

Report on the Strathclyde IRRP 12 months into the policy

Pablo de Castro, Open Access Advocacy Librarian, Jan 2025

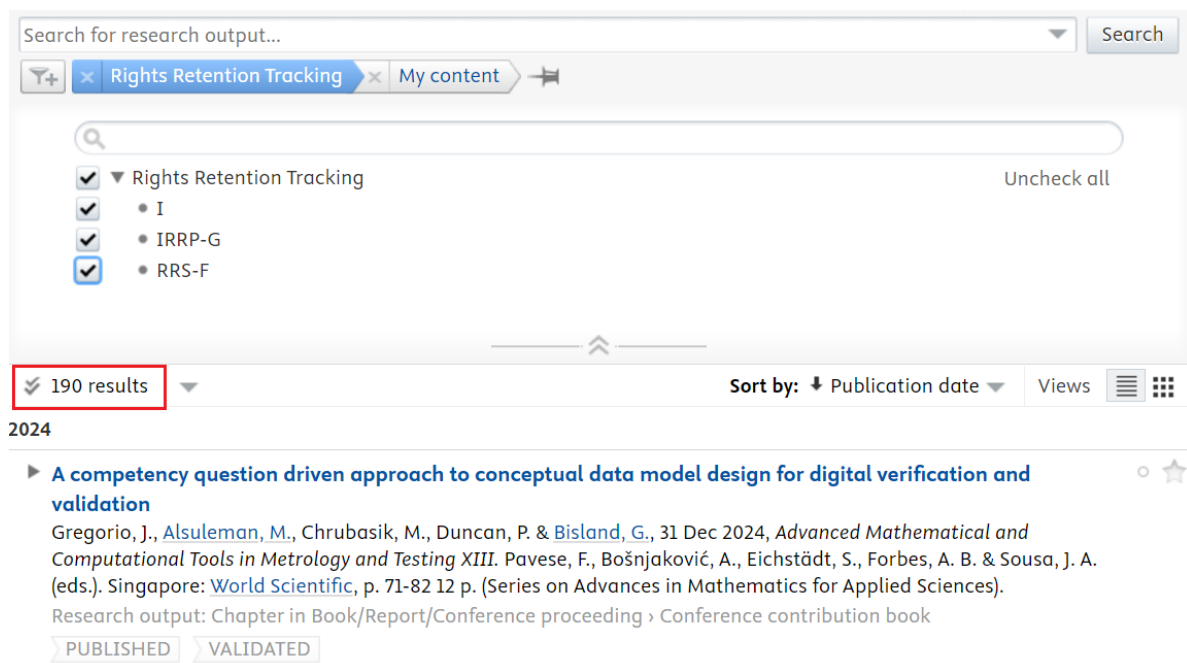
This is the report for the uptake of the [Strathclyde Institutional Rights Retention Policy](#) in its first 12 months. The policy was passed by Senate on Nov 15th, 2023 and came into force on 1 Jan 2024 (i.e. for manuscripts submitted on or after the 1 Jan 2024).

This report on the Strathclyde IRRP uptake is based on the snapshot taken from Pure on **1 Jan 2025**, i.e. right after the first 12 months have passed since the IRRP came into force. This snapshot shows **190 Strathclyde publications** made openly available via the rights retention route. The report aims to get a glimpse of the distribution of these ‘rights retention publications’ by Strathclyde department and by publisher. It’s also aimed at reviewing the current workflows for the application of rights retention.

A previous partial report was prepared based on a 20 Oct 2024 snapshot showing 138 Pure records for publications tagged for rights retention. This previous report allowed to check the evolution in the uptake and the changes happened in the last two months of the year.

