



Aston University Research Publications Policy

February 2020

This document sets out an institutional level policy for research publications which will be subject to detailed implementation at School and Research Institute / Group level.

February 2020

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v1		PVC Research	Director Information Resources and Research Services, Library Services	Research Committee	Research Committee 12/2/2020	February 2020

Aston University Research Publications Policy

Introduction/Context

This policy sets out at an institutional level Aston's policy for publishing research outputs which will be implemented at a School or Research Institute / Group level as appropriate for the disciplinary norms for each academic area. It needs to be considered in conjunction with a number of other research related policies which are noted in section 3.3.

1. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

1.1 Purpose of the Policy

High quality publications are the outputs of high-quality research underpinned by sound research integrity and ethics; publication quality can further be enhanced by a raft of measures that maximise the quality and impact of those communications.

The purpose of this policy is to set out the support and guidance that researchers should follow to enable them to further raise the quality of their research publications both as outputs of Aston's Research Strategy and in support of their individual careers.

1.2 What is covered by the Policy?

The policy covers all types of research publications: journal articles, conference papers, book chapters and books. The mix of output types will vary by discipline and discipline appropriate guidance and support about this mix will be provided at an appropriate level which might be School, Research Institute / Group.

1.3 Who is covered by the Policy?

The policy applies to all authors of research publications, to research leaders and managers and to professional services staff responsible for providing the training, support and resources which underpin this policy.

2. THE POLICY STATEMENT

The following policy statements apply to all academic areas of the University and will be reflected in local, (School or Research Institute / Group), implementation of the policy and local guidance which will apply the relevant disciplinary norms.

Publication planning

- Planning for publications is a key part of research planning which should be carried out at group, project and individual level.
- All research publications should have a clear purpose and audience for example to communicate research findings to an academic audience, for an early career researcher to build a professional profile, to attract collaborators or to communicate research to a commercial or non-specialist audience
- Emphasis should be on quality of publications, not quantity with guidance of appropriate numbers and formats of publications set locally to take account of norms for particular disciplines and individual circumstances.
- The University, at institutional and local level, should engender a supportive culture on all aspects of publishing activity including:
 - the provision of relevant training in the skills and knowledge identified in this policy
 - ensuring time is available to undertake that training and to plan and write
 - support from line managers and peers

- recognition of publication achievements in promotions and My Development Conversations which takes account of individual and personal circumstances including the stage of an individual's career and publication plans and timescales.

Research quality and Publication Quality

- Collaborative research activities are at the heart of the University's Research Strategy in recognition that this often leads to high quality outputs. Researchers are therefore encouraged to collaborate and co-author with external colleagues including internationally and from non-academic organisations as an approach likely to increase the quality and impact of publications. The University will provide opportunities for collaboration to stimulate the potential for multidisciplinary and cross institutional research and publications; this will include internal, external, international and across sectors
- Research integrity, ethics, and IT facilities underpin the quality of research and hence publications. The Research and Knowledge Exchange department will lead on relevant processes, and provide support and training relating to those areas which researchers should make themselves aware of and apply as appropriate.

Understanding assessment of research as a tool to improve publications performance

- Publications should communicate the originality, significance and rigour of the work which has the benefit of aiding in assessment activities such as REF and also improves clarity for journals editors.
- Researchers should have an understanding of the evaluation of publications and of the responsible use of research metrics (see Aston's Policy for the Responsible use of Research Publication Metrics) to empower them to optimise their research and its impact; the University will provide guidance, support and training to support this.

Increasing impact

- Researchers should select the journal or other output for publications with regard to the target audience and to maximising the discoverability of the publication. This will take account of any relevant disciplinary journals lists and perceived journal quality; Library Services will be able to advise should there be doubt on journal quality.
- Open Access publishing is a key strand in Open Research and in improving access to publications and hence impact and it is a requirement for many research funders including the Research Councils and for REF submission. Authors should ensure they maintain a current understanding of Open Access Publishing, and are familiar with (and adhere to) [Aston's Open Access Policy](#) and take advantage of the information, training and support that Library Services will provide; see [Open Access LibGuide](#). Library Services will operate an Open Access publications repository and provide a strategic and operational lead on approaches to Open Access.
- Making Research Data Open is a strand in demonstrating research integrity and may be necessary to validate publications. Research data should be made Open wherever possible in line with Aston's Open research Data policy; authors should ensure that they are familiar with this policy and take advantage of the information, training and support that Library Services will provide; see [Research Data Management Libguide](#). Library Services will operate an Open Research Data repository and provide a strategic and operational lead on approaches to Open Research Data and Open Research.
- Author profiles and identifiers, notably ORCIDs but also profiles developed for specific platforms play an important part in supporting the discoverability and impact of publications. Researchers must ensure that they have an ORCID, add it to their Pure profile and connect their publications according to the advice and guidance provided by Library Services; see [Online Researcher Profiles LibGuide](#). Library Services will act as the institutional coordinators or ORCID and other author profile tools and provide a strategic and operational lead on approaches to author identity schemes.

