



NCN's Open Access Policy, as amended by the NCN Director's letters of 11 October 2023 and 30 September 2024

Open Access to Publications: Instructions

Version 2.0:
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These Instructions are valid for all calls covered with the Policy, with the exception of projects selected in the following international calls: POLONEZ BIS, calls announced by the CHANSE, CHIST-ERA and ForestValue2.

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Abbreviations

AAM – Author Accepted Manuscript

APC – Article Processing Charges

CC – Creative Commons

CC0 (4.0) – Creative Commons – No Rights Reserved (version 4.0)

CC BY (4.0) – Creative Commons – Attribution (version 4.0)

CC BY-SA (4.0) – Creative Commons – Attribution – ShareAlike (version 4.0)

CC BY-ND (4.0) – Creative Commons – Attribution – NoDerivatives (version 4.0)

CC BY-NC (4.0) – Creative Commons – Attribution – NonCommercial (version 4.0)

CC BY-NC-SA (4.0) – Creative Commons – Attribution – NonCommercial – ShareAlike (version 4.0)

CC BY-NC-ND (4.0) – Creative Commons – Attribution – NonCommercial – NoDerivatives (version 4.0)

DOAJ – Directory of Open Access Journals

DMP – Data Management Plan

JCT – Journal Checker Tool

OA – Open Access

RRS – Rights Retention Strategy

VoR – Version of Record

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Glossary

Article Processing Charges (APCs): costs of publishing a paper in Open Access journals

Author Accepted Manuscript (AAM): the final, author-created version of the manuscript including any changes made after peer review and accepted by a journal for publication

Creative Commons licences: legal licences that allow the traditional “All Rights Reserved” model to be replaced with the “Some Rights Reserved” terms while respecting the principles of copyright law (for more see: [Licences under which papers should be made available](#))

Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ): database of international peer-reviewed Open Access journals established in 2003 (for more see: [link](#))

Hybrid Access journals: journals that publish articles in both an Open Access model and a traditional paid subscription model

Journal Checker Tool (JCT): a tool provided by cOAlition S to verify whether a journal complies with the funder’s Open Access policy and to indicate the compliance route(s) ([link to Journal Checker Tool](#))

NCN’s Open Access Policy: “National Science Centre’s Open Access Policy” adopted in 2020, valid for grant agreements signed after 1 January 2021 ([link](#)) with amendments by the NCN Director of [October 2023](#) and [September 2024](#)

Open Access journals and platforms: journals and platforms offering free access to publications, registered or with pending registration in the [Directory of Open Access Journals](#)

Persistent Identifier (PID): a sequence of characters that uniquely and permanently identifies the object to which it refers (one such commonly used persistent identifier is DOI)

Postprint: see: Author Accepted Manuscript

Preprint: the version of an article that precedes its peer review and publication in a peer-reviewed academic journal; other names: submitted version, AOM (Author’s Original Manuscript), SMUR (Submitted Manuscript Under Review)

Rights Retention Strategy (RRS): a strategy to protect the intellectual property rights of researchers to publications, enabling authors to retain the right to decide to publish the results of their research without an embargo period imposed by the publisher (for more see: [link](#))

Subscription journals: journals that publish articles that are only available through paid subscription (see also: hybrid access journals)

Transformative agreements: agreements between publishers and certain institutions (e.g. national or regional consortia, libraries), whereby part of the funds allocated to subscriptions are redirected to support Open Access publishing by authors affiliated with the institutions covered by the agreement

Transformative journals: subscription/hybrid access journals that are covered by an agreement to become Open Access journals (for more see: [link](#))

Version of Record (VoR): the version of a manuscript published in a journal with the font set and graphics corresponding to the journal’s visual identity system

INTRODUCTION



Open Access refers to making academic publications available in digital form, with the aim not only of providing free access to its content but also allowing free reproduction, dissemination and adaptation, under the terms of the CC BY (Creative Commons Attribution) licence.