As shown on figure 1 below, there are three ‘brands’ of rights retention. Each of these has been assigned a tag that is applied to the appropriate Pure records as a way to monitor their application:

- **RRS-F:** Funders’ rights retention. This rights retention approach predates the Strathclyde IRRP, as it was introduced by cOAlition S-member funders like the Wellcome Trust (1 Jan 2021) and the UKRI (1 Apr 2022) for their funded publications. Given that the Strathclyde IRRP only came into force as of 1 Jan 2024, all the initial RRS applications were of the RRS-F brand.
- **IRRP-G:** General rights retention as per the Strathclyde IRRP. The first application of this institutional policy happened in Mar 2024 (for the RRS-F, the first Strathclyde paper to which this was applied was published in Apr 2023 as per our records). The Strathclyde IRRP being much more widely applicable than the RRS-F, the number of IRRP-G instances very quickly outgrew those of RRS-F (see figure 2 for the distribution across “rights retention brands”)
- **RR-I:** Indeterminate rights retention. Temporary tag assigned to a Pure record when it’s too early to tell whether it will be an IRRP-G or RRS-F paper in the end, but early enough to see this is a candidate for rights retention. As an output progresses towards final publication, RR-I tags tend to be changed.



Search for research output... Search

Rights Retention Tracking
 My content

Rights Retention Tracking Uncheck all

- I
- IRRP-G
- RRS-F

190 results
 Sort by: ↓ Publication date
 Views

2024

▶ **A competency question driven approach to conceptual data model design for digital verification and validation**

Gregorio, J., [Alsuleman, M.](#), Chrubasik, M., Duncan, P. & [Bisland, G.](#), 31 Dec 2024, *Advanced Mathematical and Computational Tools in Metrology and Testing XIII*. Pavese, F., Bošnjaković, A., Eichstädt, S., Forbes, A. B. & Sousa, J. A. (eds.). Singapore: [World Scientific](#), p. 71-82 12 p. (Series on Advances in Mathematics for Applied Sciences).
 Research output: Chapter in Book/Report/Conference proceeding > Conference contribution book

PUBLISHED
 VALIDATED

Fig 1. Pure snapshot taken on 1 Jan 2025 showing 190 Strathclyde publications tagged as rights retention

When comparing the number of rights retention instances in 2024 (190) against the total number of institutional publications in that same period (4249 as per our records), the percentage of Strathclyde publications that have been made openly available following the rights retention route is **4.5%**. Although much lower than the percentage of publications published Gold Open Access via APC payments or Read & Publish agreements, this is a significant figure. Moreover, this percentage is expected to grow in subsequent years given that the barrier to the IRRP application created by the requirement for a manuscript to have been submitted on or after 1 Jan 2024 will no longer be there going forward.

This Strathclyde IRRP report “12 months into the policy” includes just a few figures and tables showing (as of 1 Jan 2025):

- The monthly growth of the different brands of rights retention
- The distribution by document type
- The distribution by Strathclyde department (including against the total number of publications by department held in the latest REF OA policy compliance report)
- The distribution by publisher

Each of the figures and tables below carry a basic analysis of the trends. There are also more general comments on the way the policy is being applied, both for internal and external use.

Evolution of the various brands of rights retention

As per the figures on the 1 Jan 2025 snapshot, the vast majority of ‘rights retention publications’ is for the general rights retention policy (IRRP-G), but there’s also a steady occurrence of funders’ rights retention (RRS-F) and a few instances of indeterminate rights retention (RR-I). Figure 2 below shows the monthly evolution for the three different brands of rights retention.

