

Policy Title: Rights Retention Policy

Decision: Screen out the policy and mitigate the impacts on equality by amending or changing the policy, or by developing an alternative policy or action

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Date of Completion: 17 December 2025

Part 1: Policy Scoping

Information about the policy

Name of the Policy

Rights Retention Policy

Is this an existing, revised, or new policy?

New policy

What is it trying to achieve? (For example, intended aims and outcomes)

This policy is being developed in response to Research Funder Policies and Research Grant funding terms that require research to be made freely available to the public on an open access basis.

Rights Retention is extremely important for academic staff because it is the method by which they disseminate their findings to others. It adds new knowledge to their field and helps to advance research progress. It is also important for building reputation and establishing credibility in a research field.

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is the UK's system for assessing the quality of research in UK Higher Education institutions. Open access publishing is a requirement for submission to the REF.

Open access publishing means sharing research publications freely online and removing paywalls for public access to information. The two most common ways of achieving open access to research publications are via green open access and gold open access.

Green open access involves placing an accepted manuscript copy of your published research into a subject or institutional repository. An accepted manuscript is the version of a publication after peer-review changes have been incorporated but prior to publisher typesetting or copy-editing. Green open access typically requires a publisher-imposed embargo to be placed on the accepted manuscript copy. PURE is the institutional repository at Ulster. It acts as a 'Current Research Information System' (CRIS) and is a tool that showcases academic achievements, enhances visibility, and manages research publications. All Research and Academic staff have an [external PURE Portal profile](#).

Gold open access is a paid form of open access whereby authors pay an article processing charge to a publisher to make the publisher's final version of their

research (that is the peer reviewed, copyedited and typeset version that appears in the journal) immediately available on publication. Gold open access is typically only possible if the article processing charge is paid. This charge can range from several hundred pounds to thousands of pounds.

For REF 2029, the maximum permitted embargo period for green open access is shorter than many embargoes imposed by publishers. Whilst gold open access ensures REF compliance because it involves no embargo, it requires the article processing charge to be paid. Not all researchers have the means to cover this charge.

The Rights Retention Policy ensures compliance with the open access requirements for REF 2029 without incurring additional costs. It will reduce the financial burden on individual researchers and the University.

The Policy requires Ulster researchers to grant Ulster a non-exclusive, irrevocable, worldwide licence to make accepted manuscripts of their scholarly articles publicly available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) licence. The Policy eliminates the need for embargoes on accepted manuscripts uploaded to PURE.

The Policy encourages researchers to retain ownership rights to their scholarly articles and makes it simpler for researchers to meet research funder open access policies, without incurring additional cost.

Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the policy? If so, explain how below.

Note: The Section 75 categories are:

- religious belief
- political opinion
- racial group
- age
- marital status
- sexual orientation
- sex (men and women generally)
- disability
- dependants

The following groups might be expected to benefit from the policy:

Racial group

Age

Sex (men and women generally)

Disability

Dependants

This policy will enable researchers who have experienced limited access to research funding to publish in open access, and to disseminate their research results, via so-called green open access route (that is uploading accepted manuscripts to Pure at no additional cost).

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

The policy was initiated by the Library Open Research Team, after approval from the Research and Innovation Committee (chaired by Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research). It is being developed by the Library Open Research Team in collaboration with a Working Group that has representatives from each Faculty, as well as Research Performance, Copyright and Intellectual Property, and Legal Services.

Who owns and implements the policy?

The Policy owner is the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research.

The Library Open Research Team will raise awareness of the policy and advise researchers on how to comply. They will also contact publishers to inform them of the Policy.

The Pure Support Team in Research Performance will implement the Policy by applying a CC BY licence and no embargo to accepted manuscripts in the institutional repository (Pure).

Implementation factors

Are there any factors which could contribute to or weaken the intended aim or outcome of the policy?

Yes

If yes, are they financial, legislative or other?

