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REPORT

The new university Open Access checklist

A practical guide on implementation

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European University Association asbl

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Introduction

This checklist is a guide for universities who wish to develop their Open Access (OA) activities. It was created as part of EUA's work on Open Science and steered by the EUA Expert Group on Science 2.0/Open Science.

This is the second version of the EUA University Open Access Checklist. The first was published back in 2015 and focused on institutional OA policies. Over the past six years, the scholarly publishing system and OA landscape have both changed dramatically in Europe and beyond.

Universities have made huge progress in developing and implementing OA policies and practices (cf. the EUA Open Science Surveys, 2020-2021; 2017-2018). Researchers are now more aware of the importance of OA and increasingly make their articles available openly – through repositories or OA publishing. Many national and EU research funders now require OA publication of research results. Universities and national consortia are increasingly negotiating new types of contracts, including partial or full OA components, and many new OA journals and publishing initiatives have come to light. However roughly 85% of the new research articles published globally are still produced in journals that are behind paywalls (cf. OA2020), making them inaccessible to all researchers and citizens who cannot afford to pay to access them.

The scholarly publishing system is now much more complex and dynamic. The 'old' subscription model also coexists alongside and is increasingly being replaced by paid-for-publishing. At the same time, community-driven OA initiatives are on the rise, with the creation of new, not-for-profit OA journals and publishing platforms. The future of scholarly publishing will surely be more diverse and complex (cf. Read & Publish contracts in the context of a dynamic scholarly publishing system, 2020).

With all these developments affecting universities, it is important to remember that Open Access is a means to an end. The end is a scholarly communication system that ensures "that knowledge and understanding created by researchers [is] treated as public goods, available for the benefit of members of society as a whole, to enhance the wellbeing of human beings across the planet" (Future of scholarly publishing and scholarly communication, p. 25). In other words, sharing research results, and knowledge more generally, is instrumental in addressing global challenges and enhancing wellbeing. This requires global collaboration. National and European leaders, research funders, universities, research performing organisations and researchers should all strive for a scholarly publication system that is open, affordable, equitable and sustainable.

It is important for universities to ensure they have the support and capacity to further develop their Open Access activities. This checklist is not a prescriptive list of actions or items to be implemented by institutions. It includes an "à la carte" approach allowing institutions to consider the proposals that make most sense in their particular context and for their specificities.

The checklist covers three main goals:

1. Empowerment, through high-level policies and strategies;

2. Capacity building, through libraries and negotiating consortia;

3. Reinforcement of existing structures, through academic community-driven infrastructures.

Each goal includes a variety of possible actions, their respective rationale, proposed activities, expected impact and potential pitfalls. The checklist concludes with a list of general references, to help universities discover more information about up-to-date OA resources and toolkits.

EMPOWER
High-level policy/strategy

This section outlines a series of actions that university leaders can take, independently or jointly, to catalise OA throughout the institution.

Actions

1. Discuss the benefits of OA implementation (and its challenges) with university members
2. Adopt a policy that includes a Rights Retention Statement
3. Add OA criteria in academic assessment
4. Monitor APC costs. Centralise and streamline APC reporting. Assign funding for OA publishing*
5. Support non-commercial, scholar-led publishing initiatives (Diamond OA)*
6. Advocate policy change by governments and funders

BUILD CAPACITY
Libraries and consortia

This section includes a series of actions that university libraries, consortia and publishers can take to accelerate OA output, including different types of agreements.

Actions

1. Monitor APC costs. Centralise and streamline APC reporting*
2. Enter into a publishing agreement with a pure OA publisher
3. Enter into a transformative agreement (TA) with a smaller or society publisher
4. Enter into a transformative agreement (TA) with a large publisher

REINFORCE EXISTING STRUCTURES
Academic community-driven Infrastructures

This section includes a series of actions that institutions can take to support scholarly-led initiatives on OA, to accelerate OA output.

Actions

1. Support non-commercial, scholar-led publishing initiatives (Diamond OA)*
2. Support non-commercial infrastructure for scholarly communication
3. Develop and use an institutional (or shared) OA repository

* These actions fall under more than one goal. Their description has been slightly adapted to the different goals and target groups.

EMPOWER
High-level policy/strategy

Action	Rationale	Proposed activities	Expected impact	Potential pitfalls
1. Discuss the benefits of OA implementation (and its challenges) with university members.	▶ The overall proportion of OA research outputs is increasing, but the complexity of the scholarly publishing system, in particular different OA publishing models, can be confusing. ▶ Academic leaders need to counteract the increasingly influential 'OA publishing costs more' and 'OA journals publish lower quality articles' narratives.	▶ Universities could raise awareness of the benefits of OA implementation (and its challenges). ▶ As well as training research and research support staff, they can also teach postgraduate students about the diversity of publishing formats and venues, OA (best) practices and tools. ▶ University members could be involved in developing OA strategies and policies.	▶ Empowers university members to choose the right OA publishing model. ▶ Increases the OA proportion of research output.	▶ There are unintended OA consequences to watch out for (e.g. misuse, difficult implementation, use of predatory journals).

