



# NTU library

## Open access and the REF

## REF policy on open access

An open-access requirement has been introduced for the next Research Excellence Framework (REF2021) by HEFCE. The [policy](#) states that certain outputs must be available in an open-access form to be eligible for submission to REF2021.

### Key points

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

- The policy covers journal articles and conference proceedings with an ISSN **accepted** for publication after 1 April 2016
- The 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'), though this may be replaced or augmented with an updated peer-reviewed manuscript or the final published version of record at a later date
- Publishers often impose a delay before repositories can make manuscripts openly available. The maximum permitted embargo is 12 months (for Panels A and B) or 24 months (Panels C and D). Articles still under embargo are eligible for REF submission, provided they meet the requirements of the policy
- The journal articles and conference proceedings do not need to allow text-mining to fulfil the open access criteria. However, where an institution can demonstrate that outputs are presented in a form that allows text-mining, credit will be given in the research environment component of the REF2021
- 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?

HEFCE regard the date of acceptance is 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?

HEFCE advises 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 an embargo period. Upon acceptance, and no later than three months after this date, you need to deposit your final manuscript into the university institutional repository ([IRep](#)). The paper will be made open access after any publisher embargo. While it is not requested that outputs are made available under any particular licence, HEFCE advises that outputs licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial Non-Derivative (CC BY-NC-ND) licence would meet this requirement. You can add material to [IRep](#) using the online submission system [PubSub](#).
- Gold open access - enables immediate access of the final publisher's version of your research output; an Article Processing Charge (APC) is usually charged. You may be entitled to access the NTU open access fund to make your paper open access via the gold route. You will need to complete the [NTU open access fund form](#) before submitting your paper to a journal. Following consultation with your [Research Support Librarian](#), the form should be submitted to the School Associate Dean for Research.

## 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"><li>• Individual was not employed by a UK HEI at the point of acceptance</li><li>• Individual was unable to secure the use of a repository</li><li>• Individual experienced a delay securing the final peer-reviewed text (e.g. for multi-authored papers)</li><li>• It would be unlawful, or present a security risk, to deposit the output</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Output depends on third party content for which open access rights could not be granted</li><li>• The publication concerned requires an embargo period that exceeds the stated maxima, and was the most appropriate for the output</li><li>• The publication concerned actively disallows open-access deposit, and was the most appropriate for the output</li></ul>
Technical exceptions (these outputs are considered out of scope of the policy)	Other exceptions (there may be very unusual cases where an output could not meet the criteria for a reason not covered in the other sections)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• At acceptance, the individual was at a different UK HEI that failed to comply</li><li>• A short-term technical failure within the repository prevented compliance</li><li>• An external service provider failure prevented compliance (e.g. a subject repository ceased to operate)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A short written explanation will be required</li><li>• Such cases should be extremely rare</li><li>• A process for considering these 'other' exceptions will be established in due course by HEFCE</li></ul>

## Further information

HEFCE have developed a [FAQ](#) page to complement their policy for open access in the REF2021. It will be updated regularly to answer questions commonly asked by institutions.

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