Financial: UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), the public body that is the largest research funder in the UK, requires that all UKRI-funded research must comply with its [Open Access Policy](#). If those funding requirements are not met, the University risks being subject to an audit and having the research funding cut in the next tranche.

Legislative: The policy is influenced by the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (CDPA 1988), (S11.2). Any changes to the CDPA might affect future implementation.

Other: The policy is influenced by REF 2029 [Open Access Policy](#) and guidance (it is in line with the recommended approach).

The policy is reliant on other University policies (listed below).

The policy is supported by guidance on best practice from the national [JISC Rights Retention Group](#). The introduction of the policy and the resources created in the process will in turn support future adopters via this group.

Main stakeholders affected

Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the policy will impact upon?

- Staff
- Trade Unions

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

What are they and who owns them?

Policy: [Intellectual Property Policy](#)

Policy owner: PVC Research

Policy: [Copyright Policy](#)

Policy owner: PVC Academic Quality & Student Experience

Policy: [Open Access and Pure Policy](#)

Policy owner: PVC Research

Policy: [Research Strategy](#)

Policy owner: PVC Research

Available evidence

What evidence or information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Please specify details for each of the Section 75 categories below.

Note: Evidence can come from many sources. Examples include the University's management information systems, internal or external research, surveys or consultation exercises. The Equality Commission has produced a guide to [signpost to S75 data](#). Anecdotal evidence, such as feedback from service users may also be used.

Religious Belief

The University's EO data were reviewed. On 6 February 2024, our staff profile was 52.0% Catholic and 48.0% Protestant. Compared with 6 February 2019, this indicates a 2.9% increase in Catholic staff.

Political Opinion

The University does not collect information on Political Opinion or make assumptions regarding Political Opinion based on Community Background.

Racial Group

The University's EO data were reviewed. On 6 February 2024, our staff profile was 92.8% White and 7.2% Black and Minority Ethnic (BME). This indicates a 1.8% increase in BME staff compared with 2019.

Our BME profile suggests that we are twice as diverse as the local population, as the Northern Ireland Census 2021 suggests that 3.4% of the NI population is BME.

Age

The University's EO data were reviewed. On 6 February 2024, 31.1% of our staff were in the 46-55 age band and 25.8% of staff were in the 36-45 age band. 26.2% of staff were aged '56 and above', which represents a 3.8% increase compared to 2019.

Marital Status

The University's EO data were reviewed. In February 2024, 56.0% of staff were 'Married or in a Civil Partnership', a decrease of 6.0% compared to 2019.

Sexual Orientation

The University's EO data were reviewed. In 2024, 74.0% of staff were 'Heterosexual'; 4.3% were 'LGBT+' and 21.4% were 'Not Known'.

Men and Women generally

The University's EO data were reviewed. In 2024, 58.0% of staff were 'Female'. This indicates a 2.0% increase in female staff compared with 2019.

Disability

The University's EO data were reviewed. In 2024, 6.0% of staff declared a disability, an increase of 1.2% compared with 2019.

Our disability declaration rate is lower than expected, compared with the local population. The NI Census (2021) found that 24% of the NI population stated that their day-to-day activities were limited because of a long-standing health problem or disability.

Dependants

The University's EO data were reviewed. In 2024, 43.8% of staff had dependants. This indicates a decrease of 3.9% compared with 2019.

Needs, experience and priorities

Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in relation to the particular policy or decision? (Please specify for each of the Section 75 categories below the needs, experiences and priorities)

Religious Belief

None identified

Political Opinion

None identified

Racial Group

Data collected by other research institutions suggests that historically excluded groups like racial or ethnic minorities are disproportionately affected by limited access to research funding ([source](#) pp. 5, 8). The proposed policy will enable researchers to comply with national and institutional open access policies in a sustainable way, without incurring additional costs.

Age

Data collected by other research institutions suggests that early career researchers are disproportionately affected by limited access to research funding ([source](#) p. 21). The proposed policy will enable researchers to comply with national and institutional open access policies in a sustainable way, without incurring additional costs.