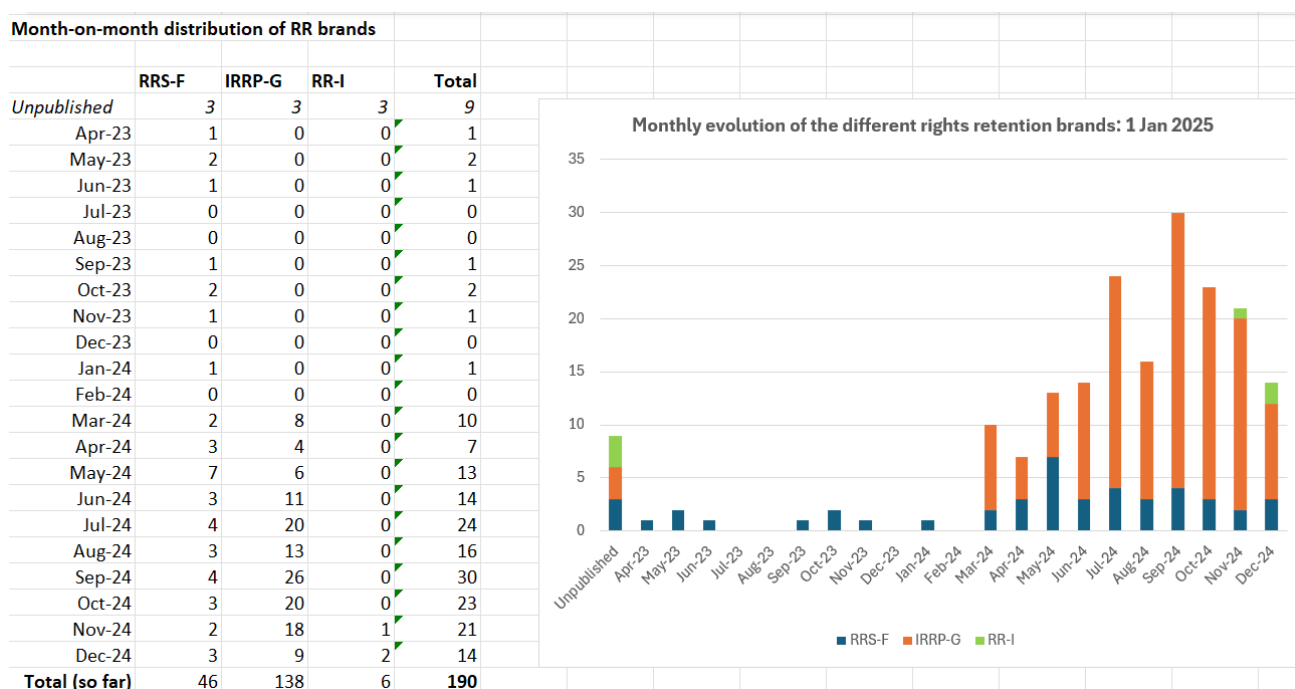


Fig 2. Monthly evolution of the three ‘brands’ of rights retention at Strathclyde

The stats for the different kinds of rights retention show 46 instances of RRS-F, 138 of IRRP-G and 6 of RR-I. In 2023 when there was still no IRRP, all rights retention instances were funders’ rights retention (RRS-F), largely for UKRI-funded papers that did not follow the Gold Open Access route. However, as we move onto 2024 and the IRRP comes into force, the number of IRRP-G instances quickly outweighs those for the RRS-F. The “unpublished” bar on the left shows a much higher than average number of RR-I instances as it’s very hard, often impossible to tell what rights retention brand (if any) these unpublished papers will eventually fall under.

Rights retention by document type

Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of the ‘rights retention publications’ are journal articles, but there’s a long tail of other document types to which RR has been applied, see figure 3 below. It’s worth bearing in mind that the Strathclyde IRRP as it has been defined *does not apply* to any kind of longform publications, i.e. to book chapters or books.

Document types	
Article	157
Conference paper	18
Review article	7
Editorial	3
Comment	1
Correction	1
Book review	1
Letter	1
Literature review	1
Total (so far)	190

