

Submission to cOAlition S from The Physiological Society

About The Society

- The Physiological Society is a registered membership charity based in the UK. It exists to support physiology, the science of how the body works in health and disease (physiological diseases include global health threats such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, respiratory disorders and neurodegenerative disease).
- The Society has 4000 members around the world, the large majority active in research and teaching.
- The reach of The Society's charitable activities extends well beyond its membership, to support the wider physiological research community through its publications, scientific meetings and public outreach. We enable international collaboration through travel grants and seed research funding, and support national physiological societies in LEDCs. A small professional staff works closely with members, researchers and teaching professionals, who offer their services on a voluntary basis to deliver The Society's charitable programmes.
- The Society owns three journals and publishes them in partnership with Wiley. *The Journal of Physiology* and *Experimental Physiology* are "hybrid" (and formerly subscription) publications, while *Physiological Reports* was launched as Open Access. All three journals are included in Wiley's recent Projekt DEAL agreement covering authors and libraries in Germany, which is considered to be a transformative step towards full Plan S compliance.

The impact of Plan S on The Society and its journals

- Compliance with Plan S would mean our two hybrid journals making the transition to Gold OA. This would impact on their finances and perhaps their editorial policies.
- While the UK and continental Europe are largely committed to a transition to full OA, 80% of our journals' authors are based outside Europe and many would not have the means to pay publication charges. One of our key commitments to authors is that the journals offer a 'no barriers' home for their research. To continue this inclusive policy while complying with Plan S, we would have to meet the cost of publishing many articles without corresponding revenue.
- Both hybrid journals currently have relatively high rejection rates. *The Journal of Physiology* in particular is an international flagship for the discipline and is known for the quality (and helpfulness) of its peer review. It is important that any model of Gold OA should be flexible enough to allow differentiation of journals in terms of selectivity, editorial standards, service to authors, and status within the community.
- All the income from our journals is used to support The Society's charitable activities. Learned societies play a unique role in science and, because much of the work is done by volunteers, provide enormous value relative to their revenue and costs. It would be a great loss to scientific endeavour if the demands of Plan S curtailed these activities.

Flexibility within Plan S

Although the principles of Plan S are widely welcomed, there are several areas in which greater flexibility would make compliance more straightforward and attractive. These are as follows:

- Set any cap on APCs relatively high (e.g. around €10,000). This would enable selective journals to compete by offering a first-class service to authors, and allow waivers for researchers in LEDCs. It would also maintain some differentiation in the journals market, giving authors more choice and encouraging innovation in services the journals offer.
- Permit flexibility in deadlines for the transition. Not least, our journals are subject to existing licensing contracts, some of which have several years to run. Even a deadline of end 2024 for the transition might be unrealistic.
- Introduce more detailed compliance-reporting in stages. The resources of learned societies are already stretched.
- Encourage funders and university administrators to observe the principles of DORA. OA will be more acceptable to authors if they believe that their career prospects do not depend on publishing in a handful of journals with high Impact Factors.
- Support other initiatives in openness and transparency. Access to research data is currently far more limited than access to journal content.

While setting out to change the journal publishing landscape is admirable and welcome, its implications reach far beyond the profitability of the major publishers. Like most other societies, The Physiological Society is developing new sources of income to reduce its reliance on publishing but there is deep concern that measures primarily aimed at the publishers pose a serious threat to societies, who do not have the publishers' resources.