

Plan S briefing for Academic Staff

Library Services, December 2020

This document provides information on the changes researchers need to make from January 2021 if their funder is adopting a Plan S associated Open Access policy. **Wellcome funded authors in particular must familiarise themselves with the new requirements before selecting a journal for publication.**

We provide a summary of how and why Plan S seeks to transform the publishing landscape in favour of Open Access. This is followed by a review of the implications for authors with particular funding sources. Finally we present guidelines for authors required to abide by Plan S associated funder policies.

The FAQ presented in Appendix 1 further expands on some of the key concepts underpinning Open Access.

For those familiar with Plan S / Open Access, feel free to skip to section 3 where the practical steps for compliance are presented.

1. Open Access and Plan S

Open Access means providing unimpeded access to read research outputs online with no payment or other barrier to entry. However, it has long been argued that the greatest public and research benefits of Open Access come when such access is immediate and allows end users to freely reuse and repurpose those outputs in new ways¹.

Plan S² is an initiative which seeks to bring about those more expansive Open Access aims for publicly funded research by encouraging the rapid and wholesale transition of publication models towards Open Access.

Researchers will be familiar with current REF Open Access requirements to deposit the Author Accepted Manuscript (AAM) in a repository (e.g. PURE) and for that manuscript to be made openly available to read, often following a publisher dictated embargo period (the so called **Green route to Open Access**). Green Open Access is not reliant on payment of additional publishing fees.

On the other hand, some funders (including Wellcome and UKRI) have supported a pay to publish model of Open Access³. They have financed the payment of article processing charges (APCs). These are publisher charges imposed for the immediate Open Access publication of the final version of papers in journals which make *some* (Hybrid Journals) or *all* (Fully Open Access Journals) of their

¹ E.g. The Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities (2003) - https://openaccess.mpg.de/67605/berlin_declaration_engl.pdf

² About Plan S - <https://www.coalition-s.org/>

³ For the past 8 years the University of Birmingham has received Open Access block grants from UKRI and Wellcome (alongside a range of other medical charities) and authors have been able to apply to Library Services to use those funds to pay APCs. Other funders may allow use of grants to pay for APCs directly. We also have an Internal Fund which allows unfunded authors to publish in Fully Open Access titles.

content open to anyone (**the Gold route**). There should be no paid or other barrier to accessing the final published version of a paper published via the Gold route⁴.

Where such APCs are paid, funder policies also require that the article is available for public access immediately and that end-users should be free to create derivative works, even commercially, so long as they acknowledge the original authors. This is typically achieved by applying a Creative Commons Attribution only (a CC-BY) licence to the output (see FAQ for an explanation of Creative Commons licences).

In the UK funder policies have led to a significant increase in the number of articles which are Open Access. However:

- The Green route remains impeded by the growth of publisher policies requiring a 12 or 24 month embargo period before an AAM becomes publicly available, reducing the potential impact and reach of new research. Typically authors agree to such restrictions when they sign agreements with publishers (sometimes referred to as Copyright Transfer Agreements). Those agreements regularly assign copyright to the publisher and severely restrict how authors are subsequently able to reuse their work in their own teaching or research activity, and share their own work with their colleagues and peers.
- The Gold route was originally envisaged to provide an injection of funding that would see journals migrate from Subscription to Fully Open Access en-masse and allow the repurposing of library budgets from subscriptions to article processing charges. This has not happened, in fact Library Services continues to see its subscription spend increase at above inflation levels year on year. While we have seen a growth in new Fully Open Access journals, the vast majority of traditional commercial and society publishers have adopted a Hybrid model, whereby a title will allow publication of both APC fee paid Open Access articles and free to publish articles which are only accessible to subscribers. Libraries have had no choice but to continue to pay subscription fees to ensure institutions have access to all content. In the meantime the grants provided to Universities for Open Access publishing have become more thinly stretched as the number of outputs and APC charges increase⁵.

