

**A rights retention policy for an ambitious applied  
University**

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This document is the Published Version [VoR]

**Citation:**

VERBAAN, Eddy (2023). A rights retention policy for an ambitious applied University. In: Rights retention strategies webinar, Online, 26 January 2023. SCONUL. (Unpublished) [Conference or Workshop Item]

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# A rights retention policy for an ambitious applied university

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Head of Library Research Support

# Where and why?

- One of the UK's largest universities
- Our vision is to be the world's leading applied university, "developing innovative, practical solutions to real world problems"
- Ambitions for Open Research:
  - Open Access helps us to share our research beyond academia with the people and organisations that we work with as an applied university
  - Goal in Library Plan to advance Open Research

## Open Access:

- 1 out of 2 papers available via gold or hybrid open access
- 4 out of 5 papers available via green open access
- Repository since 2009, currently over 22,000 items, including all our doctoral theses from 1968 onwards

## REF 2021:

- 500 staff submitted, which is 32% of all academic staff
- Top 10 in the UK for research impact in Planning, Sport, and Art & Design



*"I'm looking forward to being able to maintain the rights to the work that I have done as it gives me more scope to share articles on social media, increase readership and make it easier for policymakers and practitioners to engage with my research. They can then use it to improve their practice and make probation more effective with no one being in breach of copyright law!"*

Jake Phillips, Reader in Criminology

# What?

- Our new Open Access Policy applies to all members of staff and all students
- It requires
  - that a copy of all research outputs is deposited with the Library, which will be made available to the public where possible
  - that all scholarly articles must be made Open Access under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) licence. To achieve this, all Sheffield Hallam authors must add a Rights Retention Statement as part of their manuscript submission to the publisher

## Open Access Policy

- Authors automatically licence the university under the CC BY licence—via the staff IP Policy and Student Terms and Conditions—and this prior licence is binding on the publisher in copyright law



## Announcements to the publisher

- Authors must announce this to the publisher on submission using the Rights Retention Statement
- SHU has also notified the most popular publishers in advance that SHU authors will have given SHU a prior licence

# How?

## Design principles

### User-friendly

- No bureaucratic burden: Ideally, no additional author actions should be needed compared to the current situation – even the inclusion of a rights retention statement should be avoided if we can
- One action, a lot of benefit

### Unconstrained

- Opt-outs to accommodate publications emanating from commercial contracts with IP restrictions
- Opt-outs to accommodate co-authored papers where collaborators may have different views on applying rights retention

### Inclusive

- All staff or only to staff with a significant responsibility for research? Doctoral students?
- Shortform publications only, or also longform publications?

## Laying the groundwork

- Discussions led by our Open Research Operations Group, consisting of representatives from professional services and academic staff, led by the library
- UUK and JISC sector collaboration on requirements for transitional agreements
- Discussions about rights retention, in the context of UK-SCL, started back in 2016
  - NEED: We already had agreement on the need for a rights retention policy
  - MECHANISM: We had already established, with HR, how such a policy could be implemented by linking it to the standard lecturer's contract and staff IP policy, and student T&Cs
- New impetus when Edinburgh and Cambridge announced their policies in 2021/2

# When?

Socialisation of the idea with research leadership

Risk analysis

Consultation with trade unions

Develop online guidance for authors and co-authors

Send *notice of prior licence* to 60 publishers: notice, contract, statement



**January 2022**

Task-and-finish group

Policy text

**16 June 2022**

Formal approval from Research and Innovation Committee

Develop repository workflows

**15 October 2022**

Policy in force

# Who?

## Message

- Focus on the author benefits, sector trends, and why we're doing this
- Trying to keep the message simple: 1 action, many benefits
- Acknowledging potential risks
- Emphasising available support
  - We do not expect authors to negotiate with publishers themselves

## Response from our community

- Generally supportive of the initiative
- But some trepidation about the potential of rejection
- And in some cases, there is doubt co-authors will play ball

1 out of 5 submissions contains the Rights Retention Statement

More submissions are benefitting from rights retention

No issues with publishers have come to our attention thus far



"I was amazed when I learnt I could retain rights over my publications. Both co-authors were really pleased, and the publisher's response was very positive."

Imtiaz Mostafiz, Senior Lecturer in International Business and Strategy

# Reflections

- At the beginning, we were intimidated by the legal aspects of rights retention
- Risk aware, but not risk averse — we concluded that the benefits outweigh the risks
  - Most papers will be available immediately to the public in support of our vision to be the world's leading applied university
  - The main risk we identified was that authors may not engage
  - Legal pushback from publishers is possible but not likely
- Raising awareness in the researcher community is the linchpin for success
- How do we measure success?
  - Thinking in terms of 'compliance' is both unhelpful and a nonsense
  - We are measuring engagement and effect instead
- Common opportunities and challenges
  - Publisher notifications
  - (Metadata) framework for measuring success
  - Sharing our understanding of the legal aspects of rights retention