



British Philosophical Association

## Philosophy Publishing and Open Access

This document provides information about the Government's policy on Open Access, states the BPA's views on the central elements of what is proposed, and suggests ways in which philosophers can respond to aspects of the policy.

### 1. The Proposal

The 'Finch Report' on access to published research recommended that there must be 'Open Access' to academic work funded by public money. This means that philosophical work must be made publicly available, by journal publishers, online. The Government has accepted this recommendation and will soon attempt to implement this as policy. There are two models being proposed. On the first, 'gold' model, academics and institutions pay journals to publish research, by levying an Article Processing Charge, estimated to be between £500 and £5000 per article. On the second, 'green' model, there are no APCs but journals make articles publicly available only after an embargo period. The Government favours the former: David Willetts, Minister for Universities and Science, writes that "We prefer the 'gold' over the 'green' model, especially where the research is taxpayer funded so the Government agrees with the sentiment expressed in the Finch Report. Embargo periods allowed by funding bodies for publishers should be short where publishers have chosen not to take up the preferred option of their receiving an Article Processing Charge." The RCUK policy is that the embargo period would be 12 months for research in philosophy and other subjects in the humanities. RCUK will insist that any research funded by grants must be published in journals offering gold and/or green access; it is thought that HEFCE will insist that submissions for the REF2020 must follow this model. There will shortly be a consultation exercise conducted by HEFCE.

### 2. Support for green open access, opposition to gold

We think that there are very good reasons for a system whereby publicly-funded research is widely available, and at no charge. Philosophers, like other academic researchers, want their research to be read, and object to fact that private publishers make large profits on the back of public money and academic labour. However, such a system of making research available at no charge *already* exists, to a large extent, given that many philosophers presently put their research papers on personal websites or in university repositories as a matter of course. These are usually 'final

drafts' rather than publishers pdfs, but philosophical papers in draft or manuscript form are increasingly available free of charge in this way. In other words, philosophers already employ a de facto green model for making publicly-funded research available. Moreover, there was unanimous support, from Philosophy Heads of Department, for the implementation of a green model as policy; the idea of a 12 month embargo period ought not to be worrying, provided that academics retain the freedom to make 'final draft' versions of their own research available via repositories.

Alongside our support for green open access, there was unanimous opposition to the implementation of gold open access. We think that the gold model is both unfair and threatens academic freedom. 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.

The policy 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.

### **3. What philosophers can do**

The implementation of gold open access will have serious consequences for philosophers in the UK. Since it is likely that the amount of money provided for gold open access by research councils will be small, then the amount of philosophical research published by APCs will be correspondingly small. Many research-active philosophers in the UK will be unable to publish high-quality work in this way. If publishers wish to continue to publish articles by UK philosophers, and if the Government wishes to continue to support academic publishing, then they need to fully endorse the green model and drop support for gold. We ought therefore to push them to do this, through making our voices heard in our own institutions and in the forthcoming consultation exercise. And we should remind both that high-quality peer-reviewed journals would cease to function without the work and good will of academics who act as referees, editors, and board members. The gold model threatens academic freedom; academics can threaten to make the model unworkable by withdrawing their labour.

### **4. Further details**

Links to the Finch Report, the Government's response, and responses from RCUK and HEFCE can be found here: <http://www.researchinfonet.org/publish/finch/>

The British Academy's response is here:

<http://www.britac.ac.uk/news/news.cfm/newsid/786>

The position paper by the Campaign for the Defence of British Universities is here:

<http://cdbu.org.uk/campaigns/open-access/>

Further worries about the policy are expressed in the following document:

<http://thedisorderofthings.com/2012/12/04/open-access-hefce-ref2020-and-the-threat-to-academic-freedom/>

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