



[REDACTED]

24 August 2026

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Freedom of Information request: FOI2026/00654

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 29 July in which you requested the following:

Your request:

Freedom of Information request relating to UKRI's Open Access policy, which was adopted in 2021.

In particular, I have three questions arising from the associated Equality Impact Assessment:

- 1. Pursuant to question 5 of the first table (page 5), what evaluation, if any, has been made of "unintended EDI consequences"?*
- 2. What sources informed the row in the second table about early-career researchers (pages 9–10)? (For example, footnote 2 gives an FCDO source for the row relating to race, but no reference is given for early-career researchers.)*
- 3. Further to the explanation/justification given on page 15, what evaluation, if any, resulted from UKRI's resolution to "monitor the policy through its implementation" with respect to "the precise degree to which author choice may be affected"?*

Our response

I can confirm that UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) does hold information relevant to your request. Please see the information below.

1. Pursuant to question 5 of the first table (page 5), what evaluation, if any, has been made of "unintended EDI consequences"?

The UKRI [Open Access \(OA\) Policy](#)¹ for Research Articles was announced in August 2021 and came into effect in April 2022. The [Equality Impact Assessment \(EIA\)](#)² published alongside the policy committed UKRI to monitoring its implementation and reviewing any unintended impacts on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). The assessment identified a low risk of significant adverse impacts, and an area highlighted for monitoring was the potential effect on early-career researchers.

Since the policy's implementation, UKRI monitored its impact through a review of article policy implementation conducted during 2024 and 2025. This review included stakeholder surveys and focus groups facilitated through the UKRI Open Access Stakeholder Forum, analysis of publication data, horizon scanning, and findings from Jisc's review of transitional agreements.

¹ <https://www.ukri.org/publications/ukri-open-access-policy/>

² <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/UKRI-060821-OpenAccessPolicyEqualityImpactAssessment-FINAL.pdf>

As part of this work, UKRI developed a set of evaluation questions across ten topic areas. One of these considered whether: “Has UKRI’s open access policy for research articles unintentionally caused or contributed to disadvantages or inequalities?”

The review found that concerns about disadvantage and inequality persist within the scholarly publishing system, particularly in relation to article processing charge (APC), or “pay-to-publish”, models. Stakeholders reported that researchers without access to publishing funds may face barriers to publishing through APC-funded routes, with potentially greater impacts on independent researchers, early-career researchers, and researchers in low- and middle-income countries.

The review also found that navigating the open access publishing landscape can be challenging for both researchers and research support staff. Stakeholders highlighted that the complexity of publishing routes, funding mechanisms, and publisher requirements may disproportionately affect certain groups, including early-career researchers, researchers with learning differences, and those working outside research-intensive institutions.

Alongside these challenges, the review identified some potentially positive impacts. Stakeholders reported that the policy had encouraged the adoption of institutional rights retention policies, which can expand access to open access publishing options and support greater equity, particularly for researchers without dedicated open access funding and for early-career researchers.

Overall, the review concluded that many of the concerns raised reflect broader features of the scholarly publishing landscape rather than impacts uniquely attributable to the UKRI policy itself. UKRI will continue to monitor the implementation and impacts of the policy, including any potential EDI implications. An updated EIA will form part of future monitoring and evaluation activities.

2. What sources informed the row in the second table about early-career researchers (pages 9–10)? (For example, footnote 2 gives an FCDO source for the row relating to race, but no reference is given for early-career researchers.)

The assessment relating to early-career researchers was informed by a combination of stakeholder engagement undertaken during policy development and analysis of the availability of policy-compliant publishing routes.

One source of evidence was the public consultation on UKRI's [Open Access Review](#)³ and the responses received from stakeholders. The consultation analysis identified a range of views on the potential implications of the proposed policy for researchers, institutions and disciplines, and formed part of the evidence base used to inform policy development.

A further source was analysis undertaken by UKRI in collaboration with Jisc to examine where UKRI-funded researchers had historically published and to model the availability of policy-compliant publishing routes under existing and anticipated publishing agreements. This analysis informed UKRI's assessment of the extent to which researchers would continue to have access to appropriate publication venues under the proposed policy. The findings are discussed in the [UKRI Open Access Policy: Explanation of Policy Changes](#).⁴ At the time of publication, this document reported that approximately 51% of journals in which UKRI-funded authors had historically published were expected to offer immediate open access options through agreements that were in place or under negotiation. The figure cited in the EIA differed slightly because the underlying analysis was undertaken at a different stage of policy development.

The EIA's assessment of potential impacts on early-career researchers was therefore informed by consultation responses, stakeholder engagement and analysis undertaken with Jisc on the availability of policy-compliant publishing routes. The assessment reflected a potential risk identified during policy development, namely that any reduction in author choice could disproportionately affect early-career researchers. It did not reflect evidence of an observed impact, as the policy had not yet been implemented at the time the EIA was published.

³ <https://www.ukri.org/publications/ukri-open-access-review-consultation-analysis/>

⁴ <https://www.ukri.org/publications/ukri-open-access-policy-explanation-of-policy-changes/>

3. Further to the explanation/justification given on page 15, what evaluation, if any, resulted from UKRI's resolution to "monitor the policy through its implementation" with respect to "the precise degree to which author choice may be affected"?

The EIA noted a potential risk that restrictions on publication venue choice could disproportionately affect early-career researchers. It therefore committed to monitoring implementation of the policy, including the extent to which author choice was affected in practice.

UKRI evaluated this issue as part of the policy review described in response to question 1. One of the specific evaluation questions considered during that review was: "Is there sufficient author choice, in terms of the number of venues that offer suitable open access publishing options?"

Analysis undertaken by Jisc and shared with UKRI for the review reported that, as of June 2024, approximately 93% of the journals in which UKRI-funded authors publish offered policy-compliant routes that were eligible for UKRI funding. Comparable levels were reported across broad disciplinary groupings: health sciences (92%), life sciences (95%), multidisciplinary journals (97%), physical sciences (93%), and social sciences and humanities (96%).

The review also found that some smaller subject areas may have more limited author choice where key journals do not offer policy-compliant routes. It noted that the Jisc analysis measured the availability of compliant publishing routes based on historical data and did not represent actual article compliance rates.

The review additionally considered stakeholder views on author choice. Stakeholders highlighted concerns that researchers without access to open access funding or institutional support may face more limited publishing options. Conversely, some stakeholders considered that, provided authors retain viable publication options, a degree of constraint on publication venue choice may be an unavoidable consequence of policies intended to accelerate the transition to open access.

Overall, the review found that many journals used by UKRI-funded authors offered policy-compliant publishing routes and therefore did not identify evidence of a substantial reduction in author choice overall. However, some discipline-specific limitations remain, and UKRI continues to monitor the issue as part of its wider evaluation of policy implementation.

Your rights

If you have any queries regarding our response, please do let us know. If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review, explaining which elements of this decision you disagree with and why. Internal review requests should be submitted within 40 working days of the date of our response and should be addressed to:

Head of Information Governance

Email: foi@ukri.org

Please quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are still not content with the outcome of the internal review, you may apply to refer the matter to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review procedure provided by UKRI. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: www.ico.org.uk

If you wish to raise a complaint regarding the service you have received or the conduct of any UKRI staff in relation to your request, please see [UKRI's complaints procedure](#).⁵

⁵ <https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/contact-us/make-a-complaint/#skipnav-target>

Yours sincerely,

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