



# **BSA-HAPS response to HEFCE Open Access Consultation 30 October 2013**

## **Question 1**

**Do you agree that the criteria for open access are appropriate (subject to clarification on whether accessibility should follow immediately on acceptance or on publication)?**

Disagree

**Do you have any comments on this proposal?**

The British Sociological Association (BSA) and the Heads and Professors of Sociology (HAPS) welcome HEFCE's consultation and the greater flexibility it has shown following the first consultation.

In general terms we accept the criteria proposed. However, we feel that some clarification is needed so that authors, academics and others reading the policy will have a good understanding of how the policy will work in practice. The BSA works very closely with our authors and members through our journals. We have been very attentive to their experiences of Open Access to date. From our experience, we can foresee some confusion that may arise where guidelines, while clear to those with significant understanding of Open Access, are not clear to the authors who are trying to make suitable publishing choices for their work. It is clear that HEFCE is also focused on consultation and considering the needs of the stakeholders so we offer the points below in the interests of greater clarity.

'accessible through a UK HEI repository, immediately upon either acceptance or publication (to be decided, as outlined in paragraph 29), although the repository may provide access in a way that respects agreed embargo periods':

The BSA and HAPS are in support of offering multiple routes to open access, including the deposit or self-archive of papers in institutional or subject repositories, subject to appropriate embargo periods. We greatly appreciate HEFCE's acknowledgment of the embargo period. However, the wording of this particular point makes the conditions of deposit somewhat unclear. If an article is under embargo, it will not be 'accessible' through a UK HEI repository. It may well be deposited in such, though not 'accessible' until the embargo has expired. The BSA and HAPS would support deposit or self-archive immediately upon either acceptance or publication, while the accessibility through the repository respects agreed embargo periods. The BSA and HAPS would also recommend stating clearly that HEFCE is happy for the version of the article deposited to respect agreed embargos and self-archiving agreements with the relevant publisher (i.e. deposit of the post-peer review, pre-publication version meets Open Access criteria).



'presented in a form allowing the reader to search for and re-use content (including by download and for text-mining), both manually and using automated tools, provided such re-use is subject to proper attribution under appropriate licensing':

In general the BSA and HAPS greatly support HEFCE's position on not specifying a particular licence for publication (see our response to Q3 below). We do however have some queries on what constitutes 'appropriate licencing'. Outputs will be deemed Open Access and therefore eligible if they allow search and re-use; however what conditions on 'who' and 'when' will be acceptable? This formulation might seem to suggest particular and unrestrictive forms of creative commons license. Since BSA and HAPS have argued in a previous consultation against licenses that allow for commercial reuse, or allow re-use in very different ways from the author's intentions, we would be concerned that this formulation re-introduces a particular form of license by the back door. Our experience indicates that licencing is a topic of significant confusion. In the interests of this policy and the community that HEFCE works with, we would recommend clarification. We have further explored this point in question 3.

## Question 2

**Do you agree with the role outlined for institutional repositories, subject to further work on technical feasibility?**

Neither agree nor disagree

**Should the criteria require outputs to be made accessible through institutional repositories at the point of acceptance or the point of publication?**

Acceptance

**Do you have any comments on these proposals?**

We are not confident about the readiness of repositories throughout the sector. We believe that the funding councils have a responsibility to help ensure that all institutions are ready for the likely January 2016 start date and that this may well involve putting extra resources into those HEIs that have not had the resources hitherto to fully develop their repositories to cope with the full demands of open access requirements. Our concern relates particularly to equal opportunities being offered to all those who are conducting and publishing research regardless of their institution. We are not confident at the moment that there will be parity in place between the most research intensive universities and others by the likely 2016 start date.

The BSA and HAPS do not have a strong preference for outputs being deposited into UK HEI repositories either at point of acceptance or at publication. However, we respond here on the assumption that HEFCE is referring to the **deposit** of papers at the points of acceptance or publication – these works may be deposited but remain inaccessible under agreed embargos. (see BSA-HAPS response to Question 1) We also assume that outputs deposited but as yet inaccessible under agreed embargos are still considered compliant. Further to these assumptions, we expect that HEFCE will respect agreed conditions about which version of an article may be deposited (generally the post-peer review, pre-publication version).



Our experience would suggest that there are workload/administrative implications for the two points of deposit – either the authors or the institutional repository will be managing the deposit, publication and access (in respect of any agreed embargo period) dates. We agree that point of acceptance is likely to make things easier on authors, placing the duty of managing the time frames on the institutions. Providing all repositories equally have the resources to manage the date tracking, point of acceptance could be very suitable. The BSA and HAPS hope that no authors' outputs would be penalized should they not be deposited or made open at the earliest date possible. (We refer to paragraph 26 regarding the ineligibility of work originally published in an ineligible format and subsequently made open.)

