

HRB Open Access policy FAQs

Q. What is Open Access?

According to The European Commission¹, “Open access (OA) can be defined as the practice of providing on-line access to scientific information that is free of charge to the user and that is re-usable. A distinction is usually made between OA to scientific peer reviewed publications and research data.”

Q. Why does HRB require peer-reviewed publications to be openly available?

The HRB is committed to full, immediate and transparent Open Access (OA) to research outputs, aligned with best international standards. Since 2014, the HRB has mandated OA in its publicly funded peer reviewed research awards. In 2018, it established HRB Open Research publishing platform, and has supported national OA initiatives under the National Open Research Forum in recent years.

HRB has aligned its Open Access Policy² with the principles of Plan S, an international initiative driving efforts for full and immediate OA, and, therefore, since 01/01/2025 all peer-reviewed publications (i.e., original articles, conference proceedings, review articles – this requirement does not currently cover books or book chapters) must be immediately available from the date of publication (no embargo permitted), under a Creative Commons attribution licence (CC-BY) with Rights Retention wording.

Publication routes for full and immediate Open Access include: HRB Open Research³, publisher’s platform (see Gold Open Access, Transformative Agreement, and Diamond Open Access), or through self-archiving, by using the Rights Retention wording and depositing the publication in an Open Access repository (see Green Open Access).

Furthermore, as a public funder, HRB has an obligation to ensure that it achieves 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.

Q. Does the revised HRB Open Access Policy apply retrospectively to grants already awarded?

The revised OA policy comes into place for all publication submissions that occur from 1st January 2025. This means that it can apply to grants already awarded in the past, if they are submitting publications after this date.

Q. What is subject to HRB’s Open Access Policy?

All research publications arising in whole or in part from HRB-funded research are subject to HRB Open Access policy⁴. Any peer-reviewed publications (i.e., original articles, review articles and conference

¹ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-11/ec_rtd_background-note-open-access.pdf

² <https://www.hrb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/HRB-Open-Access-Policy-2025.pdf>

³ <http://www.hrbopenresearch.org>

⁴ <https://www.hrb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/HRB-Open-Access-Policy-2025.pdf>

proceedings - this requirement does not currently cover books or book chapters), must be immediately available from the date of publication (no embargo permitted), under a Creative Commons attribution licence (CC-BY) with Rights Retention wording.

Q. What is a Review Article?

Considering the role of the HRB in the research and evidence support systems, peer-reviewed review articles are in scope of our policy. Examples of review articles include evidence syntheses, systematic reviews, systematic-literature reviews, analyses, meta-analyses and meta-syntheses.

Q. 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 OA publishing see McKiernan et al (2016)⁵.

Q. I am ready to publish my article/conference proceeding, but I am not familiar with OA requirements. How do I make sure I am complying with HRB's Open Access policy?

Please take a look at the step-by-step Publishing Guide⁶, which will help you navigate the steps for publishing Open Access.

Q. Aren't my metrics (like H Index) important for future funding?

There is a global movement towards responsible research assessment, which moves emphasis away from metrics. For example, the signatories' commitments under the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA)⁷ include basing research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation and abandoning inappropriate uses of journal- and publication-based metrics. Over 800 organisations globally have signed, including in Ireland the HRB, Research Ireland and most universities. This builds on previous work by the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)⁸. The HRB explicitly asks its reviewers not to use such metrics.

Q. How do I make my publication Open Access?

Please refer to our Publishing Guide for a step-by-step checklist for publishing Open Access. There are four routes to make your research publications openly available: The Gold OA route, the Green OA route, the Diamond OA route including via HRB Open Research platform, and with a Transformative Agreement (TA). Please note that your existing HRB grant OA funds can be used as a contribution towards costs to publish via these routes. If choosing the Green OA route, including the required Rights Retention statement applies a Creative Commons attribution licence (CC-BY), to an Author Accepted Manuscript (AAM)⁹ arising from a submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

⁵ <https://elifesciences.org/articles/16800>

⁶ <https://www.hrb.ie/funding/responsible-research-assessment/open-access-policy/>

⁷ <https://coara.eu/>

⁸ <https://sfedora.org/>

⁹ An Author Accepted Manuscript (AAM) is the version of the work as accepted for publication, including all changes made during the peer review process.