Fig 3. Rights retention instances by document type

Distribution of IRRP instances by Strathclyde department

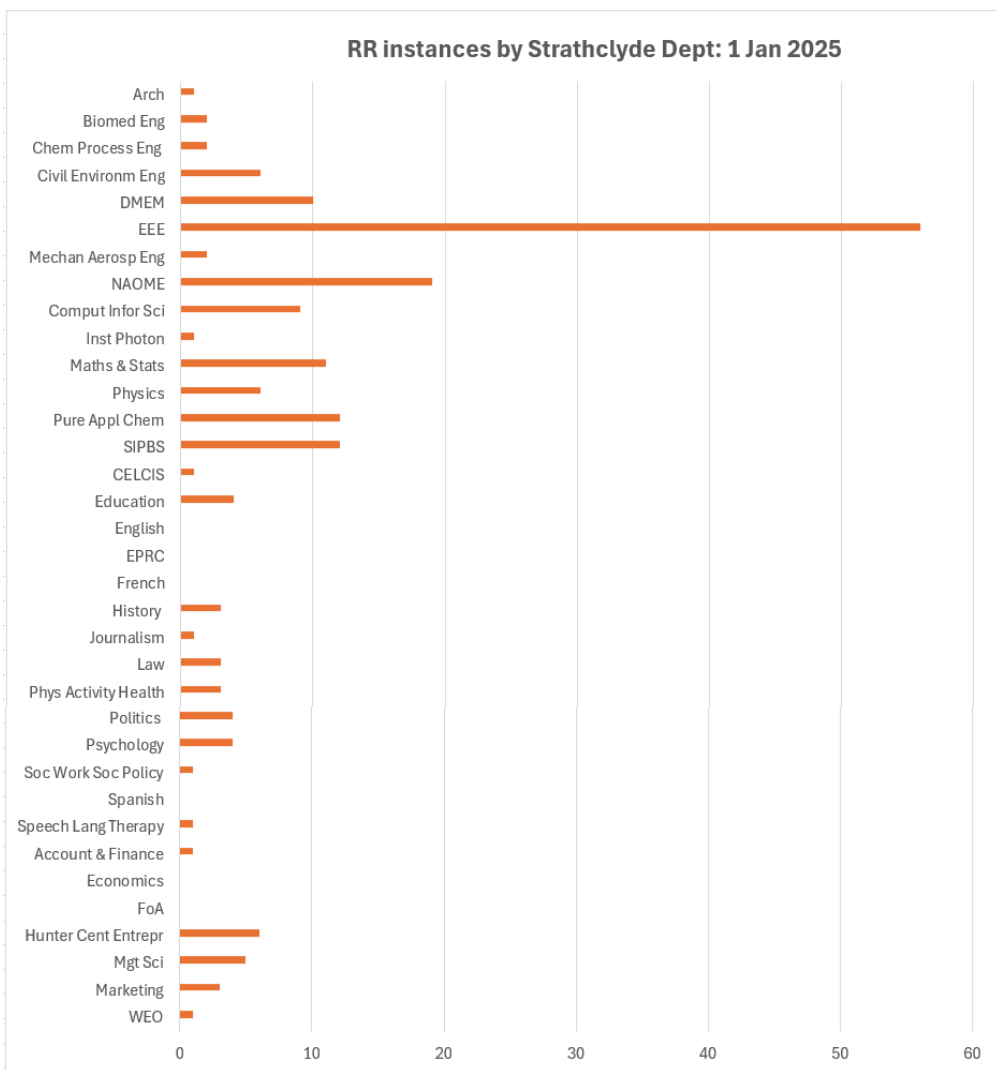


Fig 4. Rights retention instances by Strathclyde department

The distribution of rights retention instances (i.e. both IRRP-G and RRS-F) by Strathclyde departments in figure 4 above shows Electronic & Electrical Engineering (EEE) as having by far the largest number of RR instances. This is mainly a result of the frequent publication of articles in hybrid IEEE titles that cannot be published Gold OA under the “no hybrid” OA funding policy. Moreover, the IEEE are one of the publishers that have specifically stated that they agree with the application of the rights retention strategy to all their publications with Strathclyde coauthors in them, regardless of whether they are corresponding authors or not.

The distribution by department above might suggest that RR figures may as a rule be larger the more publications a specific department regularly produces. This is why the compared snapshot below has also been put together, where the number of RR instances is shown against the total number of publications by department that were analysed in the most recent REF OA policy compliance report. These figures are not fully accurate as departments have often undergone name changes since the REF OA policy started to be measured in Apr 2016, but they provide an indication of what the largest departments are in terms of their publishing volume.

This shows that it’s not completely correct to assume that the larger the number of departmental publications, the more RR instances there will be. There are cases such as EEE or NAOME where this rule would seem to apply, but other like Physics, SIPBS or MAE are counterexamples. The SBS is another case where this the-more-publications-the-more-RR-instances rule doesn’t hold.