Recognising these issues with Open Access, Plan S was designed to affect change and to expedite the transition from subscription to fully Open Access publishing models. Plan S aims to accomplish this through changes in author, publisher and institutional behaviour. It is supported and will be implemented by cOAlition S, an international consortium of research funders⁶ (cOAlition S organisations) which includes UKRI and Wellcome. Plan S was initially announced in Sept. 2018 and has since been consulting with a range of stakeholders including publishers, researchers, librarians and research funders. It will come into force via a limited group of funder policies from 1st January 2021.

⁴ While the Green and Gold routes to Open Access are most common at present, there are other modes of Open Access as well. For example Diamond Open Access journals do not charge a fee to either publish or read their content.

⁵ For example in 2018 at University of Birmingham we were forced to restrict the use of the UKRI block grant to particular publishing practices to prevent it running out part way through the year.

⁶ cOAlition S funders - <https://www.coalition-s.org/plan-s-funders-implementation/>

2. Implications for authors

As of 1st January 2021, a sub-set of cOAlition S funders will be implementing new Open Access policies aligned with Plan S. As well as many European national funding bodies, cOAlition S timelines indicate the following 'cOAlition S organisations' will adopt a Plan S associated policy imminently:

- Wellcome
- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- World Health Organisation
- Howard Hughes Medical Institute
- Templeton World
- European Commission

Whilst **Wellcome** and the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** have published their new Open Access policies^{7,8}. We are still waiting for sight of policies from the other funders listed.

Researchers acknowledging funding from the organisations listed above will be impacted by these policy changes and **will need to act on them before submitting papers for publication** - summary and local instructions for complying with the new policies are detailed below. You are also encouraged to read your funder's OA policy in full.

Library Services have created dedicated web pages where we will maintain up to date guidance about Open Access under Plan S and provide information about new funder policies as they emerge⁹. Appendices to this document present an initial FAQ and an anticipated author workflow. Again these will be updated and maintained on the Library Services web pages.

UKRI are a signatory to Plan S, but have indicated that **an aligned policy will not be implemented until 2022** following the outcome of consultation activity¹⁰. UKRI funded authors should continue to **abide by their existing policy during 2021**¹¹.

3. Key requirements for authors funded by cOAlition S organisations

For papers acknowledging funding from one of the cOAlition S organisations listed above, two requirements common across these new Plan S aligned policies which will apply **to all research papers submitted on or after 1st January 2021**:

A. Immediate Open Access

All such papers must be **immediately Open Access by the publication date under a specific Creative Commons licence - CC BY** (or CC BY-ND by exception¹²). The FAQ (Appendix 1) provides more information about Creative Commons licences.

⁷ Wellcome Open access policy – from 1 January 2021 - <https://wellcome.org/grant-funding/guidance/open-access-guidance/open-access-policy>

⁸ Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Open Access Policy – from 1 January 2021 -

<https://www.gatesfoundation.org/How-We-Work/General-Information/Open-Access-Policy#UpdatedPolicy>

⁹ <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/openaccess/plans>

¹⁰ UKRI Open access policy review: <https://www.ukri.org/our-work/supporting-healthy-research-and-innovation-culture/open-research/open-access-policies-review/>

¹¹ RCUK Policy on Open Access and Supporting Guidance: <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/UKRI-020920-OpenAccessPolicy.pdf>

¹²Such exceptions will require prior approval by the funder

B. Rights Retention

Authors **must retain sufficient intellectual property rights ownership to use and re-use those papers as they choose** after they have been published (including: free distribution/sharing of copies of the work with anyone and via any network they choose; freedom to use the work within any other work of their own, or anyone else's; freedom to use the work for teaching as they choose).

Achieving 'A. Immediate Open Access' requirements

cOAlition S organisations will continue to pay APCs to support Open Access, however, **they will not fund articles published in subscription journals (hybrid journals)** unless the publisher has entered into a sanctioned **transformative agreement** (see below) or the journal demonstrates a clear path to becoming fully Open Access (**transformative journal**). As the **University does not have funds to pay for hybrid Open Access publishing**, in practical terms, this means there are three compliant routes available to University of Birmingham researchers. The Plan S Journal Checker tool will help authors identify which route is most appropriate.

