



British Philosophical Association

## **Response to HEFCE on Open Access**

The British Philosophical Association (BPA) is the subject association for Philosophy as an academic discipline within Britain. The BPA agrees with the established policy of the four funding bodies that outputs from research supported through public funding should be widely and freely accessible. We therefore welcome the opportunity to respond to HEFCE's letter seeking advice on Open Access, especially as it relates to philosophy publishing.

### 1. Advice on expectations for open-access publications

Paragraph 9 states that the research councils "propose to accept material published via either gold or green routes as eligible, recognising that it is not appropriate to express any preference in the context of research assessment." The BPA welcomes this statement, as there is unanimous support from Philosophy Heads of Department for the green model. Indeed, philosophers already support a system of making research available at no charge, through the practice of putting their research papers on personal websites or in university repositories as a matter of course.

However, Paragraph 9 also states: "We accept the Finch Report's arguments that in the long term, the gold rather than green route may be the most sustainable way to deliver open access." The BPA thinks that the gold model would be disastrous for publishing in philosophy and in other humanities subjects. The gold model is both unfair and threatens academic freedom, and so is inconsistent with the desire of research councils, stated in Paragraph 10, for a policy which can increase the proportion of open access research "in a simple, robust, fair and transparent way." The policy is unfair because it links the ability to publish philosophical research to the ability of philosophers or their institutions to afford the APCs. This will discriminate against those who are not in the best position to pay, perhaps because they are early-career or retirees, or because their institution will be unable to devote funds to pay APCs. We imagine that many research-active philosophy departments will have little access to funds, given the current financial climate. The policy will be extremely damaging to philosophers in such departments. So whereas on the current system philosophical research is published on merit, the new system will be biased towards established philosophers at wealthy institutions.

In addition, the gold model threatens the freedom of philosophers to publish where and how much they like. Even if universities have funds to pay APCs, these will be

limited, and competition between academics for this money means that some will lose out. Again, the idea that it is capacity to pay, rather than quality of work, that is the determining factor means that a lot of work that would be published under the current system will not be published if gold open access is implemented widely. In addition, competition for APC money requires decisions to be made at the institutional level. We doubt that non-specialist panels are best placed to judge the respective merits of research in philosophy and (say) classics. We also doubt that such decisions could be made without a significant increase in administrative work, both for those making a case for funding, and for those sitting in judgement on the panels. As a result, we think that the gold model will be complicated, unfair, opaque, and anything but robust. We advise the research councils to endorse the green model for publishing in philosophy and the humanities.

## 2. Advice on repository use

As noted, many philosophers already make pre-published versions of research available on personal websites and in university repositories. We are happy to endorse the requirement that submitted outputs be available through institutional repositories, on the understanding that our current practice continue. Philosophers also make research available on subject-specific repositories such as PhilPapers (<http://philpapers.org/>), and support this form of open access.

## 3. Advice on embargoes and licences

The BPA does not oppose the imposition of an embargo period, provided that this does not affect our current practice of making pdfs of pre-published research available on personal websites and in institutional repositories.

Paragraph 16 states that research councils “recognise there are concerns, particularly in the arts and humanities community, about the potential dangers of licence abuse. Allowing re-use of materials is an important aspect of open-access publishing, and developing effective licences in terms that recognise the interests of all stakeholders will be an essential element in this.” We share the concerns that the gold model CCBY licenses will allow not just free dissemination of philosophical research, but the reuse of large proportions of such work – the figures being discussed suggest two-thirds of a published journal article – without appropriate attribution. In our view, such a license would endorse straightforward plagiarism. We therefore support the CCBY NC ND license which allows free dissemination and reuse, but insists upon clear distinctions between original philosophical research and additional work by the person or persons reusing it.

## 4. Advice on exceptions

We support exemptions for two categories of philosophical research.

(i) Research published in international journals that do not conform to the research councils’ policy on open access, and which do not allow pre-publication materials to be put on personal websites or university repositories. It is possible (though perhaps unlikely) that there might be very prestigious philosophy journals in the above category. If so, an exemption is warranted in order to allow philosophers in the UK to publish work in the very best journals.

(ii) Research published in monograph form. It is not clear that there is a workable model for open access publishing for monographs, and it is rare for

philosophers to make pre-published pdfs of monograph available through personal websites or university repositories. Given that there might be considerable difficulties in setting up a workable model for this kind of output, an exemption for REF 2020 seems sensible.

**[www.bpa.ac.uk](http://www.bpa.ac.uk)**