

Outline of a Research Data Management Policy for Australian Universities / Institutions

This documents purpose:

This document is intended as a basic starting point for institutions that are intending to write, or update, their research data management policy. It is intended to be informative, not prescriptive.

Basic headings

Possible parts of a research data management policy have been included here. It is understood that each institution will have its own method/template for writing policies. Many of the things outlined here may not be included in the formal policy but may be addressed with accompanying procedures or guidelines.

Why have a research data management policy or policies?

All Australian universities have signed up to the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (referred to hereafter as 'The Code' and can be accessed here: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files/nhmrc/file/publications/synopses/r39.pdf>).

Section 2 of The Code states that "*Policies are required that address the ownership of research materials and data, their storage, their retention beyond the end of the project, and appropriate access to them by the research community*"

Data management can mean many different things. It includes the following activities which are involved when handling data:

Data policy

Data ownership

Data documentation and compilation

Data quality, standardization, harmonization and audit

Data life-cycle control

Data custodianship

Data security and access constraints

Data access, data sharing and dissemination/licensing arrangements

Data publishing

(taken from the NLWRA Module 2:Data Management Principles which can be accessed here:

<http://nlwra.gov.au/files/pages/2613/module-2-data-management-principles.pdf>)

Name of Policy

This should be clear, concise and informative without including acronyms or abbreviations. Consider the terms that may be used to search for this policy, e.g. 'Research Data Management Policy', 'Research Data Ownership Policy' etc.

Policy Purpose

This is a short statement that outlines what is to be achieved by having this policy. There may be a single 'Research Data Management Policy' that encompasses all the points listed above, or the institution may decide to have separate policies to address different parts of research data management e.g. data ownership or data storage.

Key Principles or Objectives

This addresses the objectives of this policy. Look at the definitions / inclusions in data management that are quoted above.

Definitions

Define all terms that you are using. This may include such things as 'Archive', 'Institution Repository', 'Disposal' etc.

Exceptions

Outline situations where this policy may not apply, or define what is not covered in this policy e.g. research data does not include local administration data etc.

Application & Responsibilities

Who this policy applies to, e.g. all staff, all academics, etc, and what they are their responsibilities under this policy, e.g.:

- Researchers

What are the specific responsibilities of researchers under this policy? (Sections 2.5 – 2.7 of The Code address this.)

- Student Researchers and their Supervisors

What are the specific responsibilities of student researchers and their supervisors under this policy?

- Institution

What are the specific responsibilities of the institution under this policy? (Sections 2.1 – 2.4 of The Code address this.)

Period of Retention of Research Data and Records

As a starting point this needs to align with the periods set out in section 2.1.1 of The Code, any local or state archives Acts as well as discipline specific norms.

Storage of Research Data and Records

Detail where and how research data and records are to be stored. These may be digital (e.g. files, datasets, photos, recordings etc) or physical objects (e.g. paper, artifacts etc).

Section 2.1 of The Code states that: *"Each institution must have a policy on the retention of materials and research data."*

Security and Protection

Which records are required to be kept in secure conditions and how and where this is to happen.

Section 2.2 of The Code states that *"Institutions must provide facilities for the safe and secure storage of research data ..."*

Access to Research Data and Records

Who has access to the data and in what manner? This may differ depending on the type and sensitivity of the data.

Section 2.4 of The Code states that *"Each institution must have a policy on the ownership of, and access to, databases and archives ..."*

In addition section 2.5.2 mentions that *"Research data should be made available for use by other researchers unless this is prevented by ethical, privacy or confidentiality matters."*

Removal or Movement of Data and Records

By whom? What will be moved? From where to where? When and how will this happen?

Destruction of Records

Who will do this? What will be destroyed? Where, when and how will this happen?

Section 2.1.2 of The Code states that *“A policy is required that covers the secure and safe disposal of research data and primary materials when the specified period of retention has finished.”*

Data Ownership

The ownership of research data produced at the institution may be covered in this policy, or in a related one.

Section 2.2.1 of The Code states: *“There must be a policy on research data ownership and storage. This policy must cover all situations that arise in research, including when researchers move between institutions or employers and when data are held outside Australia.”*

In addition section 2.3 of The Code states that *“Each institution must have a policy on the ownership of research materials and data during and following the research project.”*

Collaborative Research Projects

When collaborative research projects are undertaken ownership of data must be established before a project begins.