Marital Status

None identified

Sexual Orientation

None identified

Men and Women generally

Data collected by other research institutions suggests that women continue to be disadvantaged by limited access to research funding, caused by career breaks due to pregnancy and maternity leave ([source](#) p. 8). The proposed policy will enable researchers to comply with national and institutional open access policies in a sustainable way, without incurring additional costs.

Disability

Data collected by other research institutions suggests that those who have a disability are disadvantaged by limited access to research funding ([source](#) p. 1). The

proposed policy will enable researchers to comply with national and institutional open access policies in a sustainable way, without incurring additional costs.

Dependants

Data collected by other research institutions suggests that those with caring responsibilities are disadvantaged by limited access to research funding ([source](#) p. 13). The proposed policy will enable researchers to comply with national and institutional open access policies in a sustainable way, without incurring additional costs.

Consultation

Consultation with relevant groups, organisations or individuals about the policy can provide useful information about issues or opportunities which are specifically related to them (that is evidence to inform the policy).

Please indicate whether you carried out or intend to carry out any consultation exercises prior to equality screening?

Yes

The following were consulted during development of the Policy:

- Rights' Retention Working Group, including Faculty representatives
- Intellectual Property Manager
- Copyright Manager
- Legal Services and the University Solicitor
- Research and Innovation Committee
- Ulster Policy Clinic
- Trade Unions

Part 2: Screening questions

Introduction

The answers to the following screening questions will assist the University in making a decision whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment on the policy. The following information is provided to help you to identify and comment on the level of likely impact of the policy in question 1 to 4.

Select 'major' impact if:

- a) The policy is significant in terms of its strategic importance;
- b) Potential equality impacts are unknown, because, for example, there are insufficient data upon which to make an assessment or because they are complex, and it would be appropriate to conduct an equality impact assessment in order to better assess them;
- c) Potential equality and/or good relations impacts are likely to be adverse or are likely to be experienced disproportionately by groups of people including those who are marginalised or disadvantaged;
- d) Further assessment offers a valuable way to examine the evidence and develop recommendations in respect of a policy about which there are concerns amongst affected individuals and representative groups, for example in respect of multiple identities;
- e) The policy is likely to be challenged by way of judicial review;
- f) The policy is significant in terms of expenditure.

Select 'minor' impact if:

- a) The policy is not unlawfully discriminatory and any residual potential impacts on people are judged to be negligible;
- b) The policy, or certain proposals within it, are potentially unlawfully discriminatory, but this possibility can readily and easily be eliminated by making appropriate changes to the policy or by adopting appropriate mitigating measures;
- c) Any asymmetrical equality impacts caused by the policy are intentional because they are specifically designed to promote equality of opportunities for particular groups of disadvantaged people;

- d) By amending the policy there are better opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations;
- e) Differential impact observed and opportunities exist to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

Select 'none' if:

- a) The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations;
- b) The policy is purely technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on equality of opportunity or good relations.

Taking into account the evidence presented in Part 1, please complete the screening questions (Question 1 to 4).

Screening questions

1. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 categories?

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious Belief**

The policy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this group. No evidence has been found to suggest that religious belief is a factor in accessing funding for research and publishing research results in open access.

What is the level of impact?

None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**

The policy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this group. No evidence has been found to suggest that political belief is a factor in accessing funding for research and publishing research results in open access.

Level of impact

None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**

The policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this group.

Level of impact

Minor +

This policy will enable researchers who have experienced limited access to research funding due to their race or ethnicity to publish in open access, and to disseminate their research results, via so-called green open access route (that is uploading accepted manuscripts to Pure at no additional cost).

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Age**

The policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this group.

Level of impact

Minor +

This policy will enable researchers who have experienced limited access to research funding due to their age or career stage (for example, early-career researchers) to publish in open access, and to disseminate their research results, via so-called green open access route (that is uploading accepted manuscripts to Pure at no additional cost).