Such openness lays the foundation for the widespread use of research results by scientists, students, entrepreneurs, and society at large, which consequently supports the development of science, innovation, and the economy.

The introduction of mandatory requirements to publish research results in Open Access was driven by several key factors. First, it was recognised that the researchers' rights to freely dispose of the results of their work must not be restricted by publishers. In addition, the aim was to strengthen the impact and visibility of research conducted at organizations based in Poland, increase its circulation and ensure broad global access to the results of nationally-funded research.

NCN's Open Access activities align with international initiatives undertaken in collaboration with cOAlition S, Science Europe and the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) Partnership.

Science and research must be based on the principles of openness and transparency. One of the key elements of this trend is Open Access publication of research results, which enables widespread and unrestricted distribution of knowledge. Openness of publications not only increases the visibility of research results but also fosters greater collaboration in the scientific world and a better use of public funding.

These Instructions provides an overview and description of the NCN's Open Access rules applicable after the [2023](#) and [2024](#) changes.



I. GRANTEE'S OA OBLIGATIONS AND SETTLEMENT PROCEDURE

1. Obligations

Under NCN rules, Open Access is mandatory for all scientific publications, excluding monographs, chapters in monographs, peer-reviewed collected works and peer-reviewed conference papers. However, this exception does not apply to post-conference publications that are the only project results.

The Principal Investigator (PI) plays a key role in ensuring that publications along with associated metadata and research data produced as part of the project are available in Open Access. In the annual and final reports, the PI is required to provide a list of Open Access publications, as well as related research data and their metadata.

1.1. Annual reports

Papers published in Open Access as part of a project should be included in the “Publication List” section, which is subject to an evaluation by the project supervisor at NCN appointed individually for each project. The eligibility check covers compliance with the NCN’s Open Access principles. The following aspects are verified in particular:

(A) Open Access model – formal assessment is conducted to verify if a publication conforms to one of the following three routes:

- ▶ Route 1: papers published in full Open Access journals,
- ▶ Route 2: preprint or AAM (Author Accepted Manuscript) versions of papers made available in open repositories,
- ▶ Route 3: papers published in transformative journals or journals covered by transformative agreements;

(B) Licence – verification of the licence that allows free use of a paper;

(C) Eligibility of costs – verification of costs incurred from project funds for the Article Processing Charge (APC).

In addition, for articles in peer-reviewed journals and peer-reviewed conference papers, the PI is required to provide publication-underlying data allowing verification of the research conclusions presented in the publication.

1.2. Final report

Final reports are subject to a similar formal evaluation as the annual reports but are additionally assessed by an Expert Team in terms of their content. Pursuant to the funding agreement, the extent of international coverage of research results that have been published is subject to a merit-based evaluation.

PLEASE NOTE: While Open Access is an eligibility criterion, according to the research project funding agreement, the extent of international coverage of the research results that have been published is subject to an evaluation.



II. OPEN ACCESS REQUIREMENTS

1. OA publications

Mandatory Open Access publication applies to:

- ▶ research projects selected in calls launched on 15 June 2020 and after, and financed by the NCN under agreements signed on 1 January 2021 or after,
- ▶ NCN's calls for research projects or research activities (including Miniatura),
- ▶ articles published in peer-reviewed journals as well as peer-reviewed conference papers if they are the only project outcome for publications arising from a project.

Mandatory Open Access publication doesn't apply to the following:

- ▶ monographs,
- ▶ chapters in collective works,
- ▶ peer-reviewed collected works,
- ▶ post-conference publications (except as noted above).

2. Types of manuscripts available

Authors have several options in line with NCN's Open Access Policy regarding the types of manuscripts that can be shared:

- ▶ **preprint** in an open repository from the [OpenDOAR](#) repository database

A **preprint** is used when an article has been accepted for publication by a publisher in a closed-access scientific journal and the AAM and VoR versions cannot be shared due to the terms of the author(s)' agreement with the publisher. The author then uploads the preprint to a repository, such as arXiv, bioRxiv or Zenodo at the latest when the article (VoR) is published on the publisher's website.

