Implementation of the Open Access Policy for a post- 2014 REF: Extracts from a Progress report prepared by Research Consulting for Jisc

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Implementation challenges

Institutional representatives were encouraged to identify the key issues they faced in implementing the REF OA policy as part of the regional workshops. They were then asked to categorise each issue as one of the following:

- **A key challenge** (or 'dealbreaker') which was not within the institution's control, but could significantly affect their ability to comply with the policy;
- **A resourcing challenge**, where an institution's ability to comply with the policy was dependent on increased resource;
- **Other challenges**, where institutions would value further clarification or support from Jisc or HEFCE.

There was inevitably some crossover between these categories, but broadly speaking the main issues identified within each category can be summarised as follows. The further cultural or technical developments that will be needed to address the 'key' and 'resourcing' challenges are identified.

Key challenges

Challenge	Description	Further cultural and/or technical developments required
Identification of accepted articles	Institutions have no reliable means of identifying accepted articles unless the author notifies them of this fact. Librarians are not confident that authors will do this consistently, due to a combination of ignorance of the REF requirements, refusal to comply, or authors themselves being unaware that the article has been accepted (e.g. where they are a co-author).	In the short term: • Cultural changes amongst academic staff and line management to make deposit on acceptance the norm. • Inclusion of institutional contact point in acceptance emails to authors, with scope for administrators to act on behalf of authors once licensing terms are confirmed. • Sharing of data between and across institutions (perhaps via Core), so that co-author institutions are made aware that an article has been accepted, and can check where else it has been deposited.

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Challenge	Description	Further cultural and/or technical developments required
		In the medium term: • Passing of article metadata (and ideally AAMs) direct from publishers to institutions at the point of acceptance
Inability to monitor and benchmark compliance	Neither institutions, Jisc or HEFCE have reliable data on current levels of compliance with the REF OA policy[1]. Most institutions therefore have no means of benchmarking their own performance against the sector, while HEFCE is unable to evaluate the progress being made[2]. Institutions also lack a robust evidence base against which to assess their current resourcing levels, and it is unclear how the cost/benefit of the policy might be assessed in future.	• Development of a robust approach to identification of the total outputs subject to the REF OA policy, which is likely to involve harvesting of data from Scopus or WoS. This will inevitably be an incomplete list which is only available post-publication, but it is essential to have some picture of the 'universe' of publications. • Capture of metadata on deposits in a consistent format (i.e. widespread adoption of RIOXX). • Surfacing of all metadata necessary to determine compliance – in particular this will require repositories to surface the date of deposit, which is not currently part of the RIOXX application profile. • Aggregation of data on compliant publications, whether from repositories through CORE or by submission from institutions, and comparison of this to the 'universe' of publications noted above to provide an indication of compliance. • Presentation and sharing of data at institutional level to allow benchmarking of progress across the sector, taking appropriate account of the sensitivities that will accompany any exercise of this nature.

[1] Although exercises such as the current UUK open access monitoring review will provide broad-brush data on overall levels of OA within the UK, both via the green and gold routes, this will not provide meaningful evidence of whether articles have been deposited in accordance with the specific requirements of the REF OA policy.

[2] It could be argued that only REF-returnable outputs need to be made open access, and thus monitoring the level of open access publications in aggregate is not meaningful, as this would include many outputs which will not be returned to REF. In practice, institutions' expectation is that the vast majority of outputs falling within the scope of the policy will need to be made open access, so aggregate reporting across all these publications is likely to provide a valuable indication of compliance levels.