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Marital Status**

The policy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this group. No evidence has been found to suggest that marital status is a factor in accessing funding for research and publishing research results in open access.

Level of impact

None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Sexual Orientation**

The policy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this group. No evidence has been found to suggest that sexual orientation is a factor in accessing funding for research and publishing research results in open access.

Level of impact

None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Men and Women generally**

The policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this group.

Level of impact

Minor +

This policy will enable researchers who have experienced limited access to research funding due to pregnancy or maternity leave to publish in open access, and to disseminate their research results, via so-called green open access route (that is uploading accepted manuscripts to Pure at no additional cost).

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Disability**

The policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this group.

Level of impact

Minor +

This policy will enable researchers who have experienced limited access to research funding due to their disability to publish in open access, and to disseminate their research results, via so-called green open access route (that is uploading accepted manuscripts to Pure at no additional cost).

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Dependants**

The policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this group.

Level of impact

Minor +

This policy will enable researchers who have experienced limited access to research funding due to their caring responsibilities to publish in open access, and to disseminate their research results, via so-called green open access route (that is uploading accepted manuscripts to Pure at no additional cost).

2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 categories?

Religious Belief

No. This policy will enable researchers who have experienced limited access to research funding to publish in open access, and to disseminate their research results, via so-called green open access route (that is uploading accepted manuscripts to Pure at no additional cost).

Political Opinion

No. This policy will enable researchers who have experienced limited access to research funding to publish in open access, and to disseminate their research results, via so-called green open access route (that is uploading accepted manuscripts to Pure at no additional cost).

Racial Group

No. This policy will enable researchers who have experienced limited access to research funding to publish in open access, and to disseminate their research results, via so-called green open access route (that is uploading accepted manuscripts to Pure at no additional cost).

Age

No. This policy will enable researchers who have experienced limited access to research funding to publish in open access, and to disseminate their research results, via so-called green open access route (that is uploading accepted manuscripts to Pure at no additional cost).

Marital Status

No. This policy will enable researchers who have experienced limited access to research funding to publish in open access, and to disseminate their research results, via so-called green open access route (that is uploading accepted manuscripts to Pure at no additional cost).

Sexual Orientation

No. This policy will enable researchers who have experienced limited access to research funding to publish in open access, and to disseminate their research results, via so-called green open access route (that is uploading accepted manuscripts to Pure at no additional cost).

Men and Women generally

No. This policy will enable researchers who have experienced limited access to research funding to publish in open access, and to disseminate their research results, via so-called green open access route (that is uploading accepted manuscripts to Pure at no additional cost).

Disability

No. This policy will enable researchers who have experienced limited access to research funding to publish in open access, and to disseminate their research results, via so-called green open access route (that is uploading accepted manuscripts to Pure at no additional cost).

Dependants

No. This policy will enable researchers who have experienced limited access to research funding to publish in open access, and to disseminate their research results, via so-called green open access route (that is uploading accepted manuscripts to Pure at no additional cost).

3. To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? Please provide details of the likely policy impacts and determine the level of impact for each of the categories below.

Religious Belief

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious Belief**

This policy is unlikely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief. The policy has no relevance to good relations.

Level of impact

None

Political Opinion

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**

This policy is unlikely to impact on good relations between people of different political opinion. The policy has no relevance to good relations.

Level of impact

None

Racial Group

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**

This policy is unlikely to impact on good relations between people of different racial group. The policy has no relevance to good relations.

Level of impact
None

4. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Religious Belief

No, the policy has no relevance to good relations.

Political Opinion

No, the policy has no relevance to good relations.

Racial Group

No, the policy has no relevance to good relations.

Additional considerations

Multiple identity

5. Generally speaking, people can fall into more than one Section 75 category. Taking this into consideration, are there any potential impacts of the policy or decision on people with multiple identities? (For example, disabled minority ethnic people; disabled women; young Protestant men, and young lesbians, gay and bisexual people).