- ▶ **Author Accepted Manuscript** (AAM version) in an open repository from the [OpenDOAR](#) repository base

The AAM version is used when the VoR is published in closed access, but the contract allows for the AAM to be made available in a repository, e.g. Zenodo, arXiv. It does not include the final formatting, fonts, and graphic layout of the journal.

- ▶ **Version of Record** (VoR) on the journal's website

VoR is used when the article is published in an Open Access journal. After the review process and acceptance by the publisher, the journal transforms the AAM into the final published version, VoR. It is formatted according to the publisher's guidelines, with appropriate font, logos, footnotes, graphics, and page numbering. It can be found on the publisher's website, e.g. in the PDF format.

3. Open Access routes according to NCN's OA Policy

Papers resulting from NCN-funded projects must be made available through one of the three routes:

- ▶ **Route 1** – publication of a paper in a full Open Access journal that is registered or pending registration in the Directory of Open Access Journals ([DOAJ](#)). Journals may offer: Diamond Open Access (Open Access without a charge for both readers and authors); Gold Open Access (requiring payment of APC by the authors);
- ▶ **Route 2** – making a manuscript freely available in a repository. This applies to papers published in subscription or hybrid journals. If the publisher's VoR is behind the paywall, authors must upload either its preprint or AAM version in an open repository of a researcher's choice, registered with the [openDOAR](#) database; the Open Access version of the paper must be included in the report;
- ▶ **Route 3** – publication of a paper in a transformative journal or in a journal covered by a transformative agreement. A transformative journal is a hybrid access journal that has committed to become a full Open Access journal. A list of transformative journals is available at <https://journalcwhackertool.org/transformative-journals/> and is valid only until 31/12/2024. Transformative agreements allow researchers affiliated with an institution to publish their papers in Open Access, usually at no additional cost. A list of Polish transformative agreements can be found on the [Virtual Library of Science](#) website.

PLEASE NOTE:

Papers that:

- are published in print-only journals,
- cannot be verified using the [Journal Checker Tool](#), or
- do not have a persistent identifier,

may be included in the annual reports and/or the final report provided that their AAM version is made available in a repository under the CC BY 4.0 licence without an embargo period.

Journals that are not registered or pending registration with [DOAJ](#) at the time of submission, **are not considered** Route 1-compliant journals. These may be included in the annual reports and/or the final report provided that their AAM version is made available in a repository under the CC BY 4.0 licence without an embargo period.

Under Route 2, reports may include papers published in hybrid access journals that have been published in Open Access after paying APC and the VoR is openly accessible. If the VoR is published under the CC BY 4.0 licence, depositing the AAM version in a repository is not required. Please note that in such case the APC cannot be covered by funds provided by the Centre.

4. Licences enabling distribution of papers



Creative Commons (CC) licences allow authors to retain copyright and share their papers under specific conditions. With CC licences, authors can indicate precisely under which conditions the public can use their papers; for example, to copy, share or modify them.

The National Science Centre recommends using Creative Commons 4.0, which is the latest version, and offers updated and clearer principles.

4.1. Main terms and conditions of individual CC licences



Attribution (CC BY)

This licence allows users to copy, distribute, present, and perform a work as well as to develop derivative works based on it, provided that the name of the author of the original version is cited.



Example:

Dr Jan Kowalski has published a scientific article in full Open Access under the **CC BY 4.0** licence. This means that any person may copy, distribute, modify, and use the work, provided that the authorship of Dr Kowalski is acknowledged in any medium or format his article is disseminated or adapted.

Scenario:

A researcher is preparing teaching materials using excerpts from the article by Dr Jan Kowalski. The researcher is free to use this work, provided that the materials include clear acknowledgements of the author of the original text, e.g.: "Author: Jan Kowalski, made available under the CC BY 4.0 licence".