Faculty	Department	RR instances	Compliant pubs (REF2021)
Faculty Of Engineering	Architecture	1	150
	Biomedical Engineering	2	360
	Chemical And Process Engineering	2	366
	Civil And Environmental Engineering	6	755
	Design, Manufacturing And Engineering Management	10	656
	Electronic And Electrical Engineering	56	1419
	Mechanical And Aerospace Engineering	2	678
	Naval Architecture, Ocean And Marine Engineering	19	1056
Total		98	5440
Faculty	Department	RR instances	Compliant
Faculty Of Science	Computer And Information Sciences	9	433
	Institute Of Photonics	1	102
	Mathematics And Statistics	11	803
	Physics	6	1065
	Pure And Applied Chemistry	12	922
	Strathclyde Institute Of Pharmacy And Biomedical Sciences	12	1598
Total		51	4923
Faculty	Department	RR instances	Compliant
Humanities & Social Science	Centre For Excellence For Looked After Children (Celcis)	1	7
	Education	4	413
	English	0	40
	European Policies Research Centre	0	23
	French	0	4
	History	3	68
	Journalism	1	8
	Law	3	316
	Physical Activity For Health	3	183
	Politics	4	200
	Psychology	4	402
	Social Work Social Policy	1	69
	Spanish	0	15
	Speech And Language Therapy	1	59
Total		25	1807
Faculty	Department	RR instances	Compliant
Strathclyde Business School	Accounting And Finance	1	150
	Economics	0	173
	Fraser Of Allander Institute	0	110
	Hunter Centre For Entrepreneurship	6	168
	Management Science	5	268
	Marketing	3	124
	Work Employment Organisation	1	17
Total		16	1010

Fig 5. Rights retention instances vs total number of publications by department

It's also interesting to compare the distribution of rights retention instances across faculties. Figures 6 and 7 below show that Engineering is by far the largest Faculty from a rights retention perspective, although it's Sciences the one that shows the most balanced distribution across its departments. It's worth noting that almost all departments have already seen instances of rights retention in the 12 first months of the IRRP.