Yes

Please specify the relevant Section 75 categories concerned below.
Provide details of the policy impact and data which describes the policy impact.

Racial group, age, sex (men and women generally), disability, dependants

It is highly likely that this policy will impact on individuals who have a range of identities, consistent with these protected characteristics. This policy will enable researchers who have experienced limited access to research funding due to their

race, age, sex, disability and dependants to publish in open access, and to disseminate their research results, via so-called green open access route (that is uploading accepted manuscripts to Pure at no additional cost).

Disability Duties

6. Does the policy provide an opportunity to encourage disabled people to participate in University life?

Yes. This policy will enable disabled researchers to publish in open access, and to disseminate their research results, via so-called green open access route (that is uploading accepted manuscripts to Pure at no additional cost).

7. Does the policy provide an opportunity to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?

No. The Policy encourages researchers to retain ownership rights to their scholarly articles and will make it simpler for researchers to meet research funder open access policies more generally.

Part 3: Screening decision

Based on the evidence considered and outlined in Part 1 and the responses to the screening questions (Part 2), please indicate the screening decision for this policy.

Note: The University should take particular care not to screen out policies that have a procurement aspect if there is potential to promote equality of opportunity through the procurement of services.

- Screen in** the policy (that is, subject to an Equality Impact Assessment). The likely impact is **major** in respect of one, or more of the equality of opportunity or good relations categories.
- Screen out** the policy without mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted (that is, **no** Equality Impact Assessment). The likely impact is **none** in respect of all of equality of opportunity or good relations categories.
- Screen out** the policy and **mitigate the impacts on equality by amending or changing the policy**, or by **developing an alternative policy or action** (that is, **no** Equality Impact Assessment). The likely impact is **minor** in respect of one or more of the equality of opportunity or good relations categories.

If the decision is to subject the policy to an equality impact assessment (that is, 'screen in' the policy), please provide details of the reasons.

Not applicable

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment (that is, 'screen out' the policy), please provide details for the reasons.

Not applicable

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment (that is, 'screen out' the policy), and mitigate the impacts on equality of opportunity by amending or changing the policy, or by developing an alternative policy or action, please provide reasons to support your decision, together with the proposed changes, amendments or alternative policy.

The likely impact is **minor** in respect of one or more of the equality of opportunity or good relations categories, however this impact is **positive**.

The Policy encourages researchers to retain ownership rights to their scholarly articles and will make it simpler for researchers to meet research funder open access policies more generally.

In line with the University policy this policy will be reviewed two years after it has been implemented and if necessary amended.

Timetabling and prioritising

If the policy had been '**screened in**' for an equality impact assessment, then please answer the following questions to determine its priority for timetabling the equality impact assessment.

On a scale of 1 to 3, with 1 being the lowest priority and 3 being the highest, assess the policy in terms of its priority for equality impact assessment.

Priority rating for timetabling the equality impact assessment in terms of effect on equality of opportunity and good relations:

Not applicable

Priority rating for timetabling the equality impact assessment in terms of social need

Not applicable

Priority rating for timetabling the equality impact assessment in terms of effect on people's daily lives

Not applicable

Priority rating for timetabling the equality impact assessment in terms of relevance to the University's functions

Not applicable

Note: The Total Rating Score will be used to prioritise the policy in rank order with other policies screened in for equality impact assessment. This list of priorities will assist the University in timetabling. Details of the University's Equality Impact Assessment Timetable will be included in its quarterly Screening Reports.

Is the policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities?

Not applicable

Approval and authorisation

Screened by:



Position or Job Title: PVC Research

Date screened: 20 June 2025



Approved by:

Position or Job Title: Chief People Officer

Date approved: 17 December 2025

Review

This policy is due for review (in terms of its impact on equality of opportunity and good relations) by the policy owner on: 17 December 2027