

IReL Principles for Negotiations

Background

2019 heralded a fundamental shift in how IReL realises its mission. In recognition of the fact that broadening access increases the impact of research, IReL worked with members to launch new principles for negotiating agreements that included the possibility to publish open access. By implementing these principles IReL has made it possible for researchers at member institutions to publish their articles open access. Whilst this effort has been a huge success in terms of shifting the balance towards Open Access (OA) in Ireland, challenges have arisen in terms of ensuring equitable access and a sustainable transition to OA.

In 2022 the National Open Research Forum (NORF) launched the National Action Plan for Open Research, one of the aims of which is to realise a sustainable and inclusive path to 100% OA by 2030. IReL is recognised in this plan as playing an essential role in creating this path. International discussions around the path to OA are also evolving as reflected in the 17th Berlin Open Access Conference Final Statement¹. The statement outlines a number of objectives to guide the next phase of publishers negotiations towards an open scholarly communications paradigm.

In light of evolving policy and emerging international consensus, the IReL Advisory Committee has reviewed and redrafted IReL's principles. This process has been informed not only by international discussions but also by feedback from stakeholders and the hands-on experience of the IReL Negotiation Group, who is charged with ensuring that such principles are implemented.

These renewed principles will inform IReL negotiations from 2025 onwards and help to guide the IReL Negotiations Group in deciding on where best to invest existing and finite funds.

¹ <https://oa2020.org/b17-conference/final-statement/>



Principles:

1. Cost reduction or control

Our overall aim is to achieve a fair, sustainable and affordable price for universal access that delivers value for money and cost control for our members. In some cases this will necessitate a reduction in price.

2. Uncapped open access

We want agreements with uncapped gold and hybrid OA covering 100% of our members outputs and ultimately a shift away from a per article charging model that allows all of our researchers to publish OA without author-facing charges. We are not willing to achieve this at any cost and will not invest in hybrid as a long-term strategy for achieving OA.

3. Transparency

We make all of our open access agreements publicly available and therefore will not agree to non-disclosure clauses. We also want publisher pricing models to be fully transparent and in the public realm. Publishers must support national efforts to monitor open access through the use of appropriate metadata.

4. Commitment to an OA Paradigm

Publishers should present a concrete plan to transition to OA by a set date, evidenced by data showing progression against this transition.

5. Equity

Publishers must demonstrate their efforts to eliminate barriers to OA publishing in low and middle income countries and reflect equity in their approach to global pricing. Recognising that we also have a role in addressing inequity by working together with publishers to reduce the environmental impact of digital scholarly communications we seek to identify measurable steps towards a reduction in the carbon footprint of this activity.

6. Protecting researchers' rights

We want publishers to adopt non-exclusive licenses for OA articles and to cease trying to assert control over AAMs via embargo policies. Researchers must be free to exercise their rights under national and European law. Researchers must have full control over their research as well as their choice of research methods, including the application of artificial intelligence. Innovation in research must not be chilled by the threat of unlimited liability.