EMPOWER
High-level policy/strategy

🎯 Action	⚙️ Rationale	🔷 Proposed activities	⚖️ Expected impact	🔍 Potential pitfalls
2. Adopt a policy that includes a Rights Retention Statement.	▶ Authors (or their institutions) retain their copyrights. All publications must be issued under an open license, preferably the Creative Commons Attribution license (CC BY), in order to fulfil the requirements defined by the Berlin Declaration. The *Rights Retention Strategy* gives researchers the freedom to submit manuscripts to their journal of choice (including subscription journals), while remaining fully compliant with Plan S. ▶ Plan S funders use this mechanism in their funding agreements, so the CC BY licence will override publisher agreements.	▶ Universities could include requirements for researchers to apply the most appropriate type of CC BY licence to author's accepted manuscripts (AAM) in institutional OA policies and employment contracts.	▶ Could allow almost full, immediate OA to AAMs. ▶ Makes authors aware of their intellectual property rights (IPR). ▶ Ensures that authors and their institutions retain ownership of their AAM, and thus their intellectual property. ▶ Allows authors to freely reuse tables, graphs, and other material from CC BY licensed articles without having to ask the publisher for permission. ▶ Is in line with Plan S policy.	▶ May lead to disagreements with publishers, who could make it harder for authors to exercise their rights. ▶ May require extra library staff work to explain the Rights Retention Statement to authors and advise them on publishers. ▶ Institutional OA policies should be combined with institutional implementation strategies (for example employment contracts), protecting researchers when they enter into contracts with a publisher.

EMPOWER
High-level policy/strategy

Action	Rationale	Proposed activities	Expected impact	Potential pitfalls
3. Add OA criteria in academic assessment.	▶ Researcher publishing behaviour is closely linked with the publication venue (e.g., a journal) because of the criteria used in the assessments, mainly indicators related to publications. ▶ A more balanced emphasis on research outputs and other academic activities, including open research processes, teaching and service to society is part of a holistic reform of academic assessment.	▶ Universities should only consider research outputs available as OA from a trustworthy repository or platform for academic assessment.	▶ Incentivises OA publications.	▶ Changes to academic assessment may have unintended consequences on (early-stage) academic career paths. Will require impact assessment, monitoring and change evaluations. ▶ Change may also lead to academic resistance. Will require awareness raising.

EMPOWER
High-level policy/strategy

🎯 Action	⚙️ Rationale	🔷 Proposed activities	⚖️ Expected impact	🔍 Potential pitfalls
4. Monitor APC costs. Centralise and streamline APC reporting. Assign funding for OA publishing.	▶ Gold OA journals often charge authors a fee for OA publishing. This fee can vary from €500 - €10,000 per article. ▶ The Fair Open Access Principles are to be taken into consideration.	▶ Universities should request Price and Service Transparency, in line with Plan S. ▶ Universities should monitor APC costs. They should also centralise and streamline APC reporting, with a view to restricting cost increases by some OA publishers and deals. ▶ Universities could also assign institutional funding for OA publishing (authors could contribute from their research funds but would not be forced to pay for these fees out of their salaries).	▶ Supports research publication in venues not covered by institutional or consortia agreements.	▶ Funding may be difficult to obtain. ▶ APCs can be extremely high. ▶ Universities should avoid paying APCs to 'hybrid' journals, as they run the risk of paying twice: once via the subscription and then again via the APC (double-dipping).

EMPOWER
High-level policy/strategy

🎯 Action	🧠 Rationale	🔷 Proposed activities	⚖ Expected impact	🔍 Potential pitfalls
5. Support non-commercial, scholar-led publishing initiatives (Diamond OA).	▶ Universities do not always perceive the potential of their own publication activities as a key leverage point for changing the entire academic publishing ecosystem.			
6. Advocate policy change by governments and funders.		▶ Universities could advance OA by aligning their Open Access policies with national and European funders, and by lobbying for legislation that protects IPR and anchors CC BY for academic publishing in copyright law, etc.		

BUILD CAPACITY
Libraries and consortia

Action	Rationale	Proposed activities	Expected impact	Potential pitfalls
1. Monitor APC costs. Centralise and streamline APC reporting.	▶ Gold OA journals often charge authors a fee for OA publishing. This fee can vary from €500 - €10,000 per article. ▶ The Fair Open Access Principles are to be taken into consideration.	▶ Universities should request Price and Service Transparency, in line with Plan S. ▶ Universities and consortia should monitor APC costs. They should also centralise and streamline APC reporting, with a view to restricting cost increases by some OA publishers and deals.	▶ Supports research publication in venues not covered by institutional or consortia agreements.	▶ Universities and consortia should avoid paying APCs to 'hybrid' journals, as they run the risk of paying twice: once via the subscription and then again via the APC (double-dipping).
2. Enter into a publishing agreement with a pure OA publisher.	▶ OA publishers experiment with national- or institutional-level agreements (e.g. PLOS Community Action Publishing, Frontiers).	▶ Universities could explore joining the consortia negotiating such agreements: the larger the consortium, the better the deals that can be signed.	▶ Potentially reduces the cost of APCs paid by the institution. ▶ Ensures competition in the publishing market.	▶ There is an (often unfounded) concern that some pure OA journals publish lower quality articles. As their business model relies on APCs, publishing more articles generates more income.