In addition to work on the technical feasibility of repositories and the points we have already made about the resources available to repositories, the BSA and HAPS also note that there are important considerations about policies on deposit and storage in repositories to be made. We are thinking specifically about who deposits in which repositories; how long such material is maintained in the repositories; and whether there are any conditions under which deposited material is moved from one repository to another. Some standards of practice will be needed to ensure clarity for academic and administrative staff. It will be important to work towards common practice to provide a repository for all who need it; perpetuity of access in these repositories; guarantee of archive (i.e. material will not be deleted); and minimal duplication between repositories.

We are particularly concerned about equal opportunities for early career researchers. Although they may not be formal employees at the point of submission to a journal and thus not come under the scope of HEFCE's REF policy (a point we return to under Question 6), their needs for access to institutional repositories need to be accommodated. PhD students and post-doctoral students may be publishing from research funded by RCUK and thus required to be compliant with their open access policies for publication. Their submission, acceptance for publication and/or publication may occur after they have left the institution where the funding took place and before they have alternative employment. We would suggest that HEFCE should require institutions to provide places in their repositories for any research funded at their institutions and for their PhD students.

Although we are generally endorsing the use of repositories as proposed with the assumptions/provisos in our submission, we hope that HEFCE will continue to consider the implications of repository development for the current journal subscription models, which are vital in sustaining Learned Societies, such as the BSA. We have said more on this point in Question 3 in relation to embargo periods, their role in journal subscription sustainability and the long half-lives of journal articles in Sociology as a discipline.

### **Question 3**

**Do you agree that the proposed embargo periods should apply by REF main panel, as outlined above?**

Agree

**Do you agree with the proposed requirements for appropriate licences?**

Disagree



**Do you have any comments on these proposals?**

Embargos

The BSA and HAPS agree that embargo periods should apply by REF main panel (as currently constituted), though it may be that some flexibility (i.e. a range) is suitable even with the main panels themselves. We greatly appreciate HEFCE’s recognition that various disciplines have different needs, publishing patterns and readership patterns. This distinction between disciplines has not been acknowledged by others and we hope that HEFCE will continue to recognize the different needs of the many academic communities that make up our sector.

Regarding the length of embargo periods, the BSA and HAPS recommend that HEFCE set an acceptable embargo period of up to 24 months. Such an embargo recognizes the different patterns and article half lives in various disciplines. The embargo periods are important to supporting the important aspects of the publishing industry while the major changes in the way we publish are worked out.

We support a 24 month embargo for significant reasons. Many stakeholders in the industry – learned societies such as the BSA, publishers and HEIs – are involved in projects to research and better understand our publishing patterns in light of these new changes. Initial findings indicate that articles in the social sciences have a long ‘half life’, meaning that the articles are read and cited long after their publication dates. The BSA has two wholly owned journals of long standing and we’ve included their usage and citation half lives below.

	Usage (downloads)	Citations
Sociology	6.9 years (83 months)	9.7 years
Work, employment and society	5.5 years (66 months)	7.8 years

Our publishing partner SAGE has also taken a sociology average for all its titles which is approximately 6 years (73 months), showing that BSA journals are not exceptions. These preliminary findings indicate that sociology articles are used long past their publication date. Other disciplines are likely to have slightly different patterns and we suspect that some half lives will be shorter and others longer. Therefore to offer some protection to the long term viability of the quality journals produced in Britain, long embargo periods are required so that the method of Green Open Access (deposit in an UK HEI repository) can continue alongside the subscription model as well as the Gold model that is also available in many cases.

The BSA and HAPS would recommend setting this clear, allowable embargo period for the upcoming REF cycle. This will make an unambiguous statement and will avoid any confusion. We would recommend against following the RCUK too closely. RCUK material forms only a part of the outputs submitted to REF. In addition, the RCUK has undertaken to review its policies a number of times in the coming years. Shifting the allowable embargo periods (and therefore output eligibility) during the cycle is likely to cause significant confusion. HEFCE has already set itself apart from the RCUK in the way that it has approached the question and consultation so we would recommend following this line by allowing RCUK to act independently on the basis of its own policy review timelines. Once the next REF cycle is complete, another HEFCE review of the Open Access policy would be fully appropriate.



#### Licences

The policy states that the HEFCE policy will not specify a licence for publication and the BSA and HAPS strongly support this position. Authors should be able to choose the licence that best suits their needs and their work.

However, we would seek some clarification on paragraph 34. As we have argued in response to the criteria for open access themselves, the paragraph requests data mining and reusage under appropriate licencing. 'Appropriate licencing', as chosen by the author and the publisher, may restrict reuse and data mining to particular users (i.e. non-commercial) or may allow it at a cost. Does the HEFCE policy allow for such restrictions to be placed on the search and re-use of content requested? The BSA and HAPS would recommend that the position be made clear so that authors are in no doubt that they have the full flexibility of choice as regards licencing, including the freedom to rule out commercial re-use.