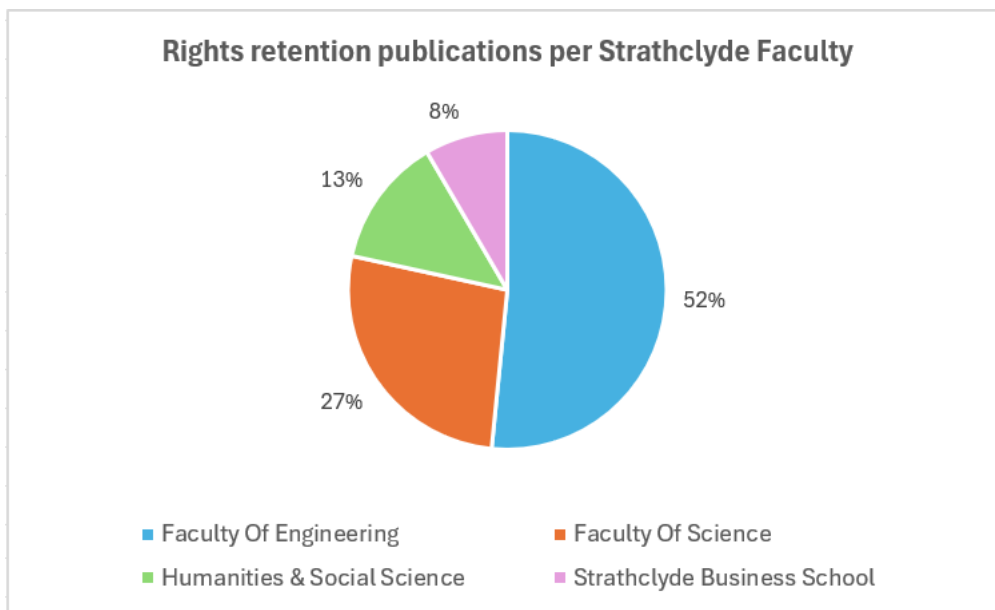


Fig 6. Rights retention instances across Strathclyde faculties

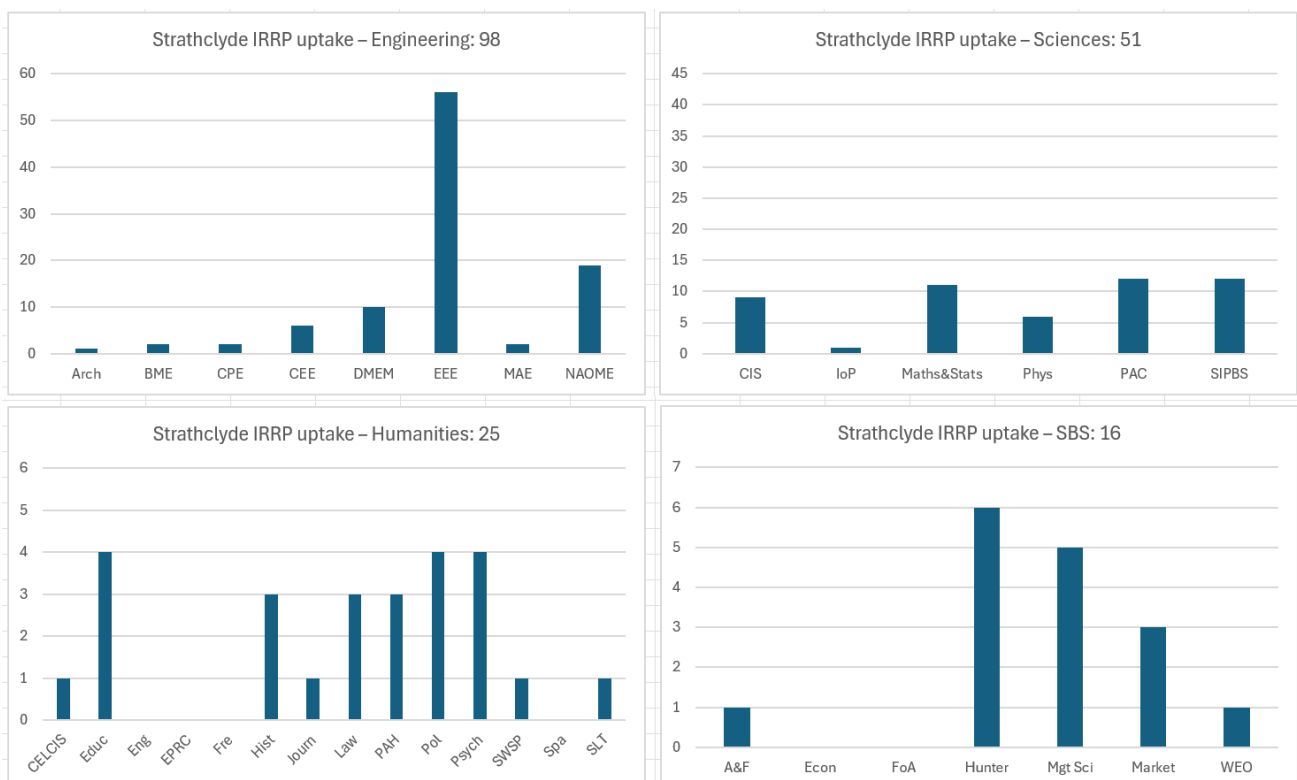


Fig 7. Rights retention by departments grouped by Strathclyde Faculty

Rights retention instances by publisher

Besides the total number of research outputs produced within a department, there's an additional factor influencing this distribution by department, namely the distribution by publisher.

The more often a specific department's publications go to (for instance) Elsevier titles, the more frequent it will be that RR gets applied to manuscripts that *cannot be made Gold Open Access via the Read & Publish agreement Strathclyde has with the publisher* because the Strathclyde author is not the corresponding author. The distribution of RR instances by publisher on figure 8 below shows **the IEEE and Elsevier well above all the other publishers**. Emerald, Springer, the American Institute of Physics (AIP) and the American Chemical Society (ACS) are the most frequent ones among the rest.

