

SFI Open Access policy 2021 – FAQs

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What is Open Access?

Open Access (OA) refers to the free, unrestricted access to scholarly research.

This includes permitting users to “read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself.

The only constraint on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited”¹.

Why does SFI require publications to be openly available?

SFI is a member of cOAlition S² – a consortium of funders who support Plan S. Plan S is an initiative for OA publishing which was launched in 2018.

SFI has aligned its Open Access Policy with the principles of Plan S and therefore, **from 01/01/2021 all SFI-funded scholarly papers that are submitted for publication from that date must be made immediately** available when they are published (i.e. no embargo period will be permitted)³.

Furthermore, as a public funder SFI has an obligation to ensure that we achieve value for money from the public investment and making outputs available to all stakeholders (including members of the public, practitioners, policy advisers and industry) helps us to achieve that goal.

What are the benefits of publishing Open Access?

Open Access to scholarly outputs improves the speed of research, increases the potential for global collaboration and ensures maximal economic and societal benefit can be realised.

Making your outputs openly available also increases the visibility of your research which has been associated with higher citation rates. For more information on the benefits of Open Access publishing see McKiernan et al (2016)⁴.

How do I make my publication Open Access?

There are two main routes to make your scholarly research openly available: The Gold OA route and the Green OA route. **Please note that SFI grant funds are permitted to be used to publish via these routes.** Although less common, Diamond OA⁵ is also a route to OA publishing that is in line with the Plan S principles.

What is Gold OA?

Gold OA refers to making your publication available through the publisher’s platform, where the payment of an article processing charge (APC) is often required (SFI grant funds can be used in this instance). In cases where the journal has a ‘transformative agreement’ in place, the APC has been

¹ <https://www.budapestopenaccessinitiative.org/read>

² <https://www.coalition-s.org/>

³ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/open-research/>

⁴ <https://elifsciences.org/articles/16800>

⁵ <https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2017/06/01/diamond-open-access-societies-mission/>

included in the contract between the publisher and the institution/organisation/jurisdiction, and the researcher is not required to pay an APC.

What is a Transformative Agreement?

A Transformative Agreement (TA) is a contract negotiated between institutions (libraries, national and regional consortia) and publishers that transform the business model underlying scholarly publishing, moving from one based on toll access (i.e. subscription model) to one in which publishers are remunerated a fair price for their open access publishing services⁶. This means that anyone (i.e. the general public) can access content in a journal without paying any fee.

To find out more about TAs in place in Ireland, please review the ESAC registry⁷ for additional information or contact your librarian for additional guidance.

Does Ireland have any Transformative Agreements in place?

Yes, IReL⁸ has negotiated in excess of 6 TAs, which include those with the following publishers:

1. Elsevier
2. Company of Biologists
3. Association for Computing Machinery
4. AIP Publishing

What does the 'subscription model' mean?

A subscription model refers to the type of contract agreed between the publisher and the institution, where access is only granted to those who have the subscription or is willing to pay a one-time fee to access content in a journal. For example, a university library will have paid for access and therefore, the students attending the university will be able to view a publication via the library. However, the general public cannot access any content from the journal, unless they pay a fee.

What is the Green route to OA?

The Green OA route involves depositing the peer-reviewed Version of Record (VoR) or Author Accepted Manuscript (AAM) in an open access repository (i.e. self-archiving).

cOAlition S has recently published the Rights Retention Strategy⁹, which supports authors in retaining ownership of their work via a Creative Commons or 'CC-BY' licensing. All funder members (including SFI) have included the Rights Retention Strategy in all relevant legislative and policy documents mandating that any research outputs arising from SFI-funded research must have a CC-BY licence attributed to the work from 01/01/2021.

What is 'Creative Commons' or CC-BY licensing?

Creative commons or CC-BY is a type of copyright licence where the original creator (author(s)) grants the public permission to reuse, distribute and build upon their existing work. Importantly, the original author/s must be attributed to any reuse of the original work.

There are some variations of the CC-BY licence and further information on this can be found [here](#).

⁶ Definition from ESAC: <https://esac-initiative.org/>.