#### Question 4

**Do you agree that the criteria for open access should apply only to journal articles and conference proceedings for the post-2014 REF?**

Strongly Agree

**Do you have any comments on this proposal?**

We strongly support this proposal. BSA and HAPS welcome the setting up of an expert reference group to examine the issues. However we believe that open access publishing of books, book chapters and monographs is a long way off and remain skeptical as to the practical difficulties to be overcome in this area. We would also stress the importance to Sociology, not only of books in the REF submission but also of chapters in edited books, which have received little or no mention in much of the discussion of open access. Such outputs amounted to some 14% of submissions to the 2008 RAE only just short of the proportion of books submitted. We hope that the expert reference group will consider book chapters as part of their deliberations. We would also stress that any published edited volumes that arise from conferences or from other sources (but are not conference proceedings as such) should be classified as books. There is increasing experimentation in sociology with visual methods which give rise to very different forms of publication, for example 'performance publication'. It is not at all clear that open access could apply to such work. We therefore reiterate that for the post 2014 REF the criteria should indeed only apply to journal articles and conference proceedings whilst the difficulties of open access in relation to other forms of publication are examined and resolved.

#### Question 5

**Do you agree that a notice period of two years from the date of the policy announcement is appropriate to allow for the publication cycle of journal articles and conference proceedings?**

Agree



### **Do you have any comments on this proposal?**

The BSA and HAPS support the proposed notice period of two years from the date of the policy announcement as appropriate. We appreciate the recognition of the need to allow authors to adjust to new criteria for their publication choices and clarity from their publication outlets.

### **Question 6**

#### **Do you agree that criteria for open access should apply only to those outputs listing a UK HEI in the output's 'address' field for the post-2014 REF?**

Agree

#### **Do you have any comments on this proposal?**

BSA and HAPS welcome HEFCE's attempt to address a difficult issue in paragraphs 56-59 with regard to academics moving country and also to early career researchers.

However we would ask for some clarity regarding the 'address field'. Is this the address/contact given to the journal at the time of output submission? We request this clarity as recording and auditing the author addresses or affiliates at the time of submission may change some processes for authors. In many cases, the details recorded for address and affiliation are variable up until the point of publication - particularly for multi-authored papers and in cases where academics move during the process of publication. It will certainly be manageable to note submission addresses and we would encourage HEFCE to be clear on this point in the final version of the policy so that suitable administrative measures can be put into place.

Subject to the above clarification, we have reservations that the proposed measure – address field – is fully suitable to the task. We are considering the circumstances of those researchers who have notional affiliation to an HEI without an employment contract. We anticipate that many early career and independent researchers may experience this situation. These individuals may well choose to publish stating affiliation but may not be in a position to comply with Open Access policies. There would need to be a mechanism in place at the time of REF submission to differentiate between employment and affiliation, ensuring that those who had had institutional addresses *but were not formally employed* by that institution at the time of output journal submission do not need to comply with the OA policy.

We would ask for a further point of clarification regarding address and deposit. For those outputs subject to the Open Access policy and where multiple UK HEI repositories are implicated (i.e. multi-authored papers; cases of academic mobility), what are the deposit expectations of HEFCE? Clarifying the expectations also relates to standards for repositories and equal opportunities as discussed in our response to Question 2. As HEFCE has acknowledged, the policy is being implemented at a very early stage of development in Open Access and therefore many issues of practice and theory have yet to be explored. We feel that queries are likely to arise and we would encourage a policy that facilitates matters for authors, HEIs and journals alike.



## Question 7

### Which approach to allowing exceptions is preferable?

b) percentage target

#### If selecting option b:

- **Do you agree that the percentage targets are appropriate?**  
Disagree
- **Do you believe the percentage target should apply consistently or vary by REF main panel?**  
By REF main panel

#### Do you have any comments on these proposals?

BSA and HAPS support the approach of using percentage targets rather than a case by case approach. The alternative approach of making individual cases is too risky for individuals and institutions and too complex and time consuming. We would like HEFCE to make clear that the percentage target applies only to journal articles and conference proceedings since we would not like any disincentive to publish books or other more experimental forms of output.

Given the differences between the disciplines, the BSA and HAPS support differential targets between the REF main panels. However we are concerned that the figures for compliance chosen do not yet rest on firm research that takes account of the open access policies of journals published overseas and possible differential patterns of submissions by different institutions to particular REF panels. Submissions to overseas journals made up a significant proportion of the Sociology submissions, to the 2008 RAE. We think it would be a mistake to enact any policy that would provide a disincentive for academics to publish in overseas journals, diminishing the international standing of UK research.

We are aware that the British Academy is currently undertaking some research into this area and would suggest that HEFCE remains informed by this ongoing research before establishing a definitive figure for each main panel. Putting too high a figure for compliance might encourage UK academics to publish in lower quality open access journals in order to meet HEFCE targets. If a decision is to be taken before there is time for more and robust research to establish clarity on the issue of publication overseas, BSA and HAPS would propose a lower figure for main panel C of 65% compliance.