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SHERPA welcomes IRCSET OA policy proposal.

SHERPA congratulates the IRCSET on its proposed policy on Open Access to published research papers.

Knowledge sharing generates innovation and is a fundamental part of research and learning. To support the sharing of knowledge there first needs to be ready access to it. Access to research outputs is particularly important for the research community but also potentially useful to the commercial sector, public services and individual citizens.

Open access repositories address these needs and allow free public access to the results of publicly-funded research. In many European countries, including the UK, Germany and the Netherlands, the infrastructure is already in place with the potential to support the deposit of the majority of research output. The Irish repository infrastructure is now growing. The promotion of Open Access policies by funding agencies can help realise this potential, with significant benefits for researchers and the public and for the wider dissemination of funded research outputs.

As the first policy of its kind in Ireland the IRCSET's policy is evidence of the growing awareness and importance of Open Access to Irish research. Such a policy will ensure the highest possible visibility for Ireland and its research in the global research arena.

While the optimum policy would be to ask for the full-text to be made available alongside the metadata from the time of publication, the policy as it stands reflects a compromise solution of allowing six months delay in access to accommodate publisher's embargoes. We appreciate the rationale for this.

However, in the continually evolving repository environment, best practices in repository management change, and must be able to change, to reflect changing needs and technological developments. We would, therefore, recommend that the delay period be kept under review and that consideration be given to the possibility of reducing it in the future in order to allow immediate access to publications.

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SHERPA is investigating issues in the future of scholarly communication. It is developing open-access institutional repositories in a number of research universities to facilitate the rapid and efficient worldwide dissemination of research.

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