For further information on OA journals, the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)¹⁰ provides an online directory of high-quality, OA, peer-reviewed journals. However, please be aware that DOAJ may include hybrid journals (which are not compliant with HRB's Open Access Policy unless a Transformative Agreement (TA) is in place) in their records. Open Policy finder¹¹ is a useful resource to find information on copyright and self-archiving policies (including embargo periods) of different publishers. It helps authors and institutions to make informed and confident decisions in open access publication and compliance.

Q. Why should I include Rights Retention wording?

Rights Retention¹² enables you to retain intellectual ownership rights in your work, allowing you to make it Open Access at the time of publication.

Publishers commonly require authors to sign exclusive publishing agreements which restrict what authors can do with their research findings. The Rights Retention Strategy allows researchers to publish in their journal of choice, including subscription journals, and provide Open Access in compliance with our policy.

By using the Rights Retention wording in a peer-reviewed article, conference proceeding or review article, Open Access can then be achieved by depositing the Author Accepted Manuscript (AAM) (the version of your work as accepted for publication, including all changes made during the peer review process) in an open access repository (i.e., the Green Open Access Route).

HRB's requirement for grant holders to use the Rights Retention statement is included in our revised Open Access Policy which is referenced in our HRB General Terms & Conditions¹³. Therefore, when an applicant accepts an award from HRB, they will be agreeing to HRB General Terms & Conditions which takes precedent over any subsequent contract such as that from a publisher.

Q. What needs to be included in the Rights Retention wording?

One of the two following statements (whichever is most appropriate) should be included in all submissions of original research to peer-reviewed journals:

'This publication has emanated from research conducted with the financial support of the Health Research Board under Grant number [XX]. For the purpose of Open Access, the author has applied a CC BY public copyright licence to any Author Accepted Manuscript version arising from this submission.'

Or

'This publication has emanated from research supported in part by a grant from the Health Research Board under Grant number [XX]. For the purpose of Open Access, the author has applied a CC BY public copyright licence to any Author Accepted Manuscript version arising from this submission.'

¹⁰ <https://doaj.org/>

¹¹ <https://openpolicyfinder.jisc.ac.uk/>

¹² <https://www.coalition-s.org/rights-retention-strategy/>

¹³ <https://www.hrb.ie/funding/grant-management/terms-and-conditions/>

Q. What is Gold Open Access?

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 (your HRB grant funds can be used to contribute to costs in this instance).

In cases where the journal has a Transformative Agreement (TA) in place, the APC has been included in the contract between the publisher and your institution/organisation, and you will not be required to pay an APC.

Q. What is a Transformative Agreement, and how can I avail of them?

A Transformative Agreement (TA) is a contract negotiated between institutions (libraries, national and regional consortia) and publishers that allow anyone (i.e., the general public) to access content in a journal without paying any fee and can allow researchers to publish OA free of charge.

IReL¹⁴ has negotiated a number of TAs with publishers for Irish Higher Education Institutions (HEI). TAs typically allow researchers to publish OA free of charge – to check if you are eligible, see IReL's website or contact your library services in your institution.

Q. What is the Green route to Open Access?

The Green OA route involves depositing the Author Accepted Manuscript (AAM) (the version of your work as accepted for publication, including all changes made during the peer review process) in an OA repository. This is achieved by using the Rights Retention wording and is referred to as self-archiving.

HRB supports the Rights Retention Strategy, which allows authors to retain ownership of their work by using a Creative Commons or 'CC-BY' licence. As a result, HRB requires that the Rights Retention wording be included in all research publications before submission to peer-reviewed journals or platforms.

Q. What is the Diamond route to Open Access?

The Diamond OA route refers to publishing in a journal free of charge, which is entirely open access to readers. HRB Open Research¹⁵ is a good example of a Diamond OA route and is available for use by HRB researchers.

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

Creative commons or CC-BY¹⁶ 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 on the Scholarly Kitchen Blog¹⁷.

As an exception, you can request that your publication is published under a CC-BY-ND¹⁸ licence. If you choose to use this licence, you must apply to HRB for approval in advance¹⁹.

¹⁴ <https://irel.ie/>

¹⁵ www.hrbopenresearch.org

¹⁶ <https://creativecommons.org/about/cclicenses/>

¹⁷ <https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2020/04/20/copyright-creative-commons-and-confusion/>

¹⁸ <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/2.0/>

¹⁹ Please contact openaccess@hrb.ie to request a licencing exception.

