to pay-to-publish. Ensure you undertake thorough research to validate the quality of the journal you are planning to submit to before submitting and agreeing to pay for publication.

1. **Do I have to publish my work OA?**

Many journals still operate the standard model of publication, so it won’t stop you from publishing if you don’t go with OA. However, you should note that there are now some journals that only publish OA, so you will need to make sure you will be able to publish without an APC if you don’t have the money to pay for one.

In either case, you still have to register your unformatted, accepted manuscript with an OA repository (for Leeds, it’s the White Rose Repository (WRR)). To deposit your manuscript on the WRR is straightforward, but there is additional information on the library webpage (<https://library.leeds.ac.uk/open-access>). If you don’t deposit your manuscript on the WRR, the paper will not be eligible for the next UK Research Excellence Framework (REF), which could disadvantage your school and the university. Therefore you must ensure your published work is deposited into the WRR, even if the article is open access via the journal.

1. **Who pays the APC?**

You aren’t expected to cover the APC yourself. Usually, a funding body (like RCUK) agrees to pay for any research it has funded to be published OA. All you have to do is, once the paper is out to review, register your submission with the library through their website and they will come back to you with a decision on whether they can fund your submission. To be eligible for this funding, you must include your funding support number (as provided by the research council) in the acknowledgements section of the paper.

There is an issue where some students do not have access to this, because their funding bodies do not underwrite OA publications. This affects some people funded by national Government programs from non-UK countries, the university scholarships and potentially more groups. Please check with the library OA staff if you have questions on your eligibility. If you are unsure about your APC status, contact the Library Research Office.

1. **I don’t have access to APC funding, but I still want to publish OA. What can I do?**

It’s definitely a good idea to publish OA if possible. If you’re in this situation, here’s a list of things you can consider trying:

1. Before you submit the manuscript, ask your selected journal if they would be willing to waive the APC. It is possible, but the amount of effort this will take will vary from journal to journal.
2. Check if any of your co-authors have access to APC funds and see if you can get the APC funded through their institution.
3. There might be limited School support for OA funding – check with your research group leader.
4. Reconsider your journal selection. A limited number of journals are starting to publish OA without charging an APC (e.g. *Royal Society Open Science*)
5. In any case choose a journal that allows immediate ‘green open access’ via the WRR and submit your unformatted manuscript as soon as it is accepted.

As a general rule, it’s unlikely that your department will be able to fund an APC. In exceptional circumstances, it might be possible but currently very probably not. The Faculty has said that finding APC funds is an issue that is to be dealt with at the School level and the Schools are currently not planning to provide money for APCs.

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*Edited by Sebastian Rost/April2017*