

Records Management Guidance: Managing Research Records (paper and electronic, including Research Data)

Introduction

To understand why it is so important to manage research records properly it is helpful to consider what can go wrong with managing your data:

- You could lose your work
- Your files could become corrupted
- You may be unable to find a file or not know which is the most up to date version
- You may be unable to back up your claims
- You may not be able to access your own data in the future
- Your data may not make sense to anyone building on your work
- Sensitive information could be leaked
- You could lose your funding if you cannot meet your funder's requirements
- You may fail to meet legal, governance or ethics requirements
- These notes aim to help you to avoid these problems.

Planning your research project

- You need to consider all of the following questions before you begin:
- Do you need to produce a data management plan? (This is well worth doing even if not requested by your funders to help you to decide how you're going to manage your data.)
- Do you need any particular software or systems to manage and store your data?
- Are you using human participants, human tissues or animals?
- Who is the funder? Any other external bodies involved? What are their requirements? Is it EU funded?
- Are there any possible sensitive issues to do with the subject matter or the funder?
- Are you aware of any legal or other requirements that you are bound by?
- What advice/policies/training etc. is available?
- Are you ensuring that all relevant documentation is kept and that you are using adequate naming and version controls?

During your research project

- Continue using your data management plan and update it
- Based on the questions you answered in the planning section ensure you are using adequate security measures e.g. password protected areas, locked cabinets etc.
- Document any changes
- Ensure do what you say you will – e.g. on consent forms, make sure processes set up to do what is promised

After your research project

- Ensure all documentation can be accessed by those that need to and that they have appropriate retention dates set and think about who will act on these?
- Transfer your work to appropriate storage, if it is paper you may want to consider the University Records Centre.
- Are you leaving the University? If so you must ensure your work is in an area it can be accessed by those who need it.
- Think about the possibility of historic value, if this applies you may be required to documents such as the original research funding bid as well as any reports that come out of it.

Key internal contacts

Computing Services Department (CSD)

<http://www.liv.ac.uk/csd/>

Computing Services provides the academic, administrative, research and teaching IT services for the University. Support for effective records management, and the protection and management of information security, are delivered by this Department.

Records Management

www.liv.ac.uk/csd/records-management

Records Management provides advice and support for all aspects of record-keeping, throughout the University, including both electronic and paper records.

Information Security

www.liv.ac.uk/csd/security

Information security is of critical importance – without adequate security measures, years of research data, personal information of sensitive documents could be put at risk.

Research Data Management project

<https://www.liv.ac.uk/csd/research-data-management/>

The RDM project is being introduced as a direct requirement of government policy on data sharing, which emphasises the potential for reusing data and data sharing created as a result of research activities carried out within the University of Liverpool. As a research intensive organisation, the

University recognises the value of research data and the need to maximise its impact by making it widely available. Research undertaken at the University spans a wide range of disciplines and is supported by diverse funding streams. Many of these funding streams have specific research data policies and requirements, and the University is committed to meeting all of their expectations.

Researcher Hub

<http://www.liv.ac.uk/researcher-hub/>

This site aims to bring all the information researchers need together in one place. Although you should also be able to access everything you need through the Hub we have provided direct links below for key areas.

Legal, Risk and Compliance

<http://www.liv.ac.uk/legal>

This department provides in-house legal advice to the University, including information on Data Protection and Freedom of information.

External sources of information

JISC Guidance

The Joint Information Systems Committee has some useful advice at:

<http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/partnerships/records-retention-he/managing-research-records>

DCC

The DCC has lots of useful information, start by looking at the resources available here on data management plans:

http://www.dcc.ac.uk/news/managing_research_data_video

Vitae

Vitae is the UK organisation championing the personal, professional and career development of doctoral researchers and research staff in higher education institutions and research institutes.

<http://www.vitae.ac.uk/>

The University of Edinburgh has some guidance for research data, including which of it is appropriate to put in the cloud:

http://www.docs.is.ed.ac.uk/docs/data-library/EUDL_RDM_Handbook.pdf

Other helpful sources of information

- Look at section M of the [University retention schedule](#) for more guidance on how long to keep your research records and consider the following advice from JISC:
- *“Some research sponsors specify requirements for retention of specific categories of records. The final section of this guidance contains a summary of the key recordkeeping requirements of the UK Research Councils and other important research sponsors.*
- *Where there are no specific external requirements to retain records of a research project, or when such requirements have already been met, the PI should apply the institution’s own records retention policy to the project records.*
- *Research is a complex activity and every project is unique. Applying the institution’s records retention policy to the records of an individual research project involves assessing:*
- *the risks of not having access to evidence of decisions made, actions taken and results produced during the project;*
- *the benefits of retaining records containing this evidence, for the institution, for the wider academic community and for society as a whole;*
- *the costs of retaining these records, including the costs of facilities and equipment to store them and of staff to maintain them and provide access to them.*
- *Specific issues to consider in determining retention periods for records of a research project include:*
- *whether records should be retained to support a patent or other protected intellectual property;*
- *whether the research has been linked to inquiries or investigations, such as allegations of scientific or financial misconduct;*
- *whether the research has been controversial or ground-breaking.*
- *Where the nature of the records makes it impossible, or prohibitively expensive, to preserve them for the required or selected retention period (e.g. biological samples), the Principal Investigator should consider what other means are available to preserve the evidence they contain.*