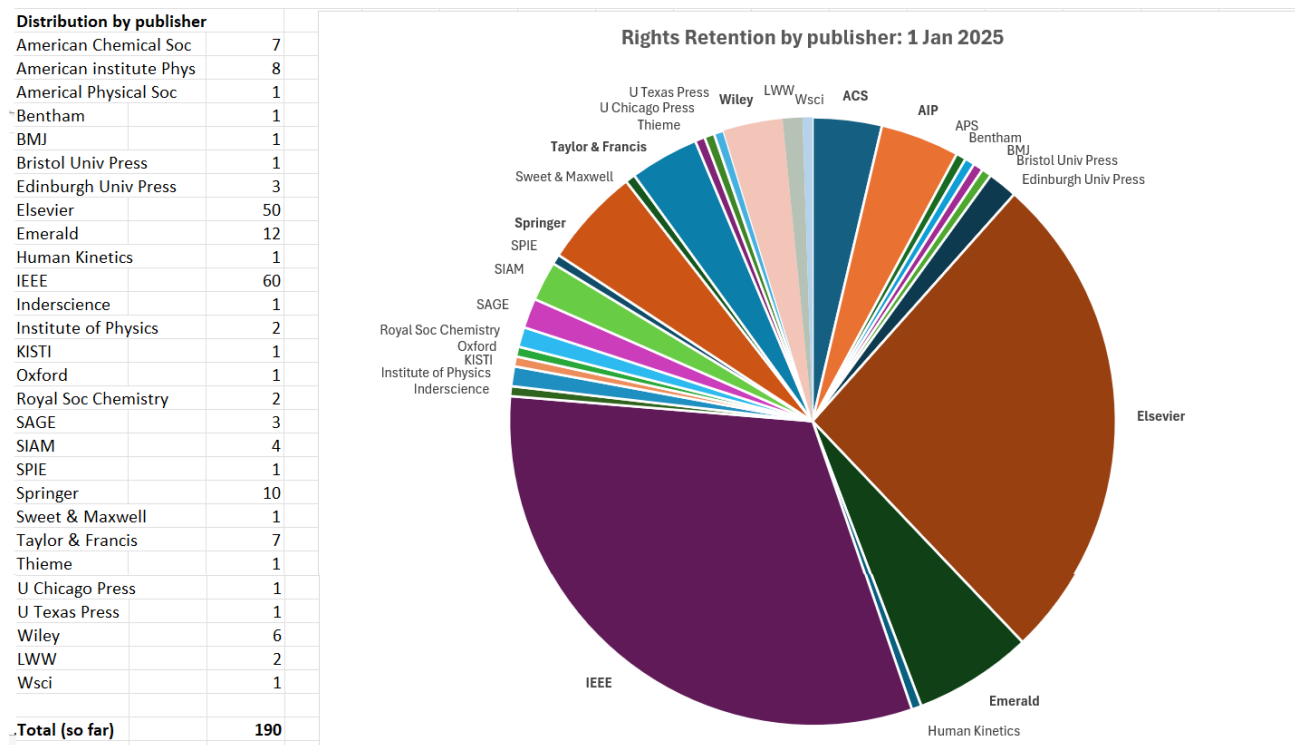


Fig 8. Rights retention instances by publisher

Some of the factors that explain the number of RR instances by department and publisher are:

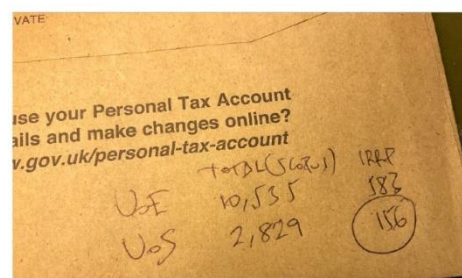
- Total number of publications produced at the department
- How many of these cannot be made Gold OA via APC payments or R&P deals
- How many of these tend to be with publishers where RR is easy to secure
- How often Strathclyde coauthors *will not be* corresponding authors

A few general comments on the application of the IRRP

1. The figure of 190 institutional publications covered by the rights retention policy in the first year of the IRRP has exceeded the original estimation based on the U Edinburgh figures (see screenshot on the side) but are still reasonably well aligned with the expectations. This shows there is a pattern that other HEIs could also use.