Section 1.2.4 of The Code states *“There must be a clear policy on collaborative research projects with other organizations, which requires arrangements to be agreed before a project begins. As a minimum, these arrangements should cover ... intellectual property... and ownership of equipment and data.”*

Special Requirements

These may include specific requirements around some or all of the following (and possibly more):

- Laboratory Notebooks
- Patents
- Privacy
- Research Involving Human Participants
- Sponsored Research - Conditions of Award (Grant or Contract Research)
- Archival Value
- Discipline Specific Practices or Codes
- Research and Data Collection in Indigenous Communities
- Ethnographic Data

Where To Get Advice

Where in the institution to go for advice about things covered in this policy.

Register of Research Data & Records Stored in Department

This is a requirement under The Code.

Section 2.2 states that *“Institutions must provide facilities ... for maintaining records of where research data are stored.”*

Section 2.6.4 states that researchers must *“Retain research data, including electronic data, in a durable, indexed and retrievable form.”* And Section 2.6.5 that they must *“Maintain a catalogue of research data in an accessible form.”*

Related Policies

What other institutional policies are related to this one. This may include such things as the institutions policy on copyright or research ownership.

Related Documents / Schedules

What other institutional or external documents are related to this policy e.g. The Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research or the institutional research data management guidelines or procedures.

Related Legislation

Commonwealth, state, local and institutional laws that affect this policy. This may include such things as state archive acts.

Commencement Date

When does this policy come into effect?

Review date

When is this policy due to be reviewed?

Policy manager

This person/position is responsible for this policy. Usually someone who directly reports to the Vice-Chancellor.

Policy contact

The person who has direct functional responsibility and accountability for all areas of work that are covered by the policy, and its related procedures. Alternatively it can be the person who directly reports to the policy manager.

Approval Authority

Which committee/board is responsible for the policy approval/amendments



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Example University Research Data Management Policy University of Edinburgh

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/information-services/about/policies-and-regulations/research-data-policy>

Research Data Management Policy

This policy for managing research data was approved by the University Court on 16 May, 2011.

The University adopts the following policy on Research Data Management. It is acknowledged that this is an aspirational policy, and that implementation will take some years.

1. Research data will be managed to the highest standards throughout the research data lifecycle as part of the University's commitment to research excellence.
2. Responsibility for research data management through a sound research data management plan during any research project or programme lies primarily with Principal Investigators (PIs).
3. All new research proposals [from date of adoption] must include research data management plans or protocols that explicitly address data capture, management, integrity, confidentiality, retention, sharing and publication.
4. The University will provide training, support, advice and where appropriate guidelines and templates for the research data management and research data management plans.
5. The University will provide mechanisms and services for storage, backup, registration, deposit and retention of research data assets in support of current and future access, during and after completion of research projects.
6. Any data which is retained elsewhere, for example in an international data service or domain repository should be registered with the University.
7. Research data management plans must ensure that research data are available for access and re-use where appropriate and under appropriate safeguards.
8. The legitimate interests of the subjects of research data must be protected.
9. Research data of future historical interest, and all research data that represent records of the University, including data that substantiate research findings, will be offered and assessed for deposit and retention in an appropriate national or international data service or domain repository, or a University repository.
10. Exclusive rights to reuse or publish research data should not be handed over to commercial publishers or agents without retaining the rights to make the data openly available for re-use, unless this is a condition of funding.

Department of Fisheries and Oceans' Management Policy for Scientific Data, June 12, 2001

Only partially reproduced here. Full policy available at: <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/Science/data-donnees/policy-politique-eng.htm>

Data Management Policies

Data Archiving

All DFO scientific data must be managed as part of an integrated system accessible through regional, zonal and national data centres. The Integrated Science Data Management Service, Science Sector, (ISDM) will provide co-ordination among regional, zonal and national centres as appropriate, to ensure that all data are properly managed. Where no data management centre exists in a Region, Science and Oceans managers will be required to designate and support indeterminate A-base staff positions that include data management responsibilities.

ISDM will continue to function as a national data centre for Departmental data with archiving functions shared as appropriate with existing Regional data centres, and will serve as the primary point of contact for international data exchanges except in cases where the ADM Science or the ADM Oceans has designated in writing an alternate data centre as the primary contact.

The responsibilities of the integrated system of data centres will be to:

- Respond to internal and external data requests, in accordance with 'Availability of Access' Section below.
- Maintain inventories and documentation for all data holdings for which they have designated responsibility, including references to data sets not stored at the data centre.
- Provide basic data retrieval, integration and summarization capabilities to satisfy common requests.
- Provide or authorize computerized networking linkages.
- Perform, in concert with the data providers, data quality control, verification and removal of duplicate data.
- Ensure long term accessibility and documentation in the event of organizational changes, retirements, etc.
- Protect data against loss resulting from error, accident, technological change, degradation of media, etc.

In cooperation with Regional staff, ISDM may provide any or all of the above services on behalf of a Region, if so requested by that Region.