Journal Checker Tool

A Plan S *Journal Checker Tool* is currently available in beta form at <https://journalcheckertool.org/>. It allows authors to check whether individual titles meet Plan S criteria for Fully OA journals or transformative arrangements, whether they have a compliant Green policy, and options available for meeting compliance. (We are aware of some current issues with the accuracy of the tool and are providing feedback to enhance its accuracy once it is live from 1st January 2021.)

JOURNAL CHECKER TOOL

BETA

Is this compliant with Plan S?

JOURNAL MY FUNDER MY INSTITUTION

PLoS Medicine (Public L) + Wellcome + University of Birmin =

Wellcome No affiliation

Yes, this combination is compliant.

What options do I have?

Before submitting a paper for publication, Wellcome (and authors funded by one of the other cOAlition S funders noted above) should enter the *Journal title*, their *funder* and their *institution* into the Journal Checker tool.

This will indicate which (if any) of the three routes to compliance is appropriate. Below we explain what these results mean and provide local guidance for following each route successfully.

Route 1: Fully Open Access Publishing Venue

Publish the paper in a journal or platform¹³ which makes all content open access under a CC BY licence by default.



PREFERRED

**FULL
OPEN ACCESS**

Where there is an APC charge, Wellcome funded authors at the University of Birmingham may apply to Library Services to use the Wellcome Open Access Block grant (<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/openaccess/funders>). We'll provide you with instructions on the options/ licence to select when you submit the paper.

If you are funded by one of the other cOAlitionS organisations with active policies, you may be able to reclaim costs direct from the funder.

Route 2: Transformative Arrangement (valid route until Dec. 2024)

Publish the paper in a journal published under a 'transformative arrangement'. Transformative arrangements may apply at a publisher (transformative agreement) or journal level (transformative journal).

Transformative agreements aim to shift funds currently paid to publishers for access to paywalled content (via subscription fees), to pay for Open Access services. In doing so they will increase the proportion of Open Access content that publisher makes available over a period of time until all newly published content is Open Access. There is more information about Transformative agreements in the FAQ.

In most cases these are publisher wide agreements which Library Services may sign up to on behalf of the University. They usually include access to read the publisher's journals and provide either an unlimited or capped number of Open Access article publications for a single fee.

Individual journals may also be '**transformative journals**' if they have actively adopted a policy to increase the proportion of OA content to 100% over the next 4 years.



PREFERRED

**TRANSFORMATIVE
AGREEMENT**

As Library Services signs up to approved **transformative agreements** they will be listed on a dedicated web page, along with instructions on how to access the agreement when you submit a paper:

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/openaccess/memberships>.

Authors can apply to use block grant funding for payment of APCs in **transformative journals** as per route 1.

¹³ This means platforms for the original publication of research outputs (e.g. Wellcome Open Research) rather than aggregators of published content

Route 3: Self Archive in an Open Access Repository (Green OA route)

Publish the paper in a subscription journal, but ensure your Author Accepted Manuscript (AAM) is made immediately Open Access in a repository under a CC BY licence.

Plan S has implemented a Rights Retention strategy (see Achieving Rights Retention requirements below) to ensure authors are free to do this for papers published in as wide a range of journals as possible.



SELF-ARCHIVING USING RIGHTS RETENTION

Wellcome funded authors should ensure they follow the **Rights Retention guidance** below when submitting a paper and then **deposit the Author Accepted Manuscript in EuropePMC** (<https://plus.europepmc.org/user-guide>) and PURE before the article is published.

If funded by one of the other cOAlitionS organisations, check any repository requirements, if no particular repository is specified, ensure your AAM is deposited in PURE before publication.

Achieving ‘B. Rights Retention’ requirements

The **Plan S rights retention strategy**¹⁴ aims to allow authors to publish in their journal of choice even if it is not Fully Open Access or under a Transformative Agreement. It works by ensuring that authors, or their institutions, retain the right to use their AAM as they please, including depositing it in an open access repository under a CC BY licence immediately.

Plan S have given notice to publishers that authors acknowledging cOAlition S organisation funding retain the right to use and share their AAM and, that at a minimum, the AAM will be published with a CC BY licence and no embargo. Authors are also required to confirm that the Plan S notice has been submitted on submission so that there is certainty the publisher has been informed. This prior notice is binding if the paper is published and it remains binding even if an author subsequently signs a Copyright Transfer Agreement with differing terms.