⁷ <https://esac-initiative.org/about/transformative-agreements/agreement-registry/>

⁸ <https://irel.ie/>

⁹ <https://www.coalition-s.org/rights-retention-strategy/>

As an exception, you can ask that one of your publications is published under a CC-BY-ND licence. If you choose to use this licence, you must apply to SFI for approval in advance.

What routes are not an option for me as an SFI-funded researcher?

If your publication has resulted from research supported by SFI funding, you are **not permitted to use SFI grant funds to publish in hybrid journals, in Bronze OA journals or in journals that apply embargoes to publications.**

What is a Hybrid Journal?

A 'hybrid' journal operates both a subscription and an Open Access model. The author can choose to pay an APC to have their publication made OA in a journal where a subscription already exists.

What is the issue with a hybrid journal?

The publisher has already been paid annual subscription fees for access to its content and for processing the submission of scholarly papers. If the author pays an APC for OA, the publisher is paid twice to do the same amount of work. This is called 'double-dipping' and is an unnecessary use of already limited resources.

What is the bronze OA route?

The bronze OA route is when an author publishes a paper in an OA journal that does not support CC-BY licensing.

What happens if I publish in a hybrid journal or via the bronze OA route?

SFI grant funds cannot be used to pay for OA publishing in a hybrid journal (not covered by a TA). Because SFI policy specifies the use of the CC-BY licence, it is not advisable to use the Bronze route for publishing. Furthermore, publications in (non-compliant) hybrid or bronze OA route journals will not be considered when assessing progress made on a SFI funded grant.

What about a subscription journal – can I still publish here?

Yes, it is possible to still publish in a subscription journal that either has a TA in place, or if you deposit your publication (either the AAM or VoR) in a Plan S-aligned repository (i.e., the Green OA Route).

I have already submitted my scholarly paper to a journal that does make provisions for immediate OA from 01/01/2021. What should I do?

In this instance, you are not impacted by the policy changes coming into effect on 01/01/2021. Only scholarly papers submitted after this date must be made immediately OA on publication. You can continue to follow the policy guidelines that are currently in effect and valid until 31/12/2020.

My paper was accepted for publication in late 2020, but I did not apply a CC-BY licence when submitting. Am I now in breach of SFI's Open Access Policy?

No, you are not. As the paper was submitted in 2020, it is not required to be 'immediately available' (i.e. no embargo), as this only applies to papers submitted for publication on or after 01/01/2021.

A maximum embargo of 6 months is permitted in this instance.

Does the publisher policy regarding embargo supplant SFI's policy?

From January 2021, SFI is incorporating the Rights Retention Strategy into all relevant legislative and policy documents. Therefore, when an applicant accepts an award from SFI, they will be agreeing to SFI's Grant Terms and Conditions which takes precedent over any subsequent contract such as that

from a publisher SFI is including guidance on the Rights Retention Strategy in its Letters of Offer and policy document in the first instance; amendments to its Grant General Terms & Conditions will follow during 2021 and this will be part of a wider consultation with a cross section of stakeholders.

SFI encourages all Grant holders to avail of the Rights Retention Strategy as early as possible.

Will SFI pay for APCs in OA journals?

As per the Grant Budget Policy¹⁰, SFI will support a contribution to APCs for Plan S compliant OA journals. SFI's contribution to article processing charges refers to the overall grant awarded, and not the individual cost associated with publishing a paper from your grant.

More specifically, currently SFI will support the use of up to 1% of the total grant awarded for article processing charges. For example, if you have a grant of 300,000 euro, then 3000 euro of the grant may be used.

SFI is aware that this is an evolving situation and how we provide support to our community will be reviewed iteratively, based on changes to average APCs, as well as the prevalence of transformative agreements in Ireland and how they operate. Also, in line with Plan S, SFI expects that the costs associated with publishing are fair, reasonable, and transparent.

Further updates will be included in SFI's revised Grants Budget Policy, which is due to be published early in 2021.

I have not allocated any budget for APCs in my grant – what should I do?

You can remain compliant with SFI's OA policy by taking the Green OA publishing route, or by availing of the TAs that are currently in place in Ireland.