BUILD CAPACITY
Libraries and consortia

Action	Rationale	Proposed activities	Expected impact	Potential pitfalls
3. Enter into a transformative agreement (TA) with a smaller or society publisher.	▶ Large publishers already have a quasi-oligopoly. Smaller publishers often have a limited ability to change their business models and publication processes. However, smaller publishers are important for a diverse market that serves the needs of different disciplines.	▶ Since smaller publishers often publish in languages other than English, universities using those languages could form consortia specifically dedicated to negotiating with these publishers.	▶ Ensures bibliodiversity, competition in the publishing market, and OA venues for smaller disciplines and languages other than English.	▶ Requires labour-intensive commitments by consortia negotiators, and efforts to increase coordination with other regional university libraries.

BUILD CAPACITY
Libraries and consortia

Action	Rationale	Proposed activities	Expected impact	Potential pitfalls
4. Enter into a transformative agreement (TA) with a large publisher.	▶ Flipping the publishing market from subscription to OA requires better alignment of university subscription negotiators.	▶ Universities could join forces with other institutions and research funding organisations to form transnational negotiating consortia, in order to contribute to the transition to full OA.	▶ Enhances negotiating consortia's power to achieve advantageous contractual conditions. ▶ Allows for improved cost monitoring, as the institution no longer pays twice (once for the subscription and once for open access APCs in the same set of journals). ▶ Ensures continued access to resources unavailable in OA.	▶ TAs may not be sufficiently transformative to lead to full OA in the long term. ▶ TAs may not result in an overall cost reduction as they simply mutate from the subscription cost to a read & publish cost. High publication costs would even increase global inequalities. ▶ Risk of continued lock-in and concerns about major players' growing market power. ▶ TAs may consolidate the existing dominance of a handful of publishers. ▶ TAs may limit diversity, innovation and the emergence of new actors and models. ▶ Risk of disappearance of small, local publishers, and non-English language publishers. ▶ Differences in national law hamper the transnational alignment of stakeholders.

REINFORCE EXISTING STRUCTURES
Academic community-driven Infrastructures

Action	Rationale	Proposed activities	Expected impact	Potential pitfalls
1. Support non-commercial, scholar-led publishing initiatives (Diamond OA).	▶ Universities, university presses, departments, and researchers are often active editors and publishers, and serve specific communities of various sizes. Institutions are not always aware of these initiatives.	▶ Universities could map these initiatives, which would also allow them to support and reward such efforts.	▶ Supports small communities and journals directly. ▶ Supports bibliodiversity and academic control. ▶ Small cost but large impact. ▶ Small contributions (including in-kind contributions) from many institutions can make the difference.	▶ Small journal sustainability is often an issue. (See OA Diamond Journals Study - consolidation efforts are underway.)
2. Support non-commercial infrastructure for scholarly communication	▶ Organisations such as the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) or the Global Sustainability Coalition for Open Science Services (SCOSS) are important for supporting community-owned freely accessible infrastructure that allows the academic community to collect, store, organise, access, share, and assess research. These initiatives require sustainable funding.	▶ Universities could align to collectively sustain these infrastructures and/ or provide in-kind contributions such as hosting and in-kind (library) staff time.	▶ Supports bibliodiversity and academic control. ▶ Small cost but large impact. ▶ Small contributions (including in-kind contributions) from many institutions can make the difference.	▶ There is an (often unfounded) concern that some pure OA journals publish lower quality articles. As their business model relies on APCs, publishing more articles generates more income.

REINFORCE EXISTING STRUCTURES
Academic community-driven Infrastructures

Action	Rationale	Proposed activities	Expected impact	Potential pitfalls
3. Develop and use an institutional (or shared) OA repository.		▶ Universities could actively support their repositories and help them become compliant with Plan S technical criteria, so they are fully equipped to host their own authors' CC BY AAMs.		

Resources

- ❖ Study on Read & Publish Agreements: https://eua.eu/101-projects/751-study-on-read-publish-agreements.html

- ❖ Plan S Rights Retention Strategy: https://www.coalition-s.org/rights-retention-strategy/

- ❖ Society Publishers Accelerating Open access and Plan S (SPA-OPS) project: https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.c.4561397.v3

- ❖ COAR Community Framework for Good Practices in Repositories: https://www.coar-repositories.org/coar-community-framework-for-good-practices-in-repositories/

- ❖ OA Books Toolkit: https://www.oabooks-toolkit.org/

- ❖ Jisc New University Press Toolkit: https://www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/new-university-press-toolkit

- ❖ Global Sustainability Coalition for Open Science Services (SCOSS): https://scoss.org/

- ❖ Science Europe Briefing Paper: Open Access Monitoring: Guidelines and Recommendations for Research Organisations and Funders: https://www.scienceeurope.org/media/cqllmhzo/se-oamonitoring-briefing-paper-2021.pdf

- ❖ European Statistical Advisory Committee (ESAC): https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/ess/about-us/ess-gov-bodies/esac

Acknowledgements

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