What do authors need to do?

1. When the Journal Checker Tool (or Library Services) has recommended that the Self-archiving route (Route 3 above) is taken, authors must inform the publisher that the AAM resulting from their submission carries a CC BY public copyright licence. **This is achieved by including the following language in both the submission letter/email (or as a note on an electronic submission system) and acknowledgements section of the paper:**

“This research was funded, in whole or in part, by [Organisation Name, Grant #]. A CC BY licence is applied to [the AAM] arising from this submission, in accordance with the grant’s open access conditions”

¹⁴ cOAlition S develops “Rights Retention Strategy” to safeguard researchers’ intellectual ownership rights and suppress unreasonable embargo periods: <https://www.coalition-s.org/coalition-s-develops-rights-retention-strategy/>

The prior notification by cOAlition S and inclusion of the above statement takes precedent over any later agreement you may sign with a publisher.

2. On publication, authors must ensure that the AAM is immediately deposited in an Open Access repository. This should include PURE, but will also need to include PMC/Europe PMC for Wellcome funded authors.

Where you are not the only author on the paper, you should ensure all authors are informed of the Rights Retention conditions and ask the corresponding author to carry out the above instructions even if they themselves are not directly funded by a cOAlition S organisation. For example, if you are co-author on a joint Wellcome/ MRC funded paper, it will still be necessary to ensure Rights Retention, even if the corresponding author is only funded by MRC.

What if I receive a subsequent publisher request to take down an AAM from the repository?

Where the above guidance has been followed and the publisher has accepted the paper for publication, you are not obliged to abide by any more restrictive general publisher policies and you should not need to remove the AAM from repositories. Plan S have asked that authors / institutions approached to subsequently take down AAMs in this way consult directly with the relevant funder. You must also inform Library Services should you receive such a request.

What if a publisher will not accept my paper because it contains a Rights Retention statement?

Unfortunately if a publisher does not offer a compliant Fully OA or Transformative Agreement route and they also choose to reject any paper submitted under the Plan S Rights Retention strategy, you will need to identify a different venue for publication of the paper. cOAlition S believe this will be rare. Nevertheless, it would be useful if you could inform Library Services of any such occurrence.

Publication Workflow

A summary diagram depicting the steps an author will need to take to meet compliance under a Plan S aligned OA policy are presented in Appendix 2 of this document.

Funder specific requirements

Based on the currently published Wellcome policy we know that some funders may choose to place additional requirements in their new OA policies over and above those required by Plan S, for example:

Deposit in PubMed Central/Europe PMC

In addition to meeting OA compliance via one of the routes above, Wellcome also require that a copy of the paper is freely available through PMC and Europe PMC by the final publication date. For papers published in an Open Access form, you should check with the journal/publisher whether they will do this for you. For papers achieving compliance via the 'Green route' you will probably need to upload the AAM to Europe PMC yourself¹⁵.

¹⁵ <https://plus.europepmc.org/user-guide>

Research Data

Wellcome require that every paper includes a statement explaining how data, original software or materials underpinning the research can be accessed.

Further Questions?

If you have any immediate questions about this briefing you may wish to consult directly with your funder. Alternatively Library Services can be contacted with questions at openaccesspublications@contacts.bham.ac.uk. We will update the FAQ (Appendix 1) on the library web pages with answers to commonly asked questions.

Appendix 1: FAQ

What is a Fully Open Access journal?

A Fully Open Access journal is an online journal in which all content is open to anyone with no requirement to pay a subscription or sign up for access. Some Fully Open Access journals may charge authors an APC charge to publish articles (Gold OA), others may allow both free access and publication (Diamond OA). The latter are typically funded by societies, or institutions, or may significantly reduce publishing costs as academic led titles. We are also starting to see new models emerge which fall under the Full OA category. For example, some publishers have adopted a model known as Subscribe to Open. So long as libraries maintain their current subscription spend with those publishers, they will guarantee that all articles published in all, or a subset, of their journals will be free to read for everyone and will not make additional charges for authors to publish with them.

What is a Hybrid journal?

A hybrid journal is a journal which contains some Open Access content and some that requires payment or a subscription, to access.

The traditional publishing model for journals has been one of pay to access with the content of journals only available to those who pay a subscription fee to the publisher for access. Over recent years many subscription based publishers have allowed authors to pay a fee (APC) to allow individual articles to be made freely accessible online with no fee at the point of publication. These sit alongside paywalled articles only accessible to subscribers in the same issue of a journal - a hybrid approach. In a hybrid journal only some of the content is Open Access and publishers support the journal through a mixture of subscription and APC charges.

What is an Author Accepted Manuscript?

There are usually three stages a journal article goes through ahead of publication

1. Pre-print: the version originally submitted to the journal by the authors before any peer review has taken place.
2. **Author Accepted Manuscript (AAM)**: the version that has undergone peer review and has been accepted by the publisher, typically sent to the corresponding author once a final version of the content is agreed (also sometimes known as the post-print)
3. Version of Record (VoR): the version that has been published and has undergone typesetting and layout to bring it into the publishers standard format and style for that journal.

What is a CC BY / CC BY-NC licence?

Creative Commons (CC) licences is a copyright licence that provide a standardised route for creators of content to grant permissions to others to use their creative work. They are designed to ensure creators retain copyright ownership while allowing others to copy, distribute and make use of that work with or without constraints determined by the specific licence applied. They don't impinge on freedoms granted under the law to users of creative works otherwise protected by copyright (for example 'fair dealing').

While each Creative Commons licence is underpinned by a legal description, they are also presented in both a user friendly 'human readable' form, and are designed to be machine readable.

There are 4 'building blocks' to Creative Commons Licences which can be used in different combinations to grant different types of permissions and to limit the reuse. (see <https://creativecommons.org/about/cclicenses/> for a full description of each licence.)

The 'building blocks' are:

BY – Any reuse must give credit to the original creator

NC – Only noncommercial uses of the work are permitted

ND – No derivatives or adaptations of the work are permitted

SA – Adaptations must be shared under the same terms as the licence on the original work

So, for example a **CC BY-NC-SA** licence allows reusers to distribute, remix, adapt and build upon the original work in any medium or format for non-commercial (NC) purposes only, only so long as attribution is given to the original creator (BY) and any adaptations must also be licensed under the same terms (SA).



You may also see CC0 which is not technically a licence. It allows creators to irrevocably give up their copyright and put their work into the worldwide public domain with no conditions on reuse, including no requirement, from a copyright perspective, to cite the original creator.



Plan S requires works to be Open Access under a CC BY licence. So long as attribution is given to the original authors, it allows anyone to read, distribute, remix, adapt and build on the material in any medium or format. This includes commercial use. Providing such a permissive licence on reuse maximises the ability of other researchers and commercial entities to build on the original research. COAlition S funders argue that this is the most efficient use of public funds for both the progress of research and economic growth



What is the difference between a CC licence and 'All rights reserved'

You will often see a copyright notice on a traditionally published article in the form "© Publisher. All rights reserved". This means the publisher owns copyright in the paper and the statement reminds the reader that the publisher asserts all rights granted to it under copyright law - the publisher owns and controls access to and use of the article. It is achieved via a copyright transfer agreement signed by the author before publication which transfers the authors copyright in their work to the publisher. Such agreements may grant the author limited ability to use their own work (e.g. limited use in teaching, deposit of the AAM in a repository after an embargo). However, a third party will need to apply for bespoke permission from the publisher to reuse the work, or rely on legal exceptions to do so. This may require a payment, or may be refused.

On the other hand a CC licence is publicly displayed and pre-licences the work for certain uses. There is no need to ask, wait and pay for further permission to reuse the work within the terms of that licence. Any use beyond the confines of the licence will still need to be granted by the copyright owner in the work, or rely on legal exceptions.

Under Plan S rights retention, publishers will continue to place an 'all rights reserved' notice on the final published version. However, by placing a CC-BY licence on the AAM, that version of the article can be freely read, downloaded, re-circulated and re-used so long as the original author is attributed, with no need to request further permission.

What if I wish to make my paper OA with a CC BY-ND licence?

To date we know that this will only be possible if the funder grants an exception. Wellcome have indicated that authors will need to complete a CC BY-ND exception form and receive approval before submitting the paper. They aim to have the form available on their web page from December 2020.

What if I wish to make my paper OA with a different licence?

Wellcome state that papers will only be compliant if made OA with either a CC BY or CC BY-ND (by approved exception) licence. However, we are aware that Plan S have suggested that a CC BY-SA licence may also be acceptable. We strongly recommend you consult directly with your funder before relying on such a licence.

In the UK the Open Government Licence (OGL) provides equivalent reuse rights to a CC BY licence. We are aware that UKRI are considering use of the OGL under their forthcoming policy, however, current Plan S aligned policies are silent on the use of the OGL. Again we recommend you consult directly with your funder before relying on such a licence.

What is a Transformative Arrangement?

Transformative Arrangements replace the traditional multi-title and big-deal subscription arrangements that Libraries sign up to and which provide access to journal content for staff and students at their institutions. Transformative agreements aim to transition funds currently paid to publishers for access to such pay walled content, to pay for Open Access services. In doing so they will increase the proportion of Open Access content that a publisher makes available. The aim is that over time Library Subscription budgets will shift from paying for access to content, to paying to allow authors to publish OA at no additional cost. Transformative agreements are viewed by Plan S as a stop gap solution and until 31 December 2024 cOAlition S organisations will contribute to the OA costs of transformative agreements in proportion to the number of papers acknowledging their funding.

In reality transformative agreements vary considerably both in terms of what proportion of content they will allow to be made OA in any one year, and in terms of the initial cost for entry (for example in several cases, publishers have set a starting cost based on current subscription spend plus current OA spend. This is problematic as much of those current OA costs have historically been met by UKRI and COAF block grant spend, and as noted above funder support for those agreements will end on 31 December 2024.

It should also be noted that while the OA publishing element of transformative agreements may apply to all authors at a University irrespective of funder, some agreements restrict that element to papers acknowledging certain funders, while other agreements put a cap on the number of OA articles they will accept for publication each year.

In the UK most large publisher agreements and an increasing number of small society agreements are negotiated by JISC on behalf of FE and HE Libraries. JISC have designed a set of Plan S approved criteria for what they refer to as Transitional Agreements. The library community is consulted on the negotiations for each agreement.

What if I am UKRI funded?

UKRI are a signatory to Plan S, however, they are consulting on their future policy and have stated that their new policy will not come into force until January 2022. UKRI authors should continue to

follow their existing OA policy and may be eligible for payment of APCs via the UKRI block grant managed by Library Services¹⁶.

Will I be able to publish in X journal?

The Plan S Journal Checker Tool will allow you to search for any title and identify which if any route to compliance can be used. We know that some publishers will not provide a compliant route via either Fully OA or Transformative arrangement. In such cases the journal checker will inform you whether the publisher will accept articles submitted with a Rights Retention statement. Where such a publisher refuses to accept papers with the Rights Retention statement, you will need to seek an alternative publication venue.

Are ERC signatories to Plan S?

The ERC Scientific Council pulled out of Plan S in July 2020. Their statement along with the Plan S response are available from the links below:

- [ERC Scientific Council calls for Open Access Plans to Respect Researchers' needs](#)
- [cOAlition S response to the ERC Scientific Council's statement on Open Access and Plan S](#)

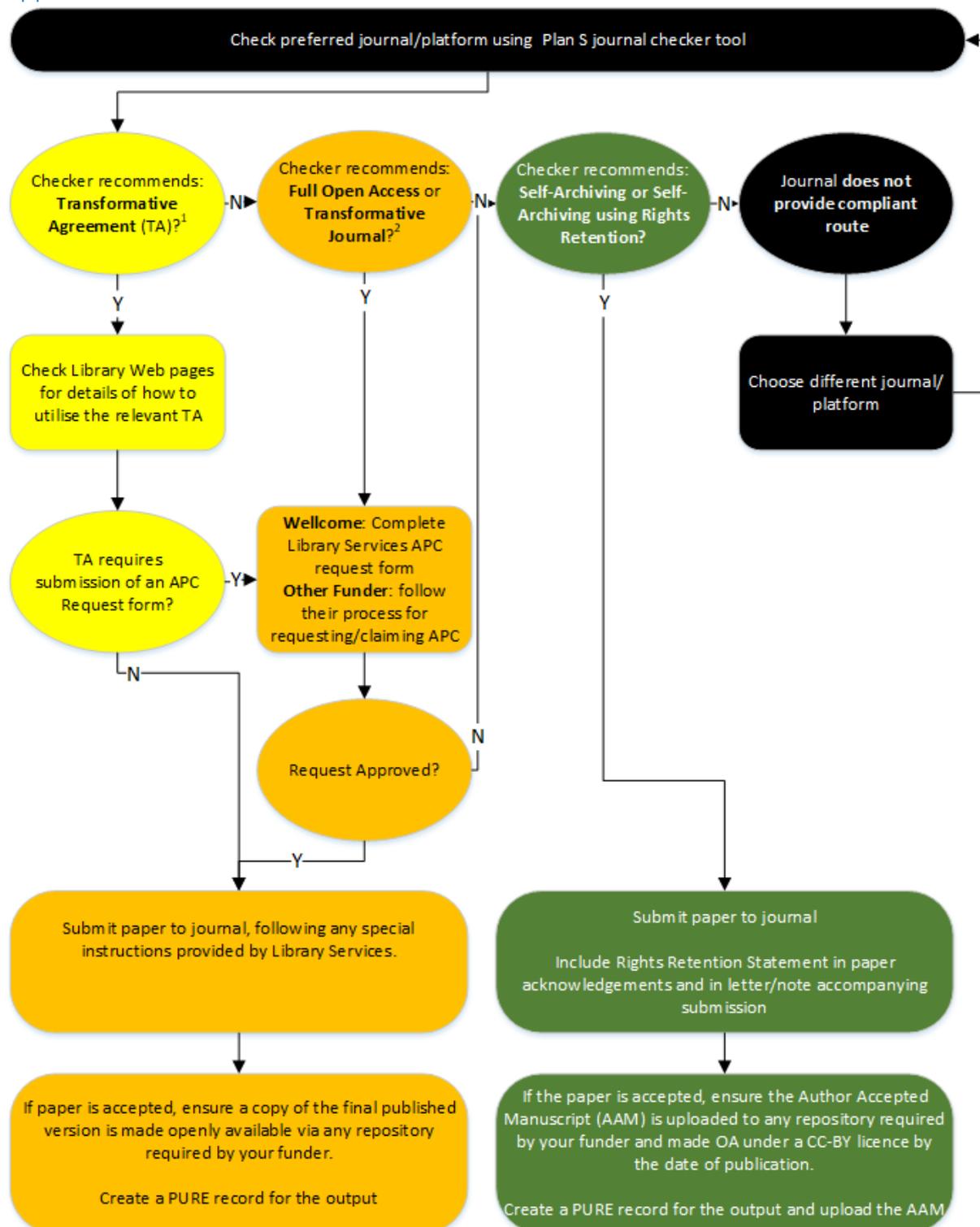
What if I choose to publish in a journal that does not allow compliant OA?

Wellcome have stated that **non-compliance will result in sanctions** against researchers and their organisations, which may include:

- Not accepting new grant applications
- Suspending funding to organisations

¹⁶ RCUK Policy on Open Access and Supporting Guidance: <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/UKRI-020920-OpenAccessPolicy.pdf>

Appendix 2: Author workflow



1. For papers with multi institution authors, the paper should be processed via the Transformative Agreement held by the Library at the Corresponding Author's institution and using their local processes. Where an external institution does not hold such an agreement, but University of Birmingham does, Library Services may be able to process the paper for a UoB collaborating author, depending on the terms of the agreement.

2. For papers with multi institution authors, any Block Grant funding held by the Library at the Corresponding Author's institution should be used for payment of APCs. Where an external institution does not hold such block grant funding, a collaborating author at UoB may apply to use our Block Grant.