CANCER RESEARCH UK

Together we are beating cancer

POLICY ON OPEN ACCESS

1 Purpose

This policy sets out our position on open access publications and how researchers and host institutions that receive our funding are encouraged to provide open and unrestricted access to published research articles.

We believe that where possible, the best way of maximising the impact of the research we fund is to provide open and unrestricted access to published research articles. This facilitates rapid sharing of knowledge and promotes innovation, ultimately ensuring that patients can access better treatments sooner.

In all cases, we encourage researchers to select publishing routes that ensure the work is available immediately on publication in its final published form.

2 Scope

This policy applies to all funded researchers, host institutions and funded collaborators in relation to original, primary research publications that are accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. This applies to publications that have been supported, in whole or in part, by us.

The policy does not apply to book chapters, monographs, editorials, reviews or conference proceedings.

This policy relates to the publishing of research articles, please see our Data sharing and management policy for requirements relating to the sharing of data that underlies the research articles.

3 Definitions

Author accepted manuscript (AAM)

The version of the paper which has been peer reviewed, revised by the authors and accepted for publication by the journal.

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The Creative Commons attribution licence. The licence allows others to distribute, remix, tweak and build upon work – also commercially – provided they credit the author(s) for the original creation and clearly indicate that changes were made to the work, if any. CC BY 4.0 licence applies to the research article itself as a creative work and does not extend to the underlying data.

Europe PubMed Central (Europe PMC)

An open access repository of life sciences journal literature.

Preprint

A preprint is the version of the paper before being submitted for peer review.

Transformative agreement

Transformative agreements are agreements negotiated between a host institution and publishers that aim to transform scholarly publications from subscription-based business models to fully open access models.

Version of record (VoR)

The final, definitive, citable version of the paper which has been copyedited, typeset, had metadata applied, and has been allocated a persistent identifier, such as a digital object identifier (DOI).

4 Key points

4.1 Requirements for research publications

If you have a research paper accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal, we expect that you and your host institution adhere to the following points:

(i) An electronic copy of your paper must be made freely available in Europe PMC. This should be immediately at publication, or no later

than six months after publication if an embargo is applied. An embargo longer than six months is not compliant.

(ii) The open access version of your research paper must be published with a CC BY 4.0 licence, unless we have agreed, as an exception, to allow publication under a CC BY-ND licence.

(iii) You must acknowledge funding from us in the funding acknowledgement section of the paper, using the format: This work was supported by Cancer Research UK [award reference]. Your award reference will either be a 4-5 digit number or a committee code, a forward slash and 6 digits (e.g. CRCEMA-May22/100001).

(iv) If your research has used patient data, you must use the patient data citation: https://understandingpatientdata.org.uk/data-citation.

(v) In line with our Data sharing and management policy, you must include a data availability statement explaining how the data and software underlying the findings reported in the paper can be assessed by researchers and other users and use persistent DOIs to cite datasets.

4.2 Routes to compliance

The above points can be met through the following routes:

Route 1: Publish in a fully open access or hybrid journal which makes the VoR freely available immediately on publication. Typically, the journal deposits the final publication in Europe PMC on the authors' behalf.

Route 2: Publish in a subscription journal and make the AAM (or VoR, where the journal permits) available no later than six months after publication. Typically, the author self-deposits the AAM on Europe PMC.

Route 3: Publish in a journal that has agreed a transformative agreement with your host institution.

4.3 Funding for open access publishing

We have previously supported open access publishing costs through institutional block grants, our Institutes' core grants and the use of grant underspend. No further financial support will be provided for this, and from 1 October 2026, open access costs will no longer be eligible for support from us.

However, we strongly encourage all funded researchers to make their work available open access. Affected researchers may do the following:

- Choose to publish in a journal that permits self-archiving of the AAM or VoR in Europe PMC. If required, a six-month embargo is allowed.
- Choose to publish in a journal that charges low or no publishing fees.
- Publish in a journal that has a transformative agreement with your host institution.

4.4 Preprints

All of our funded researchers are strongly encouraged to:

- post preprints of their work en route to peer review.
- publish them under a CC BY licence on a platform that is indexed in Europe PMC.

We believe that the peer review process adds significant value to research articles. Researchers must make sure that the article, after peer review, complies with our policy as outlined above.

4.4 Additional requirements

As per our grant conditions, researchers must provide the our Press team with a copy of all publications and conference abstracts arising from the grant activities at the time of submission for publication via the online manuscript submission

form on our website or press.office@cancer.org.uk. Any manuscripts and details will be held in the strictest confidence.

5 Support and advice

For any queries about this policy please contact policies@cancer.org.uk.

6 Related documents

For more information, please see the following webpages and documents:

- Our grant conditions
- Our Data sharing and management policy
- Manuscript submission form
- Jisc Open policy finder
- Europe PMC

7 Policy version information

Policy sponsor	Dr Iain Foulkes, Executive Director of Research & Innovation
Policy owner	Dan Burkwood, Director of Research Operations and Communications
Subject Matter Experts (SME)	Kirsty Naylor, Senior Policy & Governance Manager
Executive Board or Council approval required?	Yes -Approved by SEB
Date of last review	February 2026
Next review due	February 2028
Superseded documents	Version 9

8 Summary of Changes

Policy on Open Access – Version 9, February 2026

Key changes to the policy should be recorded below:

Version	Date	Author	Approved by	Summary of Changes
9	February 2026	Kirsty Naylor	Scientific Executive Board	• 1,2,3,4.1, 4.2 change in wording • 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 Addition of wording around embargo period • 4.3 Change in policy regarding CRUK funding publication costs • 6. Removed document link to: Guidance on our support for transformative agreements • Other minor clarifications
8	November 2022	Sue Russell	Grants Management Policy Board	• 2. Scope updated scope to clarify it relates to the publishing of research articles • 3. Definition of CC BY licence updated 4.1 changed to include potential exceptions to allow publication under CC BY-ND licence; patient data citation section added; data availability statement section added • Other minor clarifications

7	December 2021	Helena Wilcox	Dan Burkwood	• Formatted into new policy version • 3. Addition of definitions • 4.2. Addition of clarification on routes to compliance • 5. Addition of contacts for support and advice • 6. Addition of related documents