



# Recommendations for open access to academic books

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Open Scientific Publishing Expert Group  
Publications College

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May 2023 (translated in November 2024)

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# 1 | Introduction

To implement recommendations for open access to academic books and chapters resulting from funded projects in its commitments to open science, the French National Research Agency turned to the Committee for Open Science to benefit from its expertise. A working group was then set up between the [Open Scientific Publishing Expert Group](#) and the [Publications College](#). This document sets out a series of recommendations formulated by the group. These are intended for higher education and research institutes, as well as for actors in scientific publishing.

## 2 | Overview

These recommendations apply to peer-reviewed academic books and chapters.

- Eligibility for funding of open access publication fees should be restricted to peer-reviewed academic books that are entirely open access or to chapters in such books. (1)
- Request that the accepted author manuscript (AAM) be submitted to an open access repository at the same time as it is made available in open access by the publisher. (2)
- Prioritise immediate open access to academic books that received dedicated funding for open access or within one year of publication. (2)
- Subject the eligibility of funding for open access to a set of criteria: peer review, Creative Commons licence, CrossRef DOI, formats.
- Rely on existing infrastructures and platforms (open access repository, publishing platforms) to disseminate open access academic books. (2)
- Restrict funding for open access to the costs associated with the format(s) made available in open access. (3)
- State the name(s) of the funder(s) in the metadata and in the preliminary pages of academic books. (3)
- Declare open access funding in the OpenAPC section dedicated to academic books (3)
- Ensure transparency in the assessment of editing and publishing costs based on specificity and complexity of academic books, using, for example, an average cost per page. (3)
- Consider the time needed to write, peer-review, edit, and publish an academic book in the project funding. A dedicated fund for open access would dissociate the time required for editing and publishing from the research time. (4)
- Specify each party's obligations in the publishing contract and the benefits provided by the academic publisher: peer review, publishing, distribution, and promotion. (5)
- Ask the academic publisher to describe in detail and if possible in a standardised format, the procedures used to evaluate the manuscripts and the people involved. (6)
- Publish academic books in a structured format that ensures their readability, durability, reusability and their accessibility for the disabled. (7)
- Make sure that an ISBN is attributed to each version of academic book (PDF, HTML, ePub, etc.) as well as a persistent identifier (CrossRef DOI, URI, etc.). (7)
- Apply a Creative Commons licence for open access academic books, in line with the recommendations available at <https://creativecommons.org/>. The licence should be agreed upon by both the author and the publisher, comply with the terms of the contract, and be stipulated in the contract. (8)

# 3 | Recommendations

## Introduction

The working group recommendations fall under the second *Plan National pour la Science Ouverte* (French National Plan for Open Science) published in July 2021.<sup>1</sup> This states that: “The obligation to publish as open access should now be generalised to cover all research funding through publicly funded calls for projects, for both books and scientific articles.”<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, these recommendations are consistent with the open science policies pursued by a number of higher education and research institutes, such as the CNRS and the University of Lorraine.

At the international level, these proposals are based on the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science.<sup>3</sup> The working group also drew on the cOAlition S statement on open access for academic books from September 2021, and on the measures put forward by a number of European funding agencies in this field.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the European PALOMERA (Policy Alignment of Open Access Monographs in the European Research Area<sup>5</sup>) project is currently receiving funding in this area (2023-2024). Its recommendations are expected to inform the policies of funders and other institutions in order to promote the availability of academic books in open access.

## 1. Scope

The first measure of the second French Plan for Open Science is to generalize the obligation to publish in open access academic books and chapters resulting from publicly funded projects. This scope is limited to peer-reviewed research academic books on one subject (monographs) written by one or more authors. The definition given by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)<sup>6</sup> provides a clear framework for this scope: “(...) a long-form publication which communicates an original contribution to academic scholarship on one topic or theme and is designed for a primarily academic audience; an academic monograph may be written by one or more authors.”

Chapters in edited volumes are included in the scope of these recommendations. However, the inclusion of a chapter in an academic book that is not entirely open access correspond to a “hybrid” publishing model for academic works. Therefore, the working group recommends that open access publication fees for chapters should only be covered for academic books that are fully open access. This recommendation is in line with Horizon Europe’s open science policy.

Recommendation:

- Eligibility for funding of open access publication fees should be restricted to peer-reviewed academic books that are entirely open access or to chapters in such books

## 2. Open access dissemination of academic books

Open access academic books may be accessible on the publisher's website, a publishing platform, an open access repository, or any other website. These websites must ensure long-term accessibility and stability of content access. Either the accepted author's manuscript (AAM) or the published version (version of record) can be made accessible immediately after publication or after a moving barrier.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ouvrialscience.fr/deuxieme-plan-national-pour-la-science-ouverte-2021-2024>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.7

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.unesco.org/en/open-science/about>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.coalition-s.org/coalition-s-statement-on-open-access-for-academic-books/> [02/09/2021]

<sup>5</sup> <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101094270>

European funders that include academic books in their open science policy usually make open access publishing fees eligible under certain conditions. As part of its Horizon Europe program, the European Commission requires immediate open access and Creative Commons (CC) licencing for publications.<sup>6</sup> The Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (NWO), for example, requires peer-reviewed publications, the mention of the grant ID, the immediate open access (at the time of publication) under a CC licence, the attribution of a DOI, and the registration on OAPEN.