Non-commercial use (CC BY-NC)

This licence allows users to copy, distribute, present, and perform a work, as well as to develop derivative works based on it for non-commercial purposes only.



Example:

Dr Anna Nowak has published her article under the **CC BY-NC 4.0** licence. This allows her work to be copied and modified, but only for non-commercial purposes. In all cases, Dr Nowak's authorship must be properly acknowledged.

Scenario:

A non-profit organisation wants to use Dr Nowak's publication in its report. They may do so provided that they clearly acknowledge Dr Nowak's authorship and refrain from using the material for commercial purposes, such as selling the report.



ShareAlike (CC BY-SA)

This licence allows users to distribute derivative works only under the same licence as the original work.

**Example:**

Dr Anna Zielińska has published her article in the “XX” journal under the **CC BY-SA 4.0** licence. This means that anyone can copy, modify, and distribute her work, but must make new versions or adaptations available under the same licence – **CC BY-SA 4.0**. The author of the original work should also be given credit.

Scenario:

If a researcher translates Dr Zielińska’s article, they must publish the translated version under the CC BY-SA 4.0 licence. The translation must indicate that Dr Zielińska is the author of the original work.

**No derivatives (CC BY-ND)**

This licence allows users to copy, distribute, present, and perform a work only in its original form – the creation of derivatives is not permitted.

**Example:**

Dr Tomasz Kowalski has made his article available under the **CC BY-ND 4.0** licence. This means that others may copy and distribute his work but are not allowed to make any modifications or create new versions. Dr Kowalski’s authorship must be acknowledged. The content of the original work may not be altered.

Scenario:

An academic organisation wants to make the article by Dr Kowalski available on its website. They may do so provided that they do not make any changes to his work and include the appropriate information about the author.

4.2. Licenses complying with NCN’s OA

NCN accepts various types of CC 4.0 licences depending on the publication route:

Route 1 (full Open Access journals)

In the case of Route 1, articles become fully accessible immediately after publication in an Open Access journal. The NCN accepts all Creative Commons 4.0 licences:

- ▶ CC BY,
- ▶ CC BY-SA,
- ▶ CC BY-ND,
- ▶ CC BY-NC,
- ▶ CC BY-NC-SA,
- ▶ CC BY-NC-ND.

PLEASE NOTE: APC costs can only be incurred if a CC BY or CC BY-ND licence has been used (to find out more on licence requirements, see [Section. 6](#)).

Route 2 (subscription/hybrid journals)

Option 1: if the embargo period does not apply:

- ▶ deposit the AAM version in a repository under any **CC 4.0** open licence.

Option 2: if a journal prevents the AAM version from being made immediately available in an open repository by imposing an embargo period:

- ▶ deposit the preprint in a repository under the **CC BY 4.0** licence at the latest when the article is published on the publisher's website,
- ▶ once the embargo period ends, the AAM version must be deposited in a repository under an open licence permitted by the publisher, e.g. **CC BY-NC 4.0** or **CC BY-NC-ND 4.0**.

Option 3: if the AAM version cannot be made available under an open licence after the embargo period has ended:

- ▶ deposit the preprint in a repository under the **CC BY 4.0** licence at the latest when the article is published on the publisher's website,
- ▶ deposit the AAM version in a repository under a licence specified by the publisher.

Route 3 (transformative journals and journals covered by transformative agreements)

In the case of Route 3, publications can be made available under the following CC 4.0 licences:

- ▶ CC BY,
- ▶ CC BY-SA,
- ▶ CC BY-ND.

PLEASE NOTE: APC costs may be incurred if CC BY, CC BY-SA or CC BY-ND licences have been used (to find out more on licence requirements, see [Section 6](#)).