Challenge	Description	Further cultural and/or technical developments required
		• Capture of data on numbers of downloads and copy requests recorded by institutional repositories between the date of acceptance/deposit and the date of publication, to support future evaluations of the policy's benefits in terms of increased access.
Interaction with subject repositories	Deposit in subject repositories is permitted under REF OA policy, but institutions are unsure how they could monitor this, and which subject repositories would comply with the HEFCE criteria.	• Comprehensive mapping of the subject repositories in widespread use by UK researchers, and evaluation of these against REF requirements • Engagement with providers/managers of key subject repositories to identify whether data such as acceptance date and article version is or can be captured, and whether metadata and full-text can be routed from subject to institutional repositories and vice versa • Implementation of robust interfaces between institutional and subject repositories, eliminating the need for multiple deposits
Audit requirements and evidence retention	Institutions remain very uncertain about the audit requirements which will be applied, particularly in respect of exceptions (both the percentage of exceptions that will be 'permitted', and the evidence required in each case). Many are currently retaining evidence of acceptance dates and similar evidence, notwithstanding HEFCE's advice this this is not required.	• Development of assurance mechanisms for institutions, for example through internal audit process reviews • Development and dissemination of good practice in the recording and evidencing of exceptions
Systems	Only a small minority of institutions currently have the necessary systems in place to support compliance with the policy. Dated and user unfriendly repository software presents a significant barrier to researcher deposit of the AAM, while institutions are wholly dependent on CRIS suppliers to deliver appropriate functionality to support monitoring	• Further development of repository software to better facilitate deposit at scale • Improvements in interoperability and metadata to support increased automation of the process • Greater engagement with CRIS vendors to ensure sector requirements are met

Challenge	Description	Further cultural and/or technical developments required
	and compliance. Many small institutions also appear to lack the necessary technical expertise to implement developments such as adoption of RIOXX.	• Increased support for small institutions with limited technical resources in-house.

Resourcing issues

Challenge	Description	Further cultural and/or technical developments required
Rapid rise in the volume of deposits	A continuing rise in the volume of deposits, which is expected to peak in April 2016, is putting library staff under considerable pressure, with implications for staffing costs and morale.	• Adoption of a more pragmatic, risk-based approach to validation of deposits by library staff, complemented by robust takedown policies • Improvements in repository infrastructure to streamline deposit processes
Review of publisher policies and identification of embargo periods	Inconsistent, unclear and difficult to locate publisher policies can mean library staff spend significant time checking deposit requirements.	• Machine readable terms and conditions at the article level • Development of a SHERPA/REF tool to check compliance, formally endorsed by HEFCE
Population of metadata and management of embargoes for accepted articles	Deposit on acceptance creates a requirement for institutions to revisit articles and populate metadata and embargo periods on publication. Tracking and managing these records is considered to be the biggest resourcing issue facing institutions, aside from the increased volume of deposits.	• Publisher provision of digital object identifiers (DOIs) at acceptance, to enable more reliable matching of accepted manuscripts to metadata harvested from Scopus or Web of Science • Provision of machine-readable embargoes (e.g. from the SHERPA/REF service) to CRIS and repository services • Provision of machine readable licensing terms at the article level by publishers
Support and advocacy	Communications and advocacy activities represent a significant drain on staff time. The different emphases of the RCUK and REF policies result in confusion for authors, which can undermine compliance.	• Improvements in management information to support advocacy efforts • Improved alignment between the RCUK and REF policies • Cultural changes with the academic community • Amendments to promotions and performance review processes to reflect OA requirements

Other issues

A large number of other issues were raised by institutions during the review, including:

- Difficulties in determining acceptance dates for conference proceedings, and questions over the cost/benefit of making proceedings OA when only a small minority are REF-returnable
- Difficulties in securing and identifying the AAM
- Difficulties in verifying acceptance and publication dates, particularly where multiple dates are provided (e.g. online publication and print publication)
- Creation and management of duplicate records
- Subsequent replacement of AAM with the version of record
- Arrangements for the transfer of repository records between institutions where staff move
- Credit arrangements for other OA outputs
- Concerns over staff training, morale, recruitment and retention

In many cases institutions would like further guidance from HEFCE on the interpretation of these points. In practice, though, it seems unlikely definitive guidance can be issued, and in most cases they are matters for institutions themselves to resolve, whether by claiming an exception or making a reasonable judgement based on the evidence available (which will include making reference to HEFCE's existing guidance and FAQs). Jisc may have a role to play in facilitating dialogue and exchange of good practice between institutions in these areas, but they do not warrant diversion of significant resources at the present time.