Recommendations:

- Request that the accepted author manuscript (AAM) be submitted to an open access repository at the same time as it is made available in open access by the publisher.
- Prioritise immediate open access to academic books that received dedicated funding for open access or within one year of publication.
- Subject the eligibility of funding for open access to a set of criteria: peer review, Creative Commons licence, CrossRef DOI, formats.
- Rely on existing infrastructures and platforms (open access repository, publishing platforms) to disseminate open access academic books.

### 3. Funding transparency

Book Processing Charges (BPC) refer to the publication costs associated with the diffusion of open access academic books. It is the payment made to a publisher to cover the costs of publishing books in open access.<sup>7</sup> For some publishers, however, it may refer to a fixed cost that is not linked to the published volume.

Several funding agencies set maximum funding amounts per project for the publication costs of open access academic books (e.g. Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek, NWO<sup>8</sup>: €10,000, Austrian Science Fund<sup>9</sup>, FWF: €22,000). The Swiss National Science Foundation operates on the basis of CHF 15,000 for an open-access publication of a book of up to 750,000 characters (including spaces)<sup>10</sup>. This support can be increased for larger academic books or books requiring the purchase of rights, for example. A 2016 study by Ithaka S+R<sup>11</sup> of 382 books published by university presses in the US highlights a wide costs variation per academic book. This study seeks to be exhaustive in the qualification and quantification of direct and indirect costs and therefore yielded significant costs.

Direct costs may include: copy editing and proofreading, image-editing, layout (if open access in PDF format), and the production of the digital version(s) (non-exhaustive list). Other (direct or indirect) costs may also be related to the book itself: promotion, online publication, etc. Open access funding refers to the costs actually incurred by the academic publisher for publishing specific formats of academic book in open access. A printed version of the academic book may be produced and marketed by the publisher. This printed version may be covered by a grant, which should be distinguished from the funding for open access.

Setting a maximum amount for the funding of open-access academic books could hamper innovative or large-scale projects, as publishing costs can vary widely. Further studies would be necessary to establish an average cost per page for publishing, taking into account the specific features and complexity of academic books.

Recommendations:

- Restrict funding for open access to the costs associated with the format(s) made available in open access.
- State the name(s) of the funder(s) in the metadata and in the preliminary pages of academic books.
- Declare open access funding in the OpenAPC section dedicated to academic books.
- Ensure transparency in the assessment of editing and publishing costs based on specificity and complexity of academic books, using, for example, an average cost per page.

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<sup>6</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/programme-guide\\_horizon\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/programme-guide_horizon_en.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> The book processing charge (BPC) is a payment made to a publisher to cover the costs of publishing a book under open access. <https://oabooks-toolkit.org/glossary/article/2798581-book-processing-charge-bpc>.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.nwo.nl/en/calls/open-access-books>.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.fwf.ac.at/en/funding/portfolio/communication/book-publications>.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.snf.ch/en/uFmFFmMJGmt1t49/funding/open-access-book-publications>.

<sup>11</sup> Nancy L. Maron, Christine Mulhern, Daniel Rossman, Kimberly Schmelzinger, 2016. The Costs of Publishing Monographs. Toward a Transparent Methodology. ITHAKA S+R, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18665/sr.276785>.

## 4. Funding mechanisms

Open access funding publishing costs for academic books by European funding agencies currently takes two distinct forms:

- An eligible fund within the grant. It refers to a non-specific allowance included in the research grant<sup>12</sup>;
- A fund allocated for the open access publication through a dedicated fund for BPCs. This scheme allows a funding of the open access fees even after the end of the research project.<sup>13</sup>

A fund dedicated to support the costs of open access for academic books separates the financing of the research project from the publication process itself. It makes possible to dissociate the time required for publishing and the research project's funding life cycle.

Covering the costs of open access format(s) (rather than a flat fee set by the publisher unrelated to the title published) may be one way of promoting open access for academic books. While this funding model seems to be the most popular, other models are emerging and should be supported.

Some research bodies (universities, research units) already implement policies to support academic books publication through grants. However, these grants do not necessarily provide support for open access dissemination. Relying on such existing policies could be a lever for promoting the open access dissemination of academic books.

Recommendation:

- Consider the time needed to write, peer-review, edit, and publish an academic book in the project funding. A dedicated fund for open access would dissociate the time required for editing and publishing from the research time.

## 5. The scope and role of the publisher

Academic publishers are responsible for selecting texts, overseeing their scientific evaluation, and for publishing, distributing, and promoting research publications. They assume editorial and legal responsibility for the material they publish.