5. Persistent Identifier (PID)

Papers published in Open Access (VoR, AAM and preprint versions) must have a permanent and unique identifier to make sure that it can be easily accessible over the Internet. It is recommended that widely recognised identifiers be used, such as DOI. If a work is published in multiple versions (e.g. as a preprint, AAM or VoR), each version must have a different identifier.



Example:

DOI (Digital Object Identifier) is a widely used identifier for research outputs. A DOI always consists of:

- ▶ a prefix "10",
- ▶ four or more digits identifying the organisation that registered the DOI with DataCite or CrossRef,
- ▶ a suffix that identifies the specific digital object.

The DOI of the publication prepared by OpenAIRE entitled "OpenAIRE Guidelines for Data Archive Managers v1.0" and deposited in the Zenodo repository is: **10.5281/zenodo.6918**.

6. Budget



An Article Processing Charge (APC) is a fee charged to authors for making their papers available in Open Access in a journal. APC costs vary from journal to journal. **At NCN, APC costs are eligible for Route 1 and Route 3**, if a paper has been published under the following licences:

- ▶ Route 1: CC BY 4.0 or CC BY-ND 4.0,
- ▶ Route 3: CC BY 4.0, CC BY-SA 4.0 or CC BY-ND 4.0.

Eligible costs (APC) can be covered by the project budget under the following categories:

- ▶ indirect cost of Open Access (2% of direct costs),
- ▶ other indirect costs (20% of the direct costs).

The NCN recommends Route 2.

In Route 2, authors are not charged for making their articles available in Open Access (= no-cost OA publication). The VoR version of the article is published in closed access while the manuscript (preprint or AAM) is deposited in a repository. This Route's APC costs are not eligible and must not be covered by the NCN funds.

In addition, for Route 3 it is possible to rely on Polish transformative agreements. If the pool of licences specified in transformative agreements is exhausted, the APC costs for journals covered by such agreements may be paid from OA indirect costs or from the project's other indirect costs, provided that work has been accepted for publication or published by 31 December 2025 (inclusive).

PLEASE NOTE: For [transformative journals](#) (Route 3), APC costs are considered eligible if a paper has been accepted for publication or published by **31/12/2024 (inclusive)**.

In addition, please note that the publishing fees (i.e. editing, translation, copies, printed drawings in colour, submission fees) are not eligible under both direct and indirect costs across all routes.

Table 1 Overview of APC cost eligibility by OA routes

Publication route	Submission fees	APC costs	Additional publishing charges for editing
Route 1 Publication in a full Open Access journal, paper licensed under CC BY 4.0 or CC BY-ND 4.0	-	+	-
Route 2 Publication in a subscription journal (including hybrid access), manuscript (preprint, AAM or VoR) deposited in a repository	-	-	-
Route 3 Publication in a transformative journal (by 31/12/2024) or a journal covered by a transformative agreement, work licensed under CC BY 4.0, CC BY-ND 4.0, or CC BY-SA 4.0 (by 31/12/2025)	-	+	-

7. Examples of the three OA publication routes

Route 1 – example:

Dr Maria Nowak intends to publish an article in a prestigious Open Access journal “XX”. What steps should Dr Nowak take to ensure that the journal meets the Route 1 requirements, and that the VoR is immediately available upon its publication under the CC BY 4.0 licence, without an embargo period?

Steps:

1. Check if the journal is included in the DOAJ.
2. Make sure that a persistent identifier has been assigned and CC-BY 4.0 licence used.
3. Submit your paper to the editor.
4. Verify the agreement with the publisher and select the CC BY 4.0 licence.
5. Retain the APC invoice, if any APC costs have been incurred.

Route 2 – example 1: Publisher’s consent to release the AAM without an embargo period

Dr Anna Nowak has published an article in a subscription journal. What steps should she take to meet the formal requirements of the NCN’s Open Access Policy?

Once a VoR has been published on the website of the journal, Dr Nowak should deposit the AAM version of her paper in a repository, e.g. in Zenodo, under the **CC BY 4.0** licence.

