

USER GUIDE

Pre-submission & covering letter templates



Templates to help authors ask for the clarity they need before peer review proceeds

PUBLISH WITH POWER: PROTECT YOUR RIGHTS

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WHY WOULD YOU USE THESE TEMPLATES

In 2020 cOAlition S released its **Rights Retention Strategy** (RRS) with the dual purpose of enabling authors to retain rights that automatically belong to the author, and to enable compliance with their funders' OA policy via dissemination in a repository.

Unfortunately, **some publishers are being unclear and obstructive** with authors about them asserting their copyright holders' rights. They insist on the author agreeing to an embargo by using a contract, or other tactics, that conflicts with their grant condition. This comes at an advanced stage of the peer review process when the article review is accepted. At this point, authors are reluctant to challenge the publisher's dictate and restart the whole process, but they are also confused and feel under threat of legal action by the publisher if they breach the journal's conflicting embargo contract. Equally, it is an author's fundamental right to assert their own rights to their own work, whether funded or not.



To help authors ask for the clarity they need before peer review proceeds, we have created the [pre-submission letter template](#) and the [submission cover letter template](#).

- Authors can use the pre-submission letter before definitively deciding to submit to a particular journal as a means to ‘sound out’ potential choices of journals (e.g., a selection of journals covering a particular subject specialism) until they find those that provide clarity.
- Authors can use the submission cover letter template to accompany their article manuscript as part of their submission to a journal. [Covering letters typically include factual details about the article and its authors. Journals provide advice on how these letters should be constructed, for example, those at [T&F](#), [Springer Nature](#), and [APA](#)].

Such timely clarity will save time and energy being wasted by authors and reviewers for a journal that, at acceptance, will cause difficulties by not allowing the author to comply with their pre-existing grant agreement.

- cOAlition S offers the pre-submission and covering letter templates to authors and institutions as helpful resources. They are not in any way a contract or requirement with a funder.
- Authors and research institutions are free to edit and brand the template texts as they choose.
- The precise type of licence should be indicated as appropriate, for example, if an alternative licence has been agreed with the funder.
- Although the template states *“I/we have applied a CC BY licence to the Author Accepted Manuscript (AAM) arising from this submission. If the article is accepted for publication, I/we will make the AAM available without embargo in a repository”* this does not commit the author to doing that, for example, in the case where authors want to use the template to reiterate their rights assertion as a matter of course, even if they’re ‘going gold’.

- Authors may not want to use either template – that is their choice.
- Publishers may or may not confirm that they will require agreement with an additional contract. What happens next (proceed, negotiate or take the manuscript elsewhere) is the decision of the author (being mindful of any grant award commitments)
- Publishers may suggest the author publishes in one of their fully OA journals as an alternative to the subscription journal chosen by the author for submission – i.e. a journal with an APC that the author's funder will cover. This may resolve the immediate problem – providing that this journal is an acceptable alternative to the author for their specific article. However, this flouts the author's right to retain sufficient rights to their own work whilst submitting to any journal they choose. In this case, the publisher should state categorically that they reject the article in the chosen journal on the grounds that the author has applied a CC BY licence to the AAM.

cOAlition S funders would welcome authors sharing with them their experiences of employing these templates (anonymised or not) if that is possible.

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