Article L132-1 of the French Intellectual Property Code defines a publishing contract as follows: “A publishing contract is a contract by which the author of a work of the mind or his successors in title assign under specified conditions to a person referred to as the publisher the right to manufacture or have manufactured a number of copies of the work, it being for the latter to ensure publication and dissemination thereof.”<sup>14</sup>

In case of a service provision, the service provider assumes none of these responsibilities. In case of a contract at the author's expense, the publisher takes care of the technical aspects of publishing and distribution, without engaging in editorial selection or providing support for editing the manuscript. The author finances the publication, retains his rights, owns the printed copies, and receives most of the proceeds from sales. Article L132-2 of the French Intellectual Property Code states: “A contract at the author's expense shall not constitute a publishing contract within the meaning of Article L132-1.”

On its website, the Committee for Open Science offers non-exclusive transfer of rights agreements for public academic publishing. These agreements fully take into account the specifics of each type of publication (print and/or digital), within the context of open science and the Plan S.<sup>15</sup>

Recommendation:

- Specify each party's obligations in the publishing contract and the benefits provided by the academic publisher: peer review, publishing, distribution, and promotion

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<sup>12</sup> E.g. Academy of Finland (AKA), Research Council of Norway (RCN), Narodowe Centrum Nauki (NCN), European Research Council (ERC).

<sup>13</sup> E.g. Austrian Science Fund (FWF), Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), Wellcome Trust (WT), United Kingdom Research & Innovation (UKRI), Fonds National Suisse (FNS).

<sup>14</sup> Source of the translation from French: <https://wipolex-res.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/fr/fr467en.html>.

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.ouvrirelscience.fr/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/B1\\_contrat\\_Coll\\_Auteur\\_sans\\_exclu\\_sans\\_remu.pdf](https://www.ouvrirelscience.fr/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/B1_contrat_Coll_Auteur_sans_exclu_sans_remu.pdf) (Version 1: 15th December 2020).

## 6. The scientific quality of the publication

There are several possible ways of evaluating manuscripts, and the diversity of practices does not allow for an exhaustive list of criteria. The use of the standardised information system for peer review procedures provided by DOAB and OPERAS (Peer Review Information Service for Monographs, PRISM<sup>16</sup>) is a good practice that should be further encouraged. A certification process by an independent and accredited entity should be considered, following the example of the academic publishing quality certification process available for Spanish academic publishers<sup>17</sup>

Recommendation:

- Ask the academic publisher to describe in detail and if possible in a standardised format, the procedures used to evaluate the manuscripts and the people involved.

## 7. Publication format

The Budapest Open Access Initiative<sup>18</sup> defines open access as “free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraint on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited.”<sup>19</sup>

The formats offered by the publisher for open access diffusion must comply with accessibility requirements: structured, documented, and reusable formats that are machine-readable and manipulable (allowing annotation, content searchability, indexability and recomposability, and citation).

Furthermore, Directive (EU) 2019/882 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on the accessibility requirements for products and services specify that e-books must be accessible from 2025. The transposition of this European directive into French law specifies the measures to be implemented by 2025 by public and private academic publishers.

Recommendations:

- Publish academic books in a structured format that ensures their readability, durability, reusability and their accessibility for the disabled.
- Make sure that an ISBN is attributed to each version of academic book (PDF, HTML, ePub, etc.) as well as a persistent identifier (CrossRef DOI, URI, etc.).

## 8. Licences

cOAlition S recommends the use of Creative Commons licences in its statement on open access for academic books.<sup>20</sup>

Applying a Creative Commons licence to content specifies the authorisations for use of that content for the duration of the applicable copyright and other related rights.<sup>21</sup> The choice of a Creative Commons licence is an important decision for the author that must be discussed with the publisher. Indeed, the publisher may have an incentive of advisory role. The licences currently applied by publishers to academic books, in accordance with the author's wishes, range from CC-BY to more restrictive licences like CC-BY-NC-ND. All CC licences are possible.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.doabooks.org/en/article/prism>.

<sup>17</sup> Sello de calidad en ediciones académicas, CEA-APQ, Unión de Editoriales Universitarias Españolas: <https://www.selloceapq.es/>.

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.ouvri.lascience.fr/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Initiative-Budapest\\_fr.pdf](https://www.ouvri.lascience.fr/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Initiative-Budapest_fr.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.ouvri.lascience.fr/initiative-de-budapest-pour-laccess-ouvert/>.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.coalition-s.org/coalition-s-statement-on-open-access-for-academic-books/> [02/09/2021].

<sup>21</sup> <https://creativecommons.org/faq/>.

## Recommendation:

- Apply a Creative Commons licence for open access academic books, in line with the recommendations available at <https://creativecommons.org/>. The licence should be agreed upon by both the author and the publisher, comply with the terms of the contract, and be stipulated in the contract.