Steps:

1. Publish your article in a subscription journal.
2. Select a repository from the openDOAR database.

3. Make sure that the relevant licence has been used and correct persistent identifier assigned.
4. Select the CC BY 4.0 licence.
5. Deposit the AAM in the selected repository.

Route 2 – example 2: Publisher’s consent to release the AAM after the embargo period

Dr Jan Kowalski has published an article in a subscription journal. The publisher allowed Dr Kowalski to make the AAM version available after a 6-month embargo period.

What steps should Dr Kowalski take to comply with the NCN’s Open Access Policy?

Dr Kowalski should deposit the preprint in a repository, e.g. **arXiv**, under the **CC BY 4.0** licence. Six months after the article’s publication on the publisher’s website, the AAM should be uploaded in the same repository as the preprint (e.g. arXiv), while the preprint (as the previous version) should be also retained.

Steps:

1. Publish your article in a subscription journal.
2. Select a repository from the openDOAR database.
3. Make sure that a proper licence has been used and a persistent identifier assigned.
4. Select the CC BY 4.0 licence for the preprint.
5. Deposit the preprint in the repository.
6. When the embargo period is over, upload the AAM version and keep the preprint (as the previous version) in the repository.
7. Assign a persistent identifier and Creative Commons licence to the AAM.

Route 3 – example:

Dr Tomasz Nowak intends to publish an article in the journal “YY”, which is covered by a national transformative agreement. The author wants the article to be published in Open Access using the appropriate CC 4.0 licence.

What steps should Dr Nowak take to meet the Open Access Policy requirements?

The author should verify on the [Virtual Library of Science](#) website, if journal is included in an agreement with the publisher.

Steps:

1. Check if the journal is included in a list of journals covered by a transformative agreement and if the University is on the list of institutions eligible for the specific publishing programme.
2. Verify if funds are available for APC coverage through a specific agreement.
3. Select the appropriate licence (from the following: CC BY, CC BY-SA, CC BY-ND).
4. Use a transformative agreement to cover APC costs.
5. If the licence pool has been used up, APC costs may be paid from the project budget (indirect costs of OA or other indirect costs), provided the work has been accepted for publication or published by 31 December 2025 (inclusive).
6. Keep the APC invoice.

Table 2 Comparison of three OA Routes

	Route 1	Route 2	Route 3
Type of journal	Full Open Access	Subscription/hybrid access	Transformative (by 31/12/2024) or licensed under a transformative agreement (by 31/12/2025)
Type of manuscript made available	Paper published on a website of the journal (VoR)	AAM/VoR or a preprint (if there is an embargo period on AAM), made available in a repository or VoR published as part of the so-called Gold OA under the CC BY 4.0 licence (as long as the APC are not covered by the NCN funds)	Paper published on a website of the journal (VoR)
Temporary embargo on AAM	Embargo is not applicable	Embargo period can be approved by the NCN as long as the preprint is made available no later than upon the article's publication on the website of the journal, and that the AAM is uploaded and shared after the end of the embargo period	Embargo is not applicable
Licences required	CC 4.0	CC 4.0	CC BY 4.0 (Attribution) or CC BY-SA 4.0 (Attribution – ShareAlike) CC BY-ND 4.0 (Attribution – NoDerivatives)
Eligible publication costs	Article Processing Charges (APC)	Costs are not eligible	Article Processing Charges (APC) (for transformative journals: as long as the article has been accepted for publication or published by 31 December 2024; for journals covered by Polish transformative agreements, as long as the article has been accepted for publication or published by 31 December 2025)
Other conditions	APC are eligible if the work has been published under the CC BY 4.0 or CC BY-ND 4.0 licence	The repository in which the manuscript will be deposited (preprint, AAM or VoR) must be registered in openDOAR	The journal must be covered by an agreement from the ESAC list Virtual Science Library licences for 2024: here List of transformative journals: here (applicable only until 31/12/2024)

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