Q. What routes are not an option for me as an HRB-funded researcher?

Bronze OA journals (due to the inability to apply a CC-BY licence). You can only publish in a journal that applies an embargo to a publication if you immediately upload your Author Accepted Manuscript on an Open Access repository (i.e. the Green OA route). To check the Open Access policy of your journal of choice, please check the Open Policy finder²⁰.

Q. What is a Hybrid Journal?

A 'hybrid' journal operates both a subscription and OA model. The author can choose to pay an APC to have their publication made OA in a journal where a subscription is already supported by their institution. 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. For this reason, Hybrid journals are not compliant with HRB's Open Access policy, unless a Transformative Agreement is in place.

Q. What is the bronze Open Access route and why is not compliant with HRB's Open Access Policy?

The bronze OA route is when an author publishes a peer-reviewed paper in an OA journal that does not support CC-BY licensing. As CC-BY licensing is a requirement of HRB's Open Access Policy²¹, the Bronze route is not considered a compliant OA route.

Q. 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 Transformative Agreement in place, or if you deposit your Author Accepted Manuscript (AAM) in a suitable repository (i.e. the Green Route).

Q. Will HRB pay for Article Processing Charges (APCs) in Open Access journals?

As per the HRB Grant Budget Framework²², the HRB provides a contribution towards Open Access publication costs of €2,200 per publication. Typically, the HRB will contribute up to three open access publications for a grant with a duration of 3-4 years. However, the maximum allowable will be proportionate to the scale and duration of the Grants within a scheme and the Guidance Notes will provide additional guidance and details, if any. HRB contribution towards Open Access publication costs can't be bundled. HRB will not offer specific additional funding for OA charges outside of your grant budget.

HRB also provides the HRB Open Research platform for use by its researchers, without any direct costs for researchers.

In line with Plan S principles, HRB expects that the costs associated with publishing are fair, reasonable, and transparent.

Q. Should I include Article Processing Charges (APCs) as a separate budget line?

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

²⁰ <https://openpolicyfinder.jisc.ac.uk/>

²¹ <https://www.hrb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/HRB-Open-Access-Policy-2025.pdf>

²² <https://www.hrb.ie/funding/grant-management/grant-policies/>

Q. How do I find a suitable repository?

In the first instance, you should consider uploading your Author Accepted Manuscript (AAM) to your institution's repository. Where an institutional repository does not exist and/or to maximise the visibility of your work, OpenDOAR²³ is a useful resource for identifying appropriate repositories to deposit publications and other research outputs in. Your institutional librarian may be able to provide guidance about suitable data repositories. CoreTrustSeal²⁴ is another useful resource for browsing available research data repositories.

A list of mandatory and recommended requirements for repositories has been developed by cOAlition S²⁵. HRB acknowledges that many repositories are still transitioning towards the mandated and recommended requirements.

Q. What are preprints?

Preprints are publications 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 highlight recent achievements. HRB recognises pre-print articles (associated with a persistent identifier, e.g., DOI) as valuable research outputs.

Q. Does deposit a preprint make my publication compliant with HRB's Open Access policy?

No. HRB encourages researchers to publish preprints however HRB's Open Access policy²⁶ requires that the Version of Record, or Authors Accepted Manuscript after peer-review must be made openly available. A preprint would not fulfil this criterion.

Q. Does my masters or PhD thesis have to be Open Access when I submit it to my institution's library to comply with HRB's Open Access Policy?

No, **only** peer-reviewed publications must be immediately available from the date of publication (no embargo permitted), with a Creative Commons attribution licence (CC-BY) and a Rights Retention Statement.

Q. Do books or book chapters have to be immediately available upon publication?

No. At present, only peer-reviewed articles, conference proceedings and review articles) must be made immediately open without embargo. HRB encourages that academic books, book chapters or other outputs that may arise from HRB funded research are made as open as possible and as closed as necessary after publication.

Q. Who should I contact if I still have questions about HRB Open Access Policy?

You can send an email to the HRB Open Access mailbox at openaccess@hrb.ie

²³ <https://v2.sherpa.ac.uk/opensoar/>

²⁴ <https://www.coretrustseal.org/>

²⁵ https://www.coalition-s.org/technical-guidance_and_requirements/

²⁶ <https://www.hrb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/HRB-Open-Access-Policy-2025.pdf>