Furthermore, according to SFI's Budget Reallocation Policy¹¹, as a Grant holder, you are able to move funds between categories (there are exceptions) and so, if you find that you have under-expenditure in certain budget lines, these monies could be utilised to cover the costs associated with Open Access publishing.

Should I include APCs as a separate budget line?

Yes, you can include costs associated with APCs in a separate budget line in your grant application. This will support SFI's Finance and Grants team in tracking expenditure associated with Open Access publishing.

Does SFI's Open Access Policy apply to Discover Awards?

Yes, it applies to all SFI Grants (awards).

What are "compliant" journals?

The Journal Checker Tool, developed by members of cOAlition S, allows researchers to check if their journal of choice is compliant with Plan S. This is available to all SFI-funded researchers:

<https://journalcheckertool.org>

Alternatively, when choosing a journal or repository, consider the following questions:

¹⁰ https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/budget-finance-related-policies/SFI-Grant-Budget-Policy_2016_July-url-updates.pdf

¹¹ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/budget-finance-related-policies/>

1. Can I find information on the publishing options for this journal? For example, is it a gold, hybrid or subscription type journal?
2. Does my journal of choice support CC-BY licensing?
3. Will I have to apply an embargo to my publication (note: this is not permitted as per SFI OA policy from 01/01/2021 or using SFI Grant funds).
4. Is my journal of choice covered by a transformative agreement in Ireland?

For further information on OA journals, the [Directory of Open Access Journals \(DOAJ\)](#)¹² provides an online directory of high-quality, open access, peer-reviewed journals. However, please be aware that DOAJ may include hybrid journals in their records.

[SHERPA ROMEO](#)¹³ is a useful resource to find information on copyright and self-archiving policies (including embargo periods) of different publishers.

What are 'compliant' repositories?

Information on Irish institutional repositories is available through RIAN, www.rian.ie.

Also, OpenDOAR¹⁴ is a useful resource for identifying appropriate repositories to deposit publications and other research outputs in.

Where should I deposit associated data and software?

SFI recommends that data, accompanying metadata and / or software should be submitted to discipline-specific repositories that are recognised by your research community. The Science Europe 'Practical Guide to the International Alignment of Research Data Management' provides some guidance on selecting trustworthy repositories.

Where no specific repositories exist for your research area there are a number of generalist repositories that can be used, e.g. Open Science Framework¹⁵, figshare¹⁶, Zenodo¹⁷, GitHub¹⁸, Mendeley Data¹⁹.

[CoreTrustSeal](#) is another useful resource for browsing available research data repositories.

What are preprints?

Preprints are unrefereed manuscripts that are made openly available before peer-review and publication in a journal. Preprints accelerate dissemination, increase transparency and reproducibility, allow you to establish priority of discoveries and ideas and provides the opportunity to showcase recent achievements.

SFI recognises pre-print articles (associated with a persistent identifier, e.g. DOI) as valuable research outputs in application and evaluation processes. However, they cannot be used when confirming your eligibility for calls, i.e. when a particular call requires a minimum amount of publications to be eligible to apply, those publications must be peer reviewed.

¹² <https://doaj.org/>

¹³ <https://v2.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/>

¹⁴ <https://v2.sherpa.ac.uk/opendoar/>

¹⁵ <https://osf.io/>

¹⁶ <https://figshare.com/>

¹⁷ <https://zenodo.org/>

¹⁸ <https://github.com/>

¹⁹ <https://data.mendeley.com/>

Does depositing a preprint make my publication compliant with SFI's Open Access policy?

No. SFI encourages researchers to publish preprints however SFI's Open Access policy 2019 requires that the Version of Record (VoR) or Authors Accepted Manuscript, **after** peer-review must be made openly available. A preprint would not fulfil this criterion.

Does SFI's Open Access Policy apply to my masters or PhD thesis when I submit it to my institution's library?

No, SFI's policy applies to publications in peer reviewed journals.

Do books or monographs have to be immediately available upon publication?

No, an embargo of up to 12 months is applicable in this case. Please read SFI's Open Access Policy²⁰ for additional information.

Current FAQ Version: 17/12/2020
SFI will update this FAQ document regularly.

²⁰ https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/open-research/SFIs-Open-Access-Policy-V2.0_28.09.2020.pdf