

18th June 2024

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Dear Executive Chair, Chief Executives and Director,

This week we, the British Academy, have submitted our response to the REF 2029 Open Access Consultation.

Given the constraints of the format in which you have called for responses, we felt it important to send a supplementary letter to stress at a fundamental level our concern about the proposals and to warn of the significant likely consequences for the health of research in the UK were they to be implemented.

The British Academy, the national academy for the humanities and social sciences, is a strong supporter of the principles underpinning open access. We believe that the valuable knowledge and insights generated by research should be available as widely as possible.

However, we have long made the point that any system that enables greater access to research needs to be fair, responsible and sustainable. It should not impact negatively on those who produce the research, on the quality and excellence of their work, on the environment in which they operate or the research and publishing ecosystems more broadly.

We believe that the open access proposals for REF 2029 could jeopardise all of the above, and have particularly damaging consequences for researchers in the arts, humanities and social sciences, for whom longform outputs are an important mode of publication. In particular we fear it will distort and restrict the publishing options available for researchers, and be particularly damaging for those early on in their career. We are concerned that the proposals could undermine precisely those standards of excellence in research that the REF is designed to encourage. We also fear the proposals will further exacerbate the funding crisis for universities, a crisis which is leading to actions being taken which are impacting hardest on arts, humanities and social science subjects.

We have outlined our views in full in the consultation response, including:

- The need for any system of open access to be properly funded
- The need for a full impact assessment of the proposed changes, including a detailed analysis of the proposed open access requirements for longform outputs on the likely behaviours of all involved, including universities, authors, publishers and libraries
- The need to ensure that research integrity/excellence is protected
- The need to ensure the system promotes inclusivity, not exclusivity, and ensures the principles of a positive research culture and environment are maintained.

We would urge you to consider the concerns that we and others in the sector have highlighted and to pause the introduction of these proposals in order that further analysis and modelling can be carried out, including a full impact assessment.

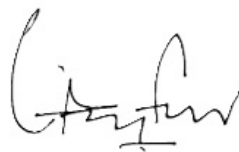
We stand ready to work with you and your colleagues on a way forward and would welcome the opportunity to convene discussions – across funders, libraries, HEIs and publishers – to identify collaborative and more effectively resourced models for supporting a fair, responsible and sustainable open access regime.

Yours sincerely



Professor Julia Black CBE PBA
President

AND



Professor Lindsay Farmer FBA
Vice-President (Publishing)

AND



Professor Simon Swain FBA
Vice-President (Research and Higher Education Policy)