Slide from the Jun 27th, 2024 presentation "So you've now passed your IRRP: What next? Some thoughts from the University of Strathclyde" showing the estimated figure for the IRRP uptake at Strathclyde in 2024 on the basis of the University of Edinburgh IRRP uptake in 2022.

Back-of-an-envelope calculation



2. The ["Galvanising the Open Access community"](#) report states that the larger the publisher, the more instances of IRRP there will be. The figures for Strathclyde seem to back that statement, with Elsevier and the IEEE being the publishers for which the IRRP has most frequently been applied. There are some exceptions though that show that this is not a rule set in stone.
3. Most rights retention papers are **journal articles with non-Strathclyde corresponding authors in titles covered by R&P deals**, meaning the IRRP is mostly applied for publications that cannot be "reached" (i.e. published Gold OA) through our R&P deals even if we are handsomely paying for them. Examples for countries whose lead authors do not have a R&P deal or have not managed to have their paper covered by it (it's usually limited OA deals when they have any) and won't pay an APC are China, India, Pakistan, France, Spain, United States, Italy, Cyprus, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Belgium, Portugal, Israel, Japan.
4. As a result of this, any cancellation of a R&P deal will (presumably) result in a spike in the number of RR applications for a specific publisher (though this remains to be tested in practice).
5. Publishers may choose to apply a "free to read" status to papers that may be made openly available via RR, but this does not preclude the application of the RR policy at the institution. "Free to read" is no replacement for immediate Open Access.
6. The figures for "rights retention publications from abroad" (meaning corresponding authors outwith Strathclyde and typically in other countries) are very small for a single institution like Strathclyde. However, as an ever-larger number of institutions pass their own IRRPs and a critical mass is gradually reached, this number will only grow and may become significant, meaning it may offer institutions abroad unable to pass their own IRRP a few examples where embargo-free Green OA may be applied. This is the potential "snowball effect" of rights retention.
7. *No specific dissemination for embargo-free Green OA papers is being made at present by institutions*, mostly in order not to irk publishers and to avoid potentially creating issues for researchers. **This should gradually change however**, especially in cases where R&P deals fall through and must be replaced by a rights retention approach. A possible non-renewal of the ACS deal in 2025 could possibly offer an opportunity in this regard.
8. One of the most difficult aspects in the application of the RRS is the **identification of the date of manuscript submission**: in order to be able to apply an IRRP-G tag to a publication, we need to know that the date of submission was on or after 1 Jan 2024, but given the wide variations in the time it takes for a manuscript to be peer-reviewed, this can be challenging. It is very helpful when publishers include the metadata element for "manuscript received" in the final published version of a paper, but at present this is not as frequent as it could be. One option here is to check with the researchers, but this is a very admin-oriented question they will not always have the time to answer.
9. Some publishers are requesting *to authors* a specific approach to rights retention application to their manuscripts, for instance by asking them to make the embargo-free AAMs CC BY-NC instead of CC BY. Authors will typically not understand what the publisher is asking them to do, given that IRRPs are being internally applied by libraries with authors not really intervening in the workflow beyond the fact that they're able to opt-out if they so wish. This means it's for HEIs to collaboratively discuss whether this sort of exception can be applied for some publishers. The REF2029 Open Access policy requirements may also be a relevant factor in these discussions.
10. Other than these requests by publishers that researchers have sometimes forwarded, **there have been no opt-out requests from researchers or takedown notices received from publishers thus far**. Also worth noting is the fact that although rights retention has been applied to a few ACS papers, no Article Development Charge or ADC has ever been paid (because all "our own" Strathclyde papers were made Gold OA via by the ACS Read & Publish agreement).