3. APPENDICES

3.1 Research assessment quality measures

The extracts below from Ref guidance are of wider value in interpreting quality:

[From Ref 2019/01 January 2019 Guidance on submissions:](#)

Table A1: Overall quality profile: Definition of starred levels p84

Four star	Quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
Three star	Quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence.
Two star	Quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
One star	Quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
Unclassified	Quality that falls below the standard of nationally recognised work. Or work which does not meet the published definition of research for the purposes of this assessment.

Notes on the criteria and definitions of the starred levels p86

‘World-leading’ quality denotes an absolute standard of quality in each unit of assessment.

‘World-leading’, ‘internationally’ and ‘nationally’ in this context refer to quality standards. They do not refer to the nature or geographical scope of particular subjects, nor to the locus of research nor its place of dissemination. For example, research which is focused within one part of the UK might be of ‘world-leading’ standard. Equally, work with an international focus might not be of ‘world-leading, internationally excellent or internationally recognised’ standard.

The criterion of ‘reach’ for impacts does not refer specifically to a geographic scale. Sub-panels will consider a number of dimensions to the ‘reach’ of impacts as appropriate to the nature of the research and its impacts. For example, an impact located within one region of the UK might be judged as ‘outstanding’ (graded as four star). Equally, an impact with international reach might not be judged as ‘outstanding’, ‘very considerable’ or ‘considerable’.

The profile for a submission that contains no research which meets the one-star threshold will be 100 per cent unclassified. A submission that contains no research (that is, no work that meets the definition of research for the REF) will not be awarded a quality profile.

[From Ref Panel criteria and working methods, January 2019](#) Section 3: Outputs

191. **Originality** will be understood as the extent to which the output makes an important and innovative contribution to understanding and knowledge in the field. Research outputs that demonstrate originality may do one or more of the following: produce and interpret new empirical findings or new material; engage with new and/or complex problems; develop innovative research methods, methodologies and analytical techniques; show imaginative and creative scope; provide

new arguments and/or new forms of expression, formal innovations, interpretations and/or insights; collect and engage with novel types of data; and/or advance theory or the analysis of doctrine, policy or practice, and new forms of expression.

192. **Significance** will be understood as the extent to which the work has influenced, or has the capacity to influence, knowledge and scholarly thought, or the development and understanding of policy and/or practice.

193. **Rigour** will be understood as the extent to which the work demonstrates intellectual coherence and integrity, and adopts robust and appropriate concepts, analyses, sources, theories and/or methodologies.

3.2 Roles and Responsibilities

Authors are responsible for:

- making themselves familiar with the recommendations of this policy and the information and approaches in place in their School and Research Institute or Group to implement this policy
- taking advantage of training and support opportunities provided in support of this policy in order to understand how to plan for, write and maximise the impact of quality publications

Research leaders in Schools, Research Institutes and Groups are responsible for:

- Providing local guidance and interpretation of this policy which reflect and interpret the policy statements for their disciplines so as to deliver improvements in publication quality.

Library Services are responsible for:

Providing guidance on Open Access Publishing, Open Research Data, research metrics skills, researcher profiles information, notably ORCIDs. For further information please contact openaccess@aston.ac.uk or researchdata@aston.ac.uk

Research and Knowledge Exchange are responsible for:

Providing guidance, processes and systems for research, integrity and ethics which enable *high quality research and hence high quality publications*. For further information please contact research_governance@aston.ac.uk

3.3 Definitions

Research Output – journal articles, conference papers, book chapters and books which publish and communicate research findings

My Development Conversation – Aston University’s approach to performance reviews

Open Research Data - the data underpinning research results that has no restrictions on its access, enabling anyone to access it

Open Access - making the findings of research freely available online as soon as possible. This is defined more precisely and in differing ways by research funders and research organisations

Open Research – This is sometimes referred to as Open Science and is the idea that scientific knowledge of all kinds should be openly shared as early as it is practical in the discovery process

Author profiles and identifiers- a unique code for an author, typically with associated identifying information which distinguishes them from other authors with similar names

[ORCIDs](#) – a persistent vendor neutral author identifier owned by researchers and used by and between researcher funders, publishers and research organisations.

3.4 Related Regulations, Statutes, and Related Policies

Aston’s Policy for the Responsible use of Research Publication Metrics

[DORA](#)

Aston’s Open Access Policy (Interim)

Aston